Developing a Local Plan for Lancaster District 2011-2031: Strategic Options for Land Allocations

Your Views
How can we meet our future housing needs?
Public Consultation 2 June to 31 July 2014
How can we meet our future housing needs?

To support economic growth and development, land is needed for housing, employment, shopping, education and other uses. This consultation focusses on housing. The city council needs your help to decide how the district’s needs for housing can be met.

Whilst we have been doing some work on this, we still need to find sites for approximately a further 5,000 new homes and we need your help to decide the best approach to do this.

This is not an easy challenge!

This document sets out the five potential options that the council could use to deliver the additional 5,000 homes needed to make the total up to more than 12,000 new homes.

These options are:

Option 1: Single Large Urban Extension
Option 2: Reviewing the Green Belt
Option 3: Development throughout the district’s towns and villages
Option 4: Large-scale expansion of two villages
Option 5: A whole new settlement

Have your say!

All five options will achieve significant growth in the district and each has varying degrees of advantages and disadvantages. It is important that you let us know what you think.

The consultation runs between Monday 2 June and Thursday 31 July.

- Do you agree or disagree with the potential options?
- Do you have a preferred option?
- Do you have other ideas or alternative options?
- What local services, facilities and infrastructure do you think these options will need?
- Are there additional benefits or constraints that we haven’t identified?

Visit the website: www.lancaster.gov.uk/planningpolicy
To see further details and complete an online questionnaire.

Write to us:
Planning and Regeneration, PO Box 4, Lancaster Town Hall, Dalton Square, LA1 1QR

Visit us:
Morecambe Town Hall, Marine Road East, LA4 5AF

Email us:
planningpolicy@lancaster.gov.uk

Phone us:
01524 582383
A New Local Plan for Lancaster District

Over the last few years the council has been busy preparing a new Local Plan for Lancaster District. This consists of five different documents. The council has produced a document containing the planning policies used to make decisions on individual planning applications. It has also prepared an Action Plan to encourage investment in the central area of Morecambe.

The next part of the Local Plan to be prepared is the Land Allocations document. Land Allocations will be accompanied by a new Policies Map that will show the sites that are allocated for development and land that will be protected from development.

Together these documents will set the planning approach up to the year 2031. The Local Plan will provide more certainty and guidance for both developers and residents about the location of development, as well as the design and sustainability expectations.

The Land Allocations document will identify the locations for housing, employment, shopping, leisure and open space.

This consultation is about Land Allocations and the Policies Map

To meet new national planning guidance in 2013 the council asked consultants Turley Associates to calculate how many new homes the council should plan to achieve. The consultants recommended that the district should plan for more than 12,000 new homes to be developed by 2031. This is equal to more than 600 new homes every year. This figure is greater than the figure which the council used for the Draft Land Allocations consultation in October 2012.

The council wants to know your views about the consultants recommendations on the overall need for housing in the district up to 2031. You can let us know for whose housing needs you think the council should plan for in the land allocations document.

The council has identified five potential options meet this additional growth. It is important to remember that the five options are in addition to those sites already identified for development by the council.

Please get involved and tell us what you think!

Why bother?

Central government has decided that housing targets must now be set locally. This is done by carrying out a local housing requirements study, known as a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Turley Associates carried out an SHMA for Lancaster District in 2013. The SHMA is based on a review of recent housing and population trends, together with forecasts for household, population and jobs growth. This resulted in the calculation of an objectively assessed housing requirement of more than 12,000 homes in the district between 2011 and 2031. You can see the report at www.lancaster.gov.uk/housingdata.

The implications of identifying less homes include:

- Housing demand will exceed supply (higher prices, hidden households, un-met needs);
- A housing and jobs mis-match (increased commuting, jobs lost to other areas);
- Less affordable housing built (as a percentage of total market housing);
- A high risk that the Land Allocations document will be found unsound at examination;
- A risk that applications to develop housing will be approved at appeal on inappropriate sites, and that infrastructure will not be provided in the most effective and coordinated manner.
How can we meet this need?

Firstly, by encouraging planning proposals for sustainable new housing development.

The new policies document supports the development of new housing. The council will support sustainable housing developments of all sizes which seek to meet the district’s housing needs, providing a range of home types, sizes and tenures and securing the maximum level of affordable homes as a priority. The redevelopment of brownfield land is a priority, but all known available brownfield sites are already “counted” in the supply. We must also recognise that development of green field sites will be necessary.

Secondly, by identifying sufficient land to meet demand and offer a wide choice of high quality homes, including affordable homes.

The council recently published a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which gathers together information on potential housing sites. If there is evidence that a site is ‘available, suitable and achievable’ it is shown in the 2014 SHLAA as a potential housing site.

Mind the gap!

More than 12,000 new homes are needed. The 2014 SHLAA for Lancaster identifies sites with a potential to deliver a total of up to 8,000 homes on more than 100 sites. However, about 3,000 of these homes currently have planning consent. Many of the 2014 SHLAA sites are new and some may not be developable. Therefore the council must identify further sites that could provide for 5,000 new homes in order to close the gap between the overall need for more than 12,000 new homes and the estimated realistic potential for the sites in the 2014 SHLAA to deliver around 7,000 new homes.

Filling the gap

Evidence suggests that opportunities for additional growth in the district are substantially constrained by environmental designations, infrastructure constraints and flood risks, all of which limit the availability of suitable sites for development.

Where do we go?

With so many constraints to development, for example 47% of the district is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), reasonable opportunities for such substantial growth are clearly limited. Whilst every effort has been made by the council to identify sites for development there is clearly still a long way to go to identify sites for the 12,000 new homes needed in the district.

The council has identified five potential options to bridge the gap between the current supply of sites (in the 2014 SHLAA) and the district’s 15 year housing need. These are described in more detail on the following pages.

Isn’t all this land Green Belt?

No, there is a difference between green field land and Green Belt. Green field land is simply land that has not been built on before. Green Belt land is land that has been specifically designated in a local plan with the aim of allowing very little development to happen over a long period of time. The only area of Green Belt in Lancaster district is the area north of Lancaster and Morecambe and south of Carnforth. This was designated in 1991. However, option 2 in this document, suggests the council may have to consider reviewing the boundaries of the Green Belt to find enough land for the new housing.
Option 1: Reviewing the Green Belt

This option would see new homes built on land that is currently in the North Lancashire Green Belt. The Green Belt is the undeveloped land to the north of Lancaster and Morecambe and the south of Carnforth. It was designated in 1991 and it covers 3% of the district. Development of new housing is not normally allowed on green belt land but reviewing this in the context of changing circumstances and growing housing need might mean that some land is used to create opportunities for development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides a single site solution to meeting the need for new homes in the district</td>
<td>Requires the development of much green field land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good connectivity to existing public transport provision and main transport corridors with opportunities for improved infrastructure</td>
<td>Would lead to Lancaster and Galgate paving together if development focuses on south Lancaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to employment provision</td>
<td>Removal of green corridors on the entrance to Lancaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to existing urban areas allows alternative transport by cycle and walking</td>
<td>Would require investment in infrastructure to support new development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential non-designated landscape and local biodiversity impacts</td>
<td>Proximity to employment provision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential non-designated landscape and local biodiversity impacts</td>
<td>Would require investment in highways and highways infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited capacity on the existing road network to support additional growth, especially on the A6 to the south of Lancaster.</td>
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Option 2: Single Large Urban Extension

This option is for a major urban extension to Lancaster. There is potential for growth to the south of the city or possibly elsewhere, for example to the east of the M6 Motorway. Urban extensions to other parts of Lancaster, Morecambe and Carnforth are limited by flood risk, environmental policy designations and existing infrastructure, for example the motorway and railway lines.

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<td>Provides a single site solution to meeting the need for new homes in the district</td>
<td>Requires development of green field land currently protected by Green Belt policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good connectivity to public transport and main transport routes, with opportunities for improved infrastructure</td>
<td>Potential large reduction in the gap between towns and villages in the Green Belt.</td>
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<td>Good connectivity to existing urban areas and communities, potential to connect to utilities for example water, gas and electricity, and, existing services such as shops, education and health care</td>
<td>Would require a strategic policy review. It may be that the review concludes that current green belt areas are not suitable for development.</td>
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<td>Proximity to existing urban areas allows alternative transport by cycle and walking</td>
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<td>Attractive development land likely to have good prospects for development</td>
<td>Requires investment in highways and highways infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growth to the south of the city could offer opportunity to provide a new junction on the A6, relieving congestion in Galgate and improving capacity along the A6.</td>
<td>Limited capacity on the existing road network to support additional growth, especially on the A6 to the south of Lancaster.</td>
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Option 3:

Development throughout the district’s towns and villages

This option would mean that new housing would be distributed throughout the district with development spread across a number of existing villages. All the sustainable villages would be expected to provide substantial areas for new housing. This option would see expansion across most towns and villages in the district.

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<td>Development of green field land</td>
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<td>Faier distribution of growth with all villages accepting significant levels of growth rather than one single settlement accommodating all the growth</td>
<td>Current service and infrastructure provision in villages may be unable to accommodate additional residents without substantial investment and upgrade</td>
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<td>Potential to help sustain local services that may be vulnerable to closure (e.g. local school, post office) due to low population numbers</td>
<td>Potential to lead to unsustainable travel patterns and increased car dependence to access services in urban areas</td>
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<td>Potential enhanced quality of life for residents through improved access to the countryside and rural living</td>
<td>Potential to negatively impact on the character and heritage of villages</td>
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<td>Affordability may remain an issue with higher land values in the rural areas likely to increase the cost of new housing</td>
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Advantages
- Allows much new housing to be built, meeting housing need in the district
- Faier distribution of growth with all villages accepting significant levels of growth rather than one single settlement accommodating all the growth
- Potential to help sustain local services that may be vulnerable to closure (e.g. local school, post office) due to low population numbers
- Potential enhanced quality of life for residents through improved access to the countryside and rural living

Disadvantages
- Development of green field land
- Current service and infrastructure provision in villages may be unable to accommodate additional residents without substantial investment and upgrade
- Potential to lead to unsustainable travel patterns and increased car dependence to access services in urban areas
- Potential to negatively impact on the character and heritage of villages
- Affordability may remain an issue with higher land values in the rural areas likely to increase the cost of new housing

Option 4:

Large-scale expansion of two villages

This option focuses the additional growth on two existing settlements, one to the north and one to the south of the district. Expanding two villages by more than 2,000 new homes each would allow new local service centres to be developed which could also serve the wider rural area. Flood risk, environmental designations and infrastructure concerns limit the number of villages where this level of growth could take place.

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<td>Would allow new housing to be built, meeting housing need in the district</td>
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<td>Potential to improve access to housing for rural communities with new housing provided in villages and rural areas</td>
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<td>Potential to provide sufficient economies of scale to provide improved and new service provision in villages</td>
<td>Potential designated and non-designated landscape and biodiversity impacts</td>
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<td>Would allow new service centres to be developed to serve the wider rural hinterland to the districts north and south</td>
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Advantages
- Would allow new housing to be built, meeting housing need in the district
- Potential to improve access to housing for rural communities with new housing provided in villages and rural areas
- Would help sustain local services that may be vulnerable to closure (e.g. local school, post office) due to low population numbers
- Potential to provide sufficient economies of scale to provide improved and new service provision in villages
- Potential enhanced quality of life for residents through improved access to the countryside and rural living in villages
- Would allow new service centres to be developed to serve the wider rural hinterland to the districts north and south

Disadvantages
- Development of green field land
- Substantial investment and upgrades needed to infrastructure
- Potential to lead to unsustainable travel patterns and increased car dependence to access services in urban areas
- Potential designated and non-designated landscape and biodiversity impacts
- Potential enhanced quality of life for residents through improved access to the countryside and rural living in villages
- Would allow new service centres to be developed to serve the wider rural hinterland to the districts north and south
- Affordability may remain an issue with higher land values in the rural areas likely to increase the cost of new housing

Option 5:

A new settlement

This option would mean a site for a whole new settlement would be identified. It would deliver all the 5,000 new homes as well as supporting new services, shopping and employment opportunities. Flood risk, environmental policy designations and existing infrastructure provision all limiting the opportunities to provide a settlement in the district. Opportunities for a new settlement might be located in the north east of the district.

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<td>Would allow potential economies of scale to support new service and infrastructure provision</td>
<td>Potential to lead to unsustainable travel patterns and increased car dependence to access services in urban areas</td>
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<td>Opportunity to deliver enhanced sustainability due to the potential for “starting with a clean slate” eco-town</td>
<td>Potential non-designated landscapes and biodiversity impacts</td>
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<td>Improved access to services for surrounding area through the provision of a new local service centre</td>
<td>Very limited existing utility and infrastructure provision</td>
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<td>Could provide for further development beyond the year 2031</td>
<td>Poor connectivity to main transport corridors including rail and bus routes leading to increased car dependence</td>
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Advantages
- Would allow new housing to be built, meeting housing need in the district
- Potential to lead to unsustainable travel patterns and increased car dependence to access services in urban areas
- Opportunity to deliver enhanced sustainability due to the potential for “starting with a clean slate” eco-town
- Improved access to services for surrounding area through the provision of a new local service centre
- Could provide for further development beyond the year 2031

Disadvantages
- Development of green field land
- Substantial investment and upgrades needed to infrastructure
- Potential to lead to unsustainable travel patterns and increased car dependence to access services in urban areas
- Potential non-designated landscapes and biodiversity impacts
- Very limited existing utility and infrastructure provision
- Poor connectivity to main transport corridors including rail and bus routes leading to increased car dependence
Alternative Options...?

These are only options, no decisions have been made. We need your help to identify the most appropriate and sustainable option for the district.

There may be alternative options and if so please tell us about them.

It may be that you think options should be combined.

Please get involved and tell us if you think alternative or combined options exist.

What Happens Next?

Your views will help the council to consider how best to meet the future housing and wider development needs of the district. The approach could be to use one of the suggested five options, or it might be a combined option or a new option that comes through this consultation.

Whichever approach is chosen the council will need to carry out more detailed work to make sure that the chosen option is deliverable. We will need to be confident that the land is available for development, that there are no constraints and that the infrastructure and services required to support development can be provided.

The council will be carrying out this work over the summer and autumn of 2014 and may be ready to consult on the conclusions of this through an initial draft Land Allocations document in early 2015.

Please keep up to date with progress on the preparation of the Land Allocations document via our website

www.lancaster.gov.uk/planningpolicy

All the details for letting the council know your views can be found on the first page of this leaflet. Please do take the time to consider why the council needs to plan for growth and development and provide your views on the suggested options. The council values the views of residents and wants to make sure that discussion and debate about the future for the district takes place before choosing an option and moving forward with Land Allocations.
Frequently asked questions

What documents should I look at on the council’s website?
Turley Associates’ Housing Requirement Report (SHMA) describes how the need for new housing has been calculated. The 2014 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) shows the 100 sites already identified which could provide for many of the required new homes. The strategic option for 5,000 homes is in addition to the 100 sites in the SHLAA.

Who will want all these houses?
The SHMA is supported by another document, the Housing Needs Study, undertaken in 2011. The Housing Needs Study uses information from a large scale survey of residents. This confirms that the population is continuing to grow and additional housing is needed to meet the needs of existing and future residents. This includes needs generated by people already working and living in the district, people moving into the district for employment, hidden households (including older children unable to access the housing market and continuing to live with parents), the growing older population, smaller households and the need generated by population growth. The Housing Needs Study helps the council decide what types of housing are needed in different parts of the district.

Couldn’t the council develop empty properties instead of building new houses in the district?
There will always be some empty homes, usually due to the gap between a former owner moving out and a new owner moving in, or because a home is being refurbished. Account has been taken of reducing the number of empty homes in the calculation of new housing need. The council is committed to bringing empty homes back into use and now has a dedicated officer responsible for reducing the number of empty homes in the district. An average of seven empty properties a month are being brought back into use as a direct result of this initiative whilst the owners of many other empty homes are being helped to return these back to use.

What would happen if we didn’t plan for the new housing requirement?
Central government requires councils to deliver the full housing need in their local housing requirements study. Where local authorities fail to do this they are vulnerable to applications being approved at appeal on inappropriate sites and in an uncoordinated and unplanned way.

What about localism and neighbourhood planning?
Neither Localism nor Neighbourhood Planning mean that local communities can decide not to apply national planning policy. They give local communities a power to plan, but alongside that a responsibility to do so in a way that delivers the objectives of national planning policy and the needs identified in the local evidence base. The answer to the question above indicates what happens if a community represented by its council decides not to plan properly. The real choice for this community is whether it wishes to rise to the challenges set by the new evidence of need, and maintain control, or to risk choices about development being taken out of its hands.

Can local services, community facilities and infrastructure support this level of development?
As a chosen option is being firmed up the council will be working with key service and infrastructure providers. This includes education and health providers as well as agencies and organisations responsible for highways and utilities. Development will not be proposed where the infrastructure does not exist or where it could not be provided and/or improved as part of the proposal.

Where can I find the national government guidance on planning?
The National Planning Policy Framework is on the government’s website (www.gov.uk). The Framework sets out planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. It provides guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers, both in drawing up plans and making decisions about planning applications.