

General Report of the meeting held on September 2022

Housing Statement of Common Ground

1. The Executive Leader and Executive Member (Economic Development and Public Service Reform), Councillor Alistair Bradley, presented the report of the Director of Planning and Development.
2. The report provides an update on the evidence and strategic policies for housing for the new Central Lancashire Local Plan and considers the provision of robust highways assessments for planning applications.
3. Councillor Bradley reported that the three Councils of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble are committed to preparation of a joint local plan which will include both strategic and development management policies, for use when determining planning applications. Commissioning housing evidence and preparing an agreed approach to the distribution of housing need is a critical part of the plan-making process.
4. The existing Core Strategy for Central Lancashire includes a shared approach to the distribution of housing and this commitment is ongoing, with a clear expectation that the new Local Plan would redistribute the housing requirement in such a way to reflect local trends, market conditions and signals etc. This was important as it enabled the three Councils to prepare a Local Plan which would meet future local need and be tailored to Central Lancashire as opposed to England as a whole.
5. Housing numbers alone are not a sustainable way to plan and therefore it is important Chorley plans for what it needs and not what national policy dictates. Development in Chorley should be plan-led, informed by robust evidence and an annual requirement which meets local need and is transparent to the community.
6. We noted the impact of the Government 5 Year Housing Land Supply requirement and debated the Government standard method of calculating housing need. This has led to a number of planning consents being granted at appeal on Safeguarded land sites with Chorley Council being deemed by Planning Inspectors as not having a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land supply.
7. These decisions were based on using the Government Standard Method of housing need which for Chorley currently requires 542 new homes to be delivered each year. A 5% buffer is required in the 5 year supply calculation which takes the annual requirement to 569 dwellings. Chorley cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing using this figure.
8. However, if the figure for the emerging Local Plan is used as specified in the agreed Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) Chorley is able to demonstrate a supply of deliverable homes equivalent to at least 5.4 years including a 5% buffer.
9. We discussed the increase in working from home following the pandemic but noted the evidence base for the figures quoted.
10. Moving forwards it is considered that the existence of the SOCG should be a material consideration for making decisions on planning applications as a material consideration for decision making. The weight to be attached to the SOCG in making decisions on planning proposals will be for the Planning Committee on a case by case basis.

11. We debated the supplementary recommendation, with members, including the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Alan Cullens, and Councillor Alan Platt and Alex Hilton, noting
 - Discussions were needed with the new administration at Lancashire County Council (LCC) regarding highways evidence for Planning Committee
 - LCC have faced similar issues to other local authorities in retaining and recruiting staff
 - Chorley do submit a high number of requests for highways evidence to LCC in comparison with other authorities in Lancashire and would, potentially, be willing to pay for this enhanced service
 - LCC would need to be consulted in addition to any independent highways consultants commissioned
 - The need for robust evidence for Planning Committee from other partners was noted

12. Following the debate recommendation 6 was amended to read 'To agree the principle of fixing a budget to fund highways evidence to present to Planning Committee after consultation with LCC Highways'. We noted discussions would take place with LCC and an update would be provided to a future Council meeting.

13. We agreed the recommendations, as amended.
 - i. To note the contents of the Housing Land Monitoring report (Appendix One) including the delivery of 6,544 homes in Chorley during the existing Local Plan Period of 2012- 2026 (taking account of previous undersupply), which represents a surplus of 1,378 homes above the Core Strategy requirement.
 - ii. To note the continued absence of a new national methodology for determining housing need and continued application of the standard method for housing.
 - iii. To acknowledge the emerging local evidence for housing need and to agree the proposed annual and local plan period housing requirement and the distribution across the three Council areas.
 - iv. To endorse the Statement of Common Ground (Appendix Two) which has been signed by the portfolio holders responsible for the Local Plan across the three Councils specifically Councillor Alistair Bradley, Cllr James Flannery, and Cllr David Borrow following endorsement by the Joint Advisory Committee on 25th July 2022.
 - v. To agree that the Statement of Common Ground be agreed by members as the preferred strategic housing policy approach to be published and consulted upon in Preferred Options (which would be proposed to replace Core Strategy Policy one) and (without fettering future planning decisions), should be taken into account as a material consideration in all future planning decisions for housing proposals.
 - vi. To agree the principle of fixing a budget to fund highways evidence to present to Planning Committee after consultation with LCC Highways.

Recommendation

14. To note the report.

Councillor Aaron Beaver
Chair of the General Purposes Committee

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