



Report of	Meeting	Date
Central Lancashire Planning Local Plan Coordinator	Central Lancashire Strategic Planning Joint Advisory Committee	22.11.2022

CENTRAL LANCASHIRE DENSITY STUDY

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. To note contents of this report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

2. Hive Land and Planning were commissioned to undertake a study into the densities delivered across sites in Central Lancashire. The aim of this work is to understand what densities we have delivered, what density zones are relevant across Central Lancashire for considering density levels, and to consider the approach to densities to be set out in policy through the new Local plan.

Confidential report	Yes	No
Please bold as appropriate		

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

3. None, for information only.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

4. To continue with the existing approach. This was rejected as we have no detailed evidence on the density rates delivered across the plan area. We also needed to review the density zones to apply and consider updates to national policy which may affect the densities to be used in the new Local Plan.

Report content

5. The purpose of this Study is to provide an evidence base with which to inform and support assumptions about the capacity of sites proposed to be allocated for residential development through the emerging Central Lancashire Local Plan (CLLP). The Study aims to provide each of the local authorities a means by which to justify the assumptions around the proposed capacity of a site for inclusion as an allocation within the emerging CLLP, based on evidence from sites consented and developed in recent years.
6. To confidently allocate future residential development sites and apply a potential capacity to those sites, an evidence-based review of sites developed within Central Lancashire in recent years was required. Hive Land and Planning were appointed to undertake this work and provide a robust basis upon which estimates of future residential development site capacities can be made.
7. The aim of this work was to provide a level of accuracy for predicting future levels of density to be used when identifying new sites for development. This study therefore provides the Councils with a means by which to justify the proposed capacity of a site, when presenting figures through the Local Plan review process.
8. This study provides a retrospective review of completed sites and factual data on densities that have been delivered or are under construction. This provides an accurate, robust and market facing basis upon which future gross density assumptions can be calculated.

Density Zones

9. The study required that the methodology and approach to this commission defined a number of 'zones' across Central Lancashire which align with existing planning policy designations where possible and display similar typologies (such as the physical built environment, housing market, developer interest, etc.) Each zone typically has residential development which displays similar densities which have been achieved within those areas. The zones were then used by the three councils to identify housing schemes within them to assess actual densities which have been achieved in those areas. The other key consideration in defining the zones was to consider the Core Strategy and proposals maps for each local authority, and in particular the Settlement Hierarchy.
10. Identifying zones for different densities is an approach which is highlighted within section 2b of the recently published National Model Design Code.
11. The study identifies five zones: rural settlements; suburban; inner urban and town centre; Preston city centre; and other (rural), these are set out in detail in Appendix 1. A maximum of 10 sites were identified within each zone for analysis, with a total of 95 sites being reviewed, and focused on residential only sites rather than mixed use or strategic sites. However, the study does look at how the data can be used on strategic allocations.
12. Appendix A to the study entitled Master Schedule provides the details of the sites reviewed and the density rates delivered and includes strategic sites, windfall sites and multiphase residential sites.

Policy Review

13. The study was required to review the existing approach to density in the adopted Core Strategy and Local plans, as well as the requirements set nationally on this to ensure the approach proposed accords with the latest guidance and is fit for purpose.
14. The study also looks at different approaches to calculating density on either a net or gross

basis, with gross density being used in this study. The definitions of both are set out below:

Gross Density: the number of dwellings per hectare of the entire given area, including public infrastructure such as roads, open space and in some instances non-residential development (e.g. schools and shops) and any other infrastructure within the area.

Net Density: measures the number of dwellings per hectare on land devoted solely to residential development. This excludes other features on the site that could be associated with the development, such as public or community infrastructure.

15. The formula used for calculating gross density is set out below:

Number of units (dwellings) / Area of site or defined sub-area (hectares)

Density per hectare (dph)

16. Site-specific information was obtained as well as the site size and yield, such as the affordable provision and total floorspace. This additional data (affordable provision and total floorspace) was collected in order to provide a sense check on the core density data and identify anomalies or data fluctuations.

Data analysis

17. The data collected was presented at both district and Central Lancashire level, with average densities being used for the latter. Table 1 below shows the results for each density zone by council and the Central Lancashire average where available.

Table 1: Summary of key density findings

Density Zone	Chorley Borough Council	South Ribble Borough Council	Preston City Council	Central Lancashire
Rural Settlements (Gross Units/ha)	29	21	29	27
Suburban	27	26	27	27
Inner Urban and Town Centre	42	35	54	40
Preston City Council			477	
Other (Rural)				21

Conclusions

18. Across Central Lancashire the key density findings on a gross net area basis are (dwellings per hectare):

- Rural settlements – 27
- Suburban – 27
- Inner urban and town centre – 40
- Preston city centre – 477
- Other (rural) – 21.

19. The study recommends that the new Local Plan uses the above figures as the basis for starting to calculate densities of sites which fall within the identified zones. The study notes this data is based on what has historically been delivered, as such higher densities may be achievable going forward given the Governments drive to make efficient use of land. The full study can be found in Appendix 2.

Equality and diversity

20. There are no implications from this report, it is a factual review of housing density delivered.

Risk

21. The key risk is lower densities being delivered on sites across Central Lancashire than the Councils would like, meaning we are not making the best use of land and need to allocate more sites to meet our identified housing need. As such the Councils are working to ensure that realistic and deliverable densities are identified in the Local Plan.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

22. There are no financial implications of this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

23. There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
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