The New Local Plan for Wyre

(This presentation was made by Howard Phillips, Vice Chair of Thornton Action Group to a Public meeting organised by TAG on October 4th 2013 at Thornton Methodist Church. The projected figures and opinions contained in this document are entirely the responsibility of the author).

**Timetable**

The New Local Plan for Wyre was planned to extend from 2006 to 2028. This has now been changed to 2011-2030. This is designed to replace the Local Plan of 1991-2006.)

The New Local Plan commenced in 2008 with the publication of The Issues and Options Document which after consultation led to the Preferred Option Document (POD) of April 2012. Consultations on the POD have been analysed but this analysis was never made public.

At about the same time as the publication of the POD, the Government issued new planning guidance in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which meant a radical rethink in the New Local Plan.

Thus the next stage of the New Local Plan – the Pre-Submission Document will not be published until Spring 2014 and it will only be Part I “Strategy and Core Processes”. There will be a Public Hearing on Part I by the Planning Inspector in the Summer of 2015.

The final section (Part II) of the New Local Plan will not be completed until 2017. This will cover “Site Allocations and Development”.

Given the new planning guidance (NPPF) and data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) together with recent studies by Wyre Council of Employment and Land Availability, the Pre-Submission Document (now 2014) is likely to differ markedly from the Preferred Options Document of 2012.

There may be some limited public consultation on certain issues before the Pre-Submission Document is published early in 2014. The Pre-Submission Document will be consulted on but only on matters regarding robustness.

**Status of Current Planning Documents**

The Preferred Options Document carries little weight regarding planning decisions since it is part of the New Local Plan which will not become legal until at least 2015.

The Local Plan of 1991-2006 continues to be effective except where it is out of date. Certain policies are saved from this Plan.
The Area Action Plan which covers Thornton North and Fleetwood Docks has been approved and runs until 2021. This will be extended as part of the New Local Plan to 2030 incorporating policies which are still relevant.

The North West Regional Spatial Strategy which involved Planning for the whole NW Region was revoked in May 2013. Each Local Authority is now responsible for drawing up its own planning requirements.

Thus in the absence of a new Local Plan, an application for development on any land could not be refused if it shown to be sustainable.

Housing

In the Preferred Options Document it was a requirement to build at least 206 dwellings per year up to 2028.

The new NPPF guidelines requires that housing needs for the period 2011-2030 for each Local Authority (LA) are “objectively assessed”. The means that the figures from the ONS which predict the number of households in each LA have to be taken into account in allocating land available for housing in the Local Plan.

The data from the ONS indicate that the number of households in Wyre will rise by 8000 between 2013 and 2028 i.e. at a rate of 533 per year. This is a result of people living longer and occupying houses which are not available for younger people wishing to buy or rent a house. About 60% of the new households come into this category. The remainder is accounted for by people moving out from Blackpool or Preston or further afield as the demand for dwellings increases in these areas.

Wyre Council Planners have suggested that the requirement shown by the ONS is 340 dwellings per year between 2014 and 2030, but with the pleading of special circumstances (unspecified), this might be reduced.

Whatever the final figure, the Pre-Submission Document will need to cater for a considerable number of houses additional to that proposed in the Preferred Options Document (POD).

The POD indicated a minimum of 5150 additional houses in Wyre by 2028. Using a requirement of 340 per year, results in 8016 new houses. Thus the number over and above the existing plans amounts to 2866.

Where will the land for this additional housing in Wyre be found?

How will land be allocated for housing between the different communities?

Will land be allocated on the basis of present day population?
Will land be allocated on the basis of housing land availability?

The SHLAA Study (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) published in 2010 identifies the land available for housing. A revised version is planned for the end of October 2013.

In this study Thornton has 25% of the available land, Poulton 39%, Garstang 11%, Fleetwood 9% and Cleveleys 2%.

Using the rate of 340 houses per year, 2866 houses need to be built in Wyre up to 2030 additional to those already identified in the Preferred Options Document.

If land is allocated for this housing according to the availability of land in the SHLAA then Thornton will have 25% which equals 717. Added to the 900 already allocated in the POD gives 1617 extra houses in Thornton by 2030.

Which land in/adjacent to Thornton will be shown as available for 1617 houses in the Pre-Submission Document?

Some of/ much of/ all of the land identified in the SHLAA?
Fig 1 shows the allocation of land in and around Thornton as planned in the Preferred Option Document of 2012. The brown shaded area is for 800 houses on the old ICI land off Bourne Road. The purple shaded area is allocated for employment land. The light green area is classified as Green Belt designed to keep the communities separate so that they do not merge together in one urban sprawl. The dark green area between Lamb’s Hill and Stanah is classified as Countryside.

Fig 2 shows in pink the land identified as available for housing in Thornton in the SHLAA of 2010. There are small pockets of land within the built up area but the vast majority of the land occurs on the edge of Thornton to the north and to the south east.
**Fig 3** shows the SHLAA land on the northern edge of Thornton. The Bourne Road site (where Hawley Gardens is now being developed) has space for 436 dwellings, which is a considerable reduction from the 800 proposed in the Preferred Options Document. Poolfoot Farm has space for 239 dwellings, Fleetwood Road North 107, and Bourne Hill 163 (see Fig 4). Finally land on the northern part of the Hillhouse site could be used for 400 dwellings provided a new link road is built over the railway from Fleetwood Road North.
Fig 5 shows the land to the South East of Thornton which is classed as Countryside Area by Wyre Planners. 428 houses could be built on Lamb’s Hill and a further 473 between Raikes Road and Underbank Road, a total of 901 houses.

The SHLAA Study 2010 identifies land for a total of 2750 dwellings in and adjacent to Thornton. Some of these are unlikely to be available e.g. NPL wish to use the Poolfoot fields for football pitches for Thornton-Cleveleys FC and for training pitches for Fleetwood Town. These sites add up to 312 houses. If the Countryside Area is excluded (901 houses) then Thornton has room for 1537 houses. However, land for 1617 is needed.

The conclusion is that at least some of the Countryside Area will be developed for housing. How much depends on developing all the available land identified in the SHLAA including the 400 on the Hillhouse site.
other communities sharing the number of new houses according to the SHLAA figures. For example 39% of the SHLAA land is in or adjacent to Poulton which would mean that Poulton would need to accommodate 2523 extra houses. The major areas of SHLAA land in Poulton (see Fig 6) are to the East (1268 houses) and South East (2488 houses).

Figure 6

SHLAA 2012 Poulton East
**Affordable Houses**

The Fylde Coast Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) states that the need in Wyre is for **590 affordable houses per year**.

Wyre Council’s objective is to achieve 50–60 per year. In 2012 the figure was 19, in 2011 the figure was 90.

Affordable houses are funded in two ways.

By insisting that developers build a percentage of affordable homes as part of their housing development. The percentage in Wyre is now 30% for any development of over 15 houses. However, this figure is often negotiated down by the developer e.g. Hawley Gardens has 10% of affordable homes.

Money is also provided to Housing Associations by the Government through the Homes and Community Agency. The amount given has recently been reduced to 60% of what was previously allocated.

**Employment Land**

The amount of land for employment use in Wyre is to be reduced in the Local Plan to 70 hectares.

Thornton has 42.5 ha of this land (including 13.5 for the Wyre Power Station).

With less employment land where will the jobs for the additional population be created?

The Local Plan proposes to create jobs according to the needs of the population but does not say where.

At present out of a workforce in Wyre of 40,000, half i.e. 20,000 people commute to work outside the Borough. A further 10,000 commute into Wyre for work.

**Open Spaces**

With at least 1617 houses needing to be built there will be loss of Open Space in Thornton.
The Planners intend to protect the Green Belt which separates Thornton from Fleetwood in the north and from Poulton/Carleton in the south, from development.

A stronger new Countryside Policy will be introduced to protect the land which is classified as countryside but this will not necessarily apply to those areas identified as Countryside Areas in the Preferred Options Document. Some of these areas will be declassified and will be available for development.

Figure 1 shows the Green Belt to the north and south of Thornton which it is intended to preserve and the Countryside Area which is under threat.

Figure 7 shows the Green Belt land south of Victoria Road in Thornton.

Howard Phillips 4th October 2013