

## WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Local Plan Review – Preferred Options

#### CONSULTATION

#### CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIC POLICIES

##### POLICY SP8: Land to the south-east of Ormskirk and Aughton

Aughton Parish Council, at its meeting on 12 November 2018, reviewed the WLBC Local Plan Review: Preferred Options document. Representatives of Aughton Parish Council had attended a consultation event with WLBC officers on 7 November 2018 where we queried the Preferred Options and raised our concerns.

During the meeting and before we considered this Agenda Item, we received a presentation from Councillor John Hodson, WLBC Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, during Public Question Time which was attended by approximately 80 local residents who engaged in a lively but well mannered Question & Answer session with Councillor Hodson. There were many objections to the proposals in the Preferred Options from local residents with very little support.

Following Public Question Time, Aughton Parish Council debated the Preferred Options as an Agenda Item and after consideration of the proposals and the overwhelming views of local residents who objected to the Preferred Options, Aughton Parish Council agreed unanimously to object to the Preferred Options.

The view of Aughton Parish Council was that if the current Local Plan had to be fundamentally reviewed in the light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which we did not necessarily accept, any development should take place in Skelmersdale within its existing settlement boundaries. We did not see the need for 2,000 new homes in Ormskirk and Aughton. Any further encroachment into Green Belt was not justified. Housing targets were being met under the existing Local Plan which had been recently successfully defended in the Courts. There was no justification for the 3 Garden Villages proposed to the West and South-West of Skelmersdale which would create urban sprawl and unjustified loss of Green Belt, fundamentally and irrevocably blighting the rural aspect of West Lancashire.

In particular, members took the following into account:

- To bring forward 2 sites off Parrs Lane, would detrimentally affect the character of Aughton from a rural Parish, resulting in urban sprawl. The current safeguarded site off Parrs Lane (WLLP 2012-2027 which is not out of date at this point in time) is the Green Belt boundary in that location. To introduce an additional site, releasing more Green Belt land would further reduce the 'green space' between West Lancashire & Merseyside. The inclusion of the South of Parrs Lane site would detrimentally affect the character and appearance of the stunning Grade II Listed Building of Moor Hall which is set in some 5 acres of gardens. It is surrounded by open fields – Grade I agricultural farmland which is visited annually by large numbers of migratory geese. Any development in close proximity to this stunning special building would detrimentally affect 'the openness' and permanently harm its character and setting.

- Unjustified evidence to release Green Belt land.

Aughton Parish Council does not believe that there are any exceptional circumstances to take up the Green Belt land in Aughton and that all other options have been explored as they are obliged to identify in the National Planning Policy Framework Green Belt Policy and we quote NPPF Chapter 13: ‘Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development.

- No justification for a 30 year Plan – the Preferred Options Document is supposed to be a Review of the current Local Plan 2012-2027 – a more realistic timescale, ie 15 years would produce more realistic numbers.
- Housing need will fall in light of new household projections (ONS intelligence 20 September 2018):

Source – Household Projections in England: 2016 based  
National Statistics Office (NSO) September 2018

Region	2016 Households	2041 Households	Change in Households
West Lancs	46,221	49,030	+2,809
Sefton	119,474	129,098	9,624
Liverpool	216,269	253,680	37,411

Students at Edge Hill University

2015	16,170
2017	15,220
Decline	950

The Preferred Options document states that WLBC needs 15,992 dwellings by 2050 whereas the NSO published recently estimate by 2041 household growth in West Lancashire would only be 2,809 dwellings in contrast to many other local authorities.

- Lack of evidence to justify the need for 16,000 new dwellings by 2050. No justification to ‘overplan’.
- The NPPF ‘Duty to Co-operate with Neighbouring Authorities’ is unjustified given these authorities have not, as far as we are aware, approached WLBC for co-operation and have made provision in their own Local Plans for their housing needs.
- The proposals for Aughton would involve the loss of a significant area of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land even double the area referred to in the Planning Inspectorate’s Appeal Decision of 22 March 2018 in respect of Land to the North-West of Parris Lane (refer to Inspector’s conclusions in the Appeal Decision which included: ‘It would involve the loss of a significant area of BMV agricultural land and conflicts with Policy EN2’).

- Aughton Parish Council noted the proposed provision of new and improved highway links connecting the B5197 Prescott Road to the A570 St Helens Road (at the junction with the University's Eastern entrance) to enable better access for the proposed residential developments to the strategic highway network.

There was no identification of exact route of the road but the significant loss of Green Belt land between Ormskirk & Aughton would be totally incompatible/inappropriate, creating a severe unacceptable impact on Aughton's minor road network (refer NPPF.P109). No very special circumstances were justified that outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt.

- Infrastructure Issues – the Preferred Options do not state how provision for additional hospitals, GP provision, schools, roads, utilities, Merseyrail parking would be catered for.
- Aughton has considerable drainage and traffic problems in Prescott Road/Town Green Lane which would be severely exacerbated by any further development in this vicinity. Long Lane cannot cope with existing traffic volumes with 'speeding' a major issue. Parking around Aughton Park Station is now becoming a significant problem.
- Build a new town for the Skelmersdale shortfall in numbers. The original population figures have still not been reached.
- Subsequent to our meeting Aughton Parish Council was concerned about some of the population figures and other data quoted in the West Lancashire Local Plan Review: Preferred Options and, as a result, supported the financing of the CPRE Demographic appraisal by a fully qualified Demographer '**West Lancashire Local Plan Review – Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) – Demographic Appraisal on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, Lancashire by Piers Elias (Independent Demographer) dated December 2018.** From his report it is obvious that there are many assumptions in the Local Plan that he sees as being incorrect or flawed. The main issue is that projections out to 2050 are most likely to be incorrect and overestimated. This supports the Parish Council viewpoint that prime agricultural Green Belt land in Aughton should not be released for development. This land would be sold to any developer at a high value in Aughton, and as a result, it is unlikely to result in affordable housing being built. As the Demographer confirms 'The Local Plan should be targeting smaller sites and lower value properties that will have the effect of lowering the affordability ratio. Building higher value properties in greater numbers will not help'. Land in Skelmersdale is more suitable for affordable housing.

In conclusion, Aughton Parish Council would therefore reject the Preferred Options for the current Local Plan Review SP8 development for Aughton, ie

- To the North-West of Parrs Lane (circa 400 dwellings)
- To the South of Parrs Lane (circa 500 dwellings)
- Green Belt land off Altys Lane, Ormskirk but within the Parish Boundary of Aughton
- To the highway links road provision connecting the B5197 to A570 St Helens Road
- Aughton Parish Council suggests that any revised proposals should be based on all future development taking place in Skelmersdale.

**To view the consultation response from CPRE Lancashire plus the independent expert Demographer's Report, commissioned by CPRE to progress a critical review of the housing evidence base of the Local Plan - shared funding contributions from 2 West Lancashire residents groups and 10 Parish Councils:**

**Aughton Parish Council  
Bickerstaffe Parish Council  
Burscough Parish Council  
Dalton Parish Council  
Hesketh with Becconsall Parish Council  
Lathom South Parish Council  
Newburgh Parish Council  
Parbold Parish Council  
Rufford Parish Council  
Scarisbrick Parish Council**

**View the link:**

**[www.cprelancashire.org.uk/news/current-news/item/2510-west-lancashires-local-plan-preferred-options-flawed-evidence](http://www.cprelancashire.org.uk/news/current-news/item/2510-west-lancashires-local-plan-preferred-options-flawed-evidence)**