3. SPATIAL STRATEGY – A BALANCED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Key issue:
Is the Spatial Strategy soundly based, effective and deliverable, appropriate for Hyndburn, supported by a robust and credible evidence base, and consistent with national policy?

3.1 Balanced Development Strategy

a. Is the Spatial Strategy clearly expressed and soundly based on a robust, credible and up-to-date evidence base, consistent with national planning policy and aligned with the strategies, priorities and projects of adjoining areas and other agencies (e.g. Pennine Lancashire Multi-Area/Local Area Agreements/Spatial Strategy etc, Blackburn with Darwen Core Strategy, housing renewal programmes, and other relevant strategies)?

Yes, the Balanced Development Strategy is clearly expressed and soundly based on a robust, credible and up to date evidence base that is consistent with national, regional and local priorities and objectives.

The Core Strategy includes references to the evidence base where appropriate. Regenerate Pennine Lancashire has produced a variety of sub-regional policy documents that seek to articulate the issues that face Pennine Lancashire and propose policy solutions. Particular reference has been made to the Integrated Economic Strategy for Pennine Lancashire and the Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy also seeks to address the relevant objectives of the Multi Area Agreement and makes particular reference to the need for strategic employment sites and increased choice of housing as well as particular initiatives such as the Todmorden Curve rail improvement. These documents are referenced throughout the Core Strategy and the Topic Papers that the Council has prepared.

The Council believe that whilst the Core Strategy is consistent with national and regional planning policy, it also seeks to reflect local circumstances and the desires of local people.

b. Is the Balanced Development Strategy the most appropriate and sustainable option for Hyndburn when considered against reasonable alternatives?

Yes, the Council believe that the Balanced Development Strategy is the most appropriate and sustainable option for Hyndburn when considered against reasonable alternatives. The development of the Balanced Development Strategy was influenced by a variety of factors including existing patterns of development, the presence of existing planning constraints such as Green Belt, national policy considerations, regional and sub-regional policy considerations, local policy, local issues and priorities.
At the start of the development of the Core Strategy, a number of workshops (in late 2005) were held to help establish the key issues affecting the Borough and ideas on how these could be tackled. The workshops also established the things that people valued in Hyndburn. This resulted in the publication of a discussion document published in May 2006 summarising the main issues and opportunities and suggesting a number of options regarding the future of housing, employment, travel, shopping and town centres, the environment, recreation and health issues. A variety of different strategies were also considered based on the following:

a) Concentrating on housing market renewal  
b) Keeping new building within towns  
c) Focusing on jobs  
d) Concentrating growth in one place  
e) A place to live in  
f) Letting developers take the lead.

The document also suggested a future vision for Hyndburn and strategic objectives to implement the vision. Consultation established that none of the different strategies on their own would be suitable as a way of realising the vision for the future development of the Borough. The general consensus was that a combination of housing market renewal, keeping new buildings within towns, focusing on jobs and a place to live would deliver the vision. Given the range of issues within the Borough, concentration on one particular theme could result in other issues being neglected – hence the need for a Balanced Development Strategy.

This, together with the publication of the Hyndburn Local Strategic Partnership’s Sustainable Community Strategy guided the preparation of the first draft of the Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy has been subject to a rigorous sustainability appraisal throughout its development and the comments arising from this process have helped to shape the document, including the selection of the Preferred Option.

c. Should the Balanced Development Strategy be set out in the form of an over-arching strategic policy to provide the context for the thematic policies which follow?

Throughout the development of the Core Strategy the Council engaged with the Government Office for the North West. Although the need to express the balanced development strategy was not raised through consultation on the Core Strategy, the Council recognise that its expression through an over-arching strategic policy would help to guide the development of later development plan documents and supplementary planning documents.

The Council has prepared a revised “policy” version of the Balanced Development Strategy that seeks to achieve this. Consultation on this will take place following completion of the examination.
d. Does the Balanced Development Strategy give sufficient strategic guidance and spatial direction about the scale, location, timing and implementation of new development, in order to guide subsequent Development Plan Documents and development decisions?

Yes, the Council believes that sufficient strategic guidance and spatial direction is provided by the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy provides an indication of the number of new houses to be developed over the period of the Strategy and the distribution of housing between Accrington, Great Harwood and Rishton. Given the size of the Borough and the number and location of housing proposed the Council do not consider that it is necessary to introduce a phasing policy for housing development. Work has been undertaken on the supply of housing sites and the Council is satisfied that there is sufficient land to meet the housing needs of Rishton, Great Harwood and Accrington and its townships. The Council has prepared a Topic Paper on Housing that provides more detail on housing issues in Hyndburn and the approach that has been taken in the Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy provides sufficient land to meet the employment land needs of the Borough over the period of the Strategy. The Core Strategy recognises the strategic role that Hyndburn may play in the future through the provision of strategic employment sites that would serve a wider geographic area. The Core Strategy contains information on the anticipated time frame for the development of strategic sites and their infrastructure requirements. The Core Strategy also provides policy guidance on how existing employment sites should be treated by later development plan documents, seeking to protect better quality sites. The Council has prepared a Topic Paper on the Economy that provides further information on the approach taken by the Core Strategy on economy and employment issues.

e. Are the main elements of the Balanced Development Strategy justified, effective, deliverable and soundly based, particularly in terms of providing the proposed amount of housing and employment development, and recognising the environmental, physical and traffic/transport constraints to development?

Yes, the Council believe the main elements of the Balanced Development Strategy are justified, effective, deliverable and soundly based. Details relating to the development of housing and employment land are addressed in more detail later in this paper.

In considering the future supply of land resources the Council has had regard to the quantity of land required to meet the aims of the strategy and has also considered potential constraints to development. This is evidenced through the work undertaken on the housing supply (SHLAA) and employment land supply (Employment Land Study). A significant amount of work has also been undertaken on the strategic sites and this work has not identified any constraints to development that cannot be addressed through the application of sound planning principles.

f. Does the Spatial Strategy appropriately reflect the Vision and Strategic Objectives and adequately address cross-boundary issues?
Yes, the Council believe that the Spatial Strategy reflects the Vision and Strategic Objectives where it is possible to do so. The Council do not believe that it is necessarily possible to clearly articulate some of the strategic objectives (for example those relating to health) of the Core Strategy solely through the use of a spatial expression of those objectives. The Spatial Strategy lends itself better to more traditional land uses such as housing and employment land.

The Spatial Strategy adequately addresses cross boundary issues. Many of these are articulated at the Pennine Lancashire level in various documents (e.g. Multi Area Agreement, Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy, etc) which form part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy and have been submitted as supporting documents. Spatial elements of these are articulated in the Balanced Development Strategy e.g. the strategic employment sites at Whitebirk and Huncoat which will help provide higher value job opportunities in accessible locations; the development of the Huncoat colliery site for high quality housing (in pursuit of a more balanced housing market); focussing investment and improvement in key regeneration areas; improving connectivity between Pennine Lancashire and Greater Manchester.

g. Is the Spatial Strategy sufficiently flexible to respond to a variety of unexpected or changing circumstances in the future?

Yes, the Council believes that the Spatial Strategy is sufficiently flexible to respond to a variety of changing circumstances.

The Council has sought to build flexibility into the Core Strategy through the following measures:

- Ensuring that there is a sufficient quantity of land that is available for the development of housing, employment and other uses, thus providing a good choice for developers and not being over-reliant on one option;
- Not including any requirement to phase new development or to development on brownfield sites or regeneration areas first;
- Working with developers and land owners on the strategic sites;
- Recognising that viability is an issue and seeking to avoid placing unacceptable burdens on developers.

Despite the language used in the Draft NPPF, the Council believe that the role of the planning system is to facilitate the development that is needed within an area. The planning system itself does not develop houses or business development, it is the private sector that delivers the majority of these and it is important to recognise this.

h. Does the Key Diagram properly illustrate the main elements of the Spatial Strategy, including the future pattern of development (including proposed employment and housing development), the hierarchy/role of centres and the general extent of, and changes to, the Green Belt boundary?

Yes, the Key Diagram illustrates the main elements of the Spatial Strategy including proposed employment and housing sites. When preparing the Key Diagram the Council
were mindful of the need to ensure that it was not over-complicated or cluttered. It therefore seeks to illustrate the strategic elements of the Core Strategy. Excerpts from the Key Diagram are included within those sections of the Core Strategy that concern the spatial components that have been identified.

The text of the Core Strategy clearly indicates that the general extent of the Green Belt will remain unchanged with four locally important changes at Huncoat (2), Altham Business Park and Oswaldtwistle. The Site Allocations DPD will annotate the boundaries of the Green Belt. If the Inspector believes that the Key Diagram would benefit from an additional layer that indicates the general extent of the Green Belt the Council would have no objection to including this.

The Key Diagram illustrates the general location of town centres in the Borough. The text of the Core Strategy provides more detail on the hierarchy/role of the town centres.