7. AREA BASED POLICIES

A. ACCRINGTON AND TOWNSHIPS

a. Amount & Distribution of Housing in Accrington (Policy A1)

i. Is the amount and proportion of new housing development to be developed within Accrington and its townships appropriate, soundly based, deliverable and justified with evidence (including the SHLAA & East Accrington SPD)?

The derivation of the overall housing figure is explained at 5.1a. The response to matter 5.1c sets out how the proportion of housing for the spatial areas has been derived. The Housing Topic Paper provides background to the housing policies.

In line with the Balanced Development Strategy (proposed policy BD1 submitted by the Council after submission) states at part a) “the existing settlement pattern and hierarchy of centres will be maintained by concentrating development within the urban areas and in centres of a scale and type appropriate to their role. Accrington and its townships will accommodate the majority of new development…”. The Council believe that the Balanced Development Strategy is sound as discussed at matter 3.

Policy A1 provides further development of this in relation to housing and states that 75% of new housing will be developed within the main urban area of Accrington and its townships. Based on an overall requirement of about 3,200 dwellings as set out in 5.1a, this amounts to 2,400 dwellings over the 15 year plan period.

The Council consider that this approach is sound. Accrington and its townships form the largest urban area within the borough and contains an extensive range of services and social and physical infrastructure which are readily accessible to the Borough’s population. Just over three quarters of the Borough’s population live within this urban area. The area also contains the regeneration areas of Blackburn Road, Woodnook and Burnley Road. Accrington and its townships offer the most potential for accommodating new housing without the need to amend Green Belt Boundaries (the exception is the former colliery site at Huncoat which is explained in detail at matter 7e.

The Council also consider that the proportion and amount of housing set out under A1 is deliverable and justified with evidence. The SHLAA (CS_Supp3.13) indicates that the majority of potential housing sites are within Accrington and its townships. There is potential to meet 75% of the overall dwelling requirement and the sites are deliverable in the plan period (see table at 3.22 of the Housing Topic Paper). More recent work, referred to at 3.23 of the Housing Topic Paper reaffirms that this proportion can be met. Dwellings not yet constructed on sites which already have planning permission also make a contribution to future supply. At 31st March 2011, there were 429 dwellings outstanding. The majority of these are in Accrington and its townships (approximately 90%).
The identification of specific sites to meet the housing requirements in accordance with spatial distribution set out in policies A1, GH2 and R1 will form part of the Site Allocations DPD.

The Woodnook and Burnley Road areas are covered in the East Accrington SPD (CS_Supp3.26). Both lie within the Accrington main urban area to which policy A1 relates and are included within the former Housing Market Renewal Area. A key housing objective for these areas is to diversify the housing offer in the wider context of regeneration. Whilst the strategic framework (part 6 of the SPD) focuses on rejuvenation and restructuring of housing it also identifies potential development sites including residential sites which could be developed for housing or include housing as part of a mixed use scheme. These sites (Volvo Garage and Pioneer Street are included in the SHLAA) and some are taken forward in the Accrington AAP. The plans also include sites which have the potential for clearance of old housing stock and redevelopment for residential purposes. However as the overall housing provision figure is net rather than gross, these sites would only contribute if there was a net gain in the number of houses. It is considered that policy A1 is consistent with the SPD.

b. Accrington Town Centre (Policy A2)

i. Is the policy for Accrington town centre, including its role and status in the hierarchy and the focus for new retail and office development, appropriate, soundly based, deliverable and justified with evidence?

The Balanced Development Strategy (expressed as proposed policy BD1) states at b) that “Accrington Town centre will be the principal centre and will provide for the Borough's key services, retail and town centre needs.” Policy A2 reflects Accrington’s role as the principal centre in the Borough.

The Hyndburn Local Plan identifies Accrington as the main centre in the Borough and prior to its demise, the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan identified Accrington in the Lancashire retail hierarchy. Evidence from the Retail Study (CS_Supp3.11) shows that Accrington provides a wide range of goods and services to a wide catchment area and that it is the principal town centre in the Borough. More recent surveys have confirmed the town centre hierarchy. This is discussed at matter 4.3.

Policy A2 seeks to focus new convenience and comparison retail development and office development in the town centre. The policies of the Accrington AAP seek to develop the more detailed policy framework for the town centre to strengthen and enhance its role.

The policy reflects the spatial element of wider policies and strategies which seek to regenerate and strengthen the town centre such as the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Hyndburn Regeneration and Economic Strategy (CS_Supp3.9).

The Council considers that this approach is sound.
c. Local Centres in Accrington (Policy A3)

i. Is the role and status of local centres in Accrington appropriate, soundly based and justified with evidence?

Policy A3 identifies Clayton le Moors and Oswaldtwistle as local centres which will be developed for a range of services to support their local communities.

These centres have developed historically to include a range of shops and services, such as doctors surgeries and libraries which provide for the needs of their local communities. Based on the range of services available they correspond most closely to the definition of district centres in as defined in Annex B of PPS4. They are referred to as local centres in the Core Strategy. As such they form part of the retail hierarchy with other local centres of Rishton.

More detailed policies including the identification of centre boundaries will be developed in the Site Allocations and Development Management DPDs.

d. Brookside Business Centre (Policy A5)

i. What are the exceptional circumstances justifying removal of land from the Green Belt and the impact on the purposes of the Green Belt?

The Council has prepared a Topic Paper on Green Belt issues. Much of the text below is taken from the Green Belt Topic Paper. A summary of the response to this question is contained in the table at the end of the Council’s response.

Current national planning guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts (1995) states that the fundamental purpose of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

“to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness. Green Belts can shape patterns of urban development at sub-regional and regional scale, and help to ensure that development occurs in locations allocated in development plans. They help to protect the countryside, be it in agricultural, forestry or other use. They can assist in moving towards more sustainable patterns of urban development”.

One of the purposes of including land in the Green Belt is to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. The Core Strategy recognises that the majority of land needed to accommodate the level of development that is proposed can be met from the use or development of sites already within the urban area. However, there are a few instances where this is not possible and where it is proposed to develop on land that is currently within the Green Belt, Brookside Business Centre being one.
The Brookside Business Centre is located on land on the edge of Oswaldtwistle. Beyond the boundary of the established Business Centre and beyond the established urban boundary, in the Green Belt, an area of approximately 7.96 ha was used for the manufacture of chemicals. This site became known by the name of the chemical manufacturers as either the “Nipa” site or the “Clariant” site. Clariant UK Ltd closed the plant in 2006 with the loss of 40 jobs, however, the site has been owned and operated by a variety of company’s. Nipa laboratories operated the site for a long period and during their time in Oswaldtwistle there were two leaks of acid gas which resulted in the company being prosecuted. The site was later taken over by Cocker Chemicals before Clariant UK Ltd took over.

Although since the closure of the plant in 2006 the majority of the buildings have been removed, there remains in place an extensive concrete hard standing and some buildings near the site entrance off Nook Lane. The Hazardous Substances Consent (HSC), which was in force on this site (Application No. PR/03/0007), allowed for the storage of 50 tonnes of Para chologophenyl isocyanate, 154.6 tonnes of Benzl chloride, 685 tonnes Benzoisothiazoline and 166 tonnes of Perchloroethylene. Due to the existence of the HSC, the site was a Notification Site under the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations 1999. The oval shaped Consultation Zone relating to this Notification extends 800 metres to the north, 493 metres to the east, 373 metres to the south and 338 metres to the west from the centre of the site.

The site comprises a large previously developed site (illustrated by the photograph in Figure 4), on the edge of the urban area, but in the Green Belt. Although the buildings have been removed, the site continues to blight Oswaldtwistle, a situation that will only be resolved through the comprehensive redevelopment of the area. There is a narrow strip of land between the former chemicals site and the urban area. This area has been used for the storage of materials in connection with the adjoining premises (formerly Joseph Metcalfes) that until recently was used for the manufacture of soil enhancers, fertilizers and other horticultural products.

In 2010, a consortium of developers worked with the Council towards the development of a mixed use scheme for the site and the adjacent mill building. The scheme was based around the development of a Sustainable Construction Centre for Accrington and Rossendale College, supported by sustainable housing and employment development. The Centre would have provided a show-case for the development of low carbon housing as well as a centre of excellence for the college in design and construction. The proposed scheme also provided for the development of a Country Park on adjacent countryside. The Country Park would have formed an integral part of the scheme and would have provided a valuable rural recreational resource to local residents and visitors.

Part (b) of Policy A5 of the Core Strategy states:

*The development of a Sustainable Construction Centre and Country Park would be supported in this area provided that its development is guided by a Development Supplementary Planning Document that has been prepared in consultation with the local community and statutory consultees. A change to the Green Belt boundary to include the*

---

1 During this time 2000 local residents were advised to stay indoors by the Police. The company were fined £21,900 and £75,000 in fines and costs.
site of the former Clariant Chemicals works would only be supported in connection with this scheme.

The supporting text of the Core Strategy explains that a high quality scheme, potentially of sub-regional importance, could be taken forward at the site. The Green Belt boundary would only be changed to accommodate a mixed use scheme of the type described in the Core Strategy, subject to the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) prepared in consultation with local residents. Modification of the Green Belt boundary in this location would bring a number of benefits:

- A major brownfield (previously developed) site would be incorporated into the urban area. Inclusion of the site within the urban area, allowing potential development, is the only foreseeable way in which a large area of contaminated land could be remediated and returned to a beneficial afteruse.
- The policy framework proposed also seeks to maximise the value of the adjacent rural area which would remain in the Green Belt.

The proposed policy framework would not erode the purposes of the Green Belt and would further the objectives of retaining adjacent land in the Green Belt, as set out in the summary at 3.16. At present, progress of the scheme for the site currently appears to have stalled due to a number of reasons:

- Reductions in Government funding for education, affecting the ability of the college to invest in a sustainable construction centre.
- Issues concerning the purchase and development of the site by the entrepreneur backing the scheme.

Notwithstanding these setbacks, it is still considered that the principles behind the scheme are sound and for this reason the Council are continuing to recommend that the boundary of the Green Belt is redrawn to provide for the exclusion of the Nipa/Clariant Site.

In relation to the Draft National Planning Policy Framework (Draft NPPF) the Council note that although development on previously developed land is already permissible if the site is identified in the local plan as a major developed site, it is proposed to extend this policy to similar sites not already identified in a local plan. If this approach is adopted, it would presumably mean that very special circumstances would no longer need to be demonstrated. The former Nipa/Clariant site is a good example of where there would be potential environmental benefits associated with taking a less restrictive approach provided the redevelopment of the site is properly planned as proposed.

Summary – Assessment of Impact on purposes of Green Belt and Very Special Circumstances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact on Green Belt – Brookside Business Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Purposes of the Green Belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposed change will serve to encompass an area of land that has been developed in the past and which has the appearance of a derelict site in the urban area. Inclusion of this area in the Green Belt in accordance with the policies of the Core Strategy will help prevent the unrestricted sprawl of the urban area by ensuring that the area is properly planned with the local community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| B | **to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another**  
The site is a sufficient distance from the built up area of Blackburn to prevent Accrington/Oswaldtwistle from merging with its larger neighbour. |
| C | **to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment**  
The previously developed site is present and is bounded by the countryside. The Core Strategy seeks a variety of improvements to neighbouring countryside as part of the potential development of this area, helping to safeguard the countryside from future encroachment. |
| D | **to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns**  
The presence of a large area of previously developed land that is contaminated does little for the setting or character of Oswaldtwistle. The development of the area would not only preserve, but significantly improve the setting and special character of Oswaldtwistle. |
| E | **to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.**  
The development of this site would clearly assist in achieving urban regeneration and assist in the recycling of a large area of derelict land. |

2. **The Objectives of the Green Belt**

| A | **to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population**  
The policy framework for this site seeks to positively improve opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population through the development of a country park. |
| B | **to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas**  
The policy framework proposed by the Core Strategy would provide significant new opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation near the urban area. |
| C | **to retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live**  
The development and improvement of this site would represent a significant improvement to the landscape near to where people live. |
| D | **to improve damaged and derelict land around towns**  
 Alteration of the boundary of the Green Belt in this area would allow a large area of derelict and contaminated land to be improved. This would not only make a significant difference to the physical appearance of the site, but also provide an opportunity for an on-going risk of pollution to be properly assessed and addressed. |
| E | **to secure nature conservation interest**  
The development of the country park would help ensure nature conservation interests in the area are protected and enhanced. There are a number of areas within the area of the potential country park that are designated Biological Heritage Sites. |
| F | **to retain land in agriculture, forestry and related uses**  
The proposed modification of the Green Belt boundary would assist the positive management of neighbouring land through the development of the country park. This may include the development of areas for forestry or equestrian use. |

3. **Very Special Circumstances**
Inclusion of this area of previously developed land within the urban area would bring a number of significant environmental and economic improvements:

- It would allow a large area of previously developed land to be utilised and developed to the benefit of the community
- It would provide for the visual appearance of the land to be significantly improved and the blight associated with it removed
- It would allow a potential pollution hazard to be addressed
- It would provide for the improvement of neighbouring rural areas and their development as a country park for the benefit of the community.

Are there any serious constraints which may adversely affect the delivery of this proposal, such as the implications of the former Chemical Works, HSC & COMAH Orders/Hazardous Substance Consent and land contamination issues?

It is likely that the site is contaminated by a variety of chemical substances, however, the extent or severity of contamination is not known. Redevelopment of the site must be accompanied by an appropriate remediation scheme that would return the site to a condition fit for the proposed afteruse. Given the scale of the potential redevelopment, an Environmental Impact Assessment may be required to be undertaken.

Notwithstanding the location of the site in the Green Belt, whilst a Hazardous Substance Consent remains extant, the Health and Safety Executive will continue to apply the consultation zones, limiting the amount and type of development that could be undertaken within the area of the zones. In January 2009 the Council presented a report to its Planning Committee seeking authority to make an order to revoke the consent. The Hazardous Substance Consent was subsequently revoked under s14(2) of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990 on 4th March 2009.

There is also a need for the site to served by a satisfactory access. It would be necessary for the developers to demonstrate how this would be achieved, working with the highway Authority (Lancashire County Council) and the Borough Council.

e. Huncoat (Policies A7-A9)

What is the basis and justification for the major housing proposal at Huncoat, and what is the likely scale and timescale of development?

The major housing proposal at Huncoat is needed for two main reasons:

1. To ensure that the Borough has sufficient land identified to meet the housing needs over the period of the Core Strategy – a quantitative need, and;
2. To provide a large site that would be suitable for the development of high quality family homes – a qualitative need.

Quantity of Housing
It is proposed that the site at Huncoat would accommodate approximately 400 new houses. Over the period of the Core Strategy it is proposed that 3,200 new dwellings would be developed, the Huncoat site therefore represents 12.5% of the future housing supply.

There is insufficient land within the existing urban area to provide for the development of this number of new houses without eroding the quality of the parks and open spaces within the urban area.

**Quality of Housing**

In 2010 the Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy was revised to take account of changes in the economy and the abolition of Housing Market Renewal funding for Pennine Lancashire authorities. Although the vision remains unchanged, the strategic objectives have been clarified:

**Objective 1.** To ensure a sufficient quantity, quality, and appropriate type of housing supply, to meet the economic growth aspirations and social needs of Pennine Lancashire.

**Objective 2.** To develop sustainable neighbourhoods that can retain and attract successful households, reducing the disparities between neighbourhoods and providing linkages to economic growth and employment opportunities, improving the economic performance of the sub-region.

**Objective 3.** To meet the housing, health and support needs of residents and vulnerable people; promoting better services, with greater choice and accessibility that are fully integrated into local communities.

The Housing Strategy relates strongly to the Spatial Guide, recognising the importance of the M65 corridor in delivering growth. Within this corridor, the PLHS stresses the importance of diversifying the supply of housing, stating at page 5:

> “The lack of diversity of aspirational homes has resulted in people with means moving out of the area, polarising the sub-region and leading to degraded neighbourhoods. It is vital that the housing market here is rebalanced to include aspirational housing to retain the affluent population whilst simultaneously improving the condition of existing stock, to meet modern needs. This must be delivered in tandem with improvements to education, skills, worklessness, connectivity and business growth initiatives to ensure that local communities benefit from internal and external growth, from linking into neighbouring conurbations, through strategic rail schemes e.g. Todmorden Curve, and are not a drag to any growth delivered through the interventions of the PLMAA.”

Put simply, increasing the diversity and quality of housing will help to retain those who would otherwise move out, and attract those who may wish to move in. The present market structure denies individuals and families the choice that is available elsewhere, meaning that to move into a larger house they often need to move out of Hyndburn.
The development of new housing at Huncoat fits well with the objectives behind the Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy, particularly where the M65 corridor is concerned.

- The development would make significant contribution to the supply of high quality family homes, helping to rebalance the housing market in Hyndburn and provide choice to its residents. It would help deliver aspirational homes.
- The development would facilitate the development of new housing in close proximity to an area of future economic and business growth.
- Facilitating new development in highly accessible locations, linking to neighbouring conurbations. Huncoat would benefit from the strategic rail scheme (Todmorden Curve) referred to by the Strategy above and is in close proximity to the strategic road network.
- The Huncoat Colliery site would be able to provide “prestige” housing in a high quality environment, in a popular neighbourhood, that would meet the exacting demands of the high and upper middle income bands, as evidenced by the SHMA.

The Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy (refresh - 2010) places increased emphasis on the importance of delivering high quality, aspirational housing to rebalance the housing market to support economic growth. There are no other housing sites in Accrington, other than Huncoat, capable of delivering the objectives of the strategy set of in the PLHS.

Although the Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy recognises the importance of an adequate housing supply, rebalancing the housing market is dependent upon developing more housing of the right type and quality that is also in the right location, an approach that is also articulated and supported in the Spatial Guide. The Pennine Lancashire Spatial Guide (PLSG) has been developed by the Pennine Lancashire authorities and is intended to present a spatial framework for the development of Pennine Lancashire and how the sub-region will develop over the next 10-15 years. The document is now at an advanced stage and has been endorsed by the Pennine Lancashire Chief Executives.

The importance of connectivity is recognised by the PLSG and a series of plans have been prepared that illustrate the location of future development and its relationship to transport networks and other areas of growth.

The PLSG also recognised the importance of strategic housing and employment sites and the need to ensure these were located were they could complement each other. In relation to the need for strategic housing sites, the guide supports the stance taken by the Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy stating:\(^2\):

\[\text{A range of new housing sites will need to be delivered in Pennine Lancashire in order to achieve the twin objectives of regeneration and economic growth. Renewal will need to continue in inner urban neighbourhoods in order to widen the housing offer there and reduce the proportion of older terraced housing stock, a significant proportion of which is in an unfit state and fails to meet the housing needs of the local population. At the same time, in order for the sub-region’s economic growth aspirations to be realised, a number of more aspirational sites will need to be}\]

\(^2\) At paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3.
delivered. In order to meet the needs of families, and to attract higher wage earners to live in the sub-region, provision of larger family and executive style housing in attractive locations will be necessary. These sites will be central to ensuring that Pennine Lancashire can provide a housing offer that is capable of competing with neighbouring sub-regions in order to retain and attract higher wage earners to support economic growth.

Strategic housing sites across the sub-region that will play a central role in achieving the aims and objectives of the Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy have been identified. The overall housing “offer” of Pennine Lancashire is central to attracting investment and retaining a skilled population. Firstly we need to provide opportunities for housing growth, to bring in a scale of high quality new housing sufficient to secure a shift in the market. Secondly we need to continue to pay attention to our regeneration priorities, to take advantage of the opportunities presented by our existing housing stock and to ensure that local communities benefit from economic growth.”

The Pennine Lancashire Spatial Guide makes specific reference to housing on the Huncoat Colliery Site at paragraph 5.15, noting its proximity to the strategic employment site.

“The former Huncoat Colliery provides a major development opportunity close to transport links, particularly the M65 and the A56 / M66 towards Manchester. It is also within walking distance of Huncoat railway station. It is close to the strategic employment site at M65 Junction 8….”

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Hyndburn provides further evidence to support the need for aspirational housing, but also stresses the need for this housing to be sited within a high quality environment.

“The demands of the high and upper middle income bands are exacting in terms of both quality of product and neighbourhood. They exhibit a strong bias towards large semi-detached and detached housing in owner occupation. This does not preclude the consumption of other housing types, but this would largely be predicated on the quality of the surrounding environment, neighbourhood quality and prestige factors.”

The Huncoat Colliery site is in a high quality environment and would be able to deliver prestige housing of this type in a quality neighbourhood. The ability of the site to be connected to the strategic road network via the Whinney Hill Link Road also makes this site more attractive to potential developers, a point that was supported in the discussions that were held with Agents acting on behalf of Dale Properties, owners of a large portion of the colliery site.

The presence of large areas of social housing on Burnley Road and Bolton Avenue raises doubts about the ability of the central Huncoat site to achieve this.

---

3 SHMA, paragraph 7.34.
ii. What are the implications of redeveloping the former colliery site for housing in terms of practicality and deliverability, and are there any adverse implications related to the presence of the nearby RSPCA animal centre and proposed employment/waste management development?

As evidenced by the representations made by Graham Bolton Associates, there do not appear to be any over-riding constraints that would prevent the development of the former colliery site for housing development. A variety of surveys were undertaken in connection with the Environmental Assessment undertaken in connection with the Whinney Hill Link Road and although these identify, for example, those parts of the site that benefit from having ecological value, it is possible to positively plan for these areas. Similarly, the Council have information on those parts of the site that have been subject to coal mining. Huncoat Colliery possessed two comparatively deep shafts, meaning that the site has not been subject to widespread shallow working that is often a cause of subsidence or poor ground conditions. The two shafts are present and although their location is known the Council do not believe that the integrity of their capping has been assessed.

It is evident from old aerial photographs that the site once accommodated a number of buildings and rail and pit-head infrastructure and although the site was the subject of a reclamation scheme the extent to which this scheme either “removed” or “buried” these features is not known. It is known that a number of hardstandings are still present and it is suspected that the foundations of former buildings will also be present.

Potential constraints and future patterns of development would be assessed as part of a Supplementary Planning Document that the Core Strategy proposes would be prepared for that area. This would also consider how the development should integrate with Huncoat.

The Council have assessed\(^4\) the Noise Assessment that was submitted by the RSPCA and discussed the matter with them. Noise from the dogs housed in the kennels was more likely to be a potential problem during daytime hours when the animals are being attended to. Despite no complaints ever having been received about noise from properties within the area illustrated below, it was considered (by the Council’s EHO) that a buffer with a radius of 246m would be adequate to protect nuisance from noise arising.

\(^4\) An assessment was undertaken by the Council’s Environmental Health Department.
The Council has recommended a minor change to the wording of the Core Strategy to address this. This “buffer” zone does not affect the land holdings of Dale Properties (represented by Graham Bolton Associates). The extent of the zone is also based on no mitigation measures being implemented. It may of course be possible to put in place some form of noise attenuation barrier as a means of reducing the extent of the “buffer” zone. The developers of the affected land would be expected to undertake the necessary work to demonstrate that such measures would produce the desired effect.

In terms of the potential waste development, the Council would not wish to see major waste development in close proximity to the housing site and a sufficient buffer would need to be established. The Council would not envisage waste uses being development on the parcel of land between Altham Lane and the Railway. The location of the waste uses within the Strategic Employment Site would need to be guided by the Site Allocations DPD / Neighbourhood Plan for Huncoat that would be prepared in consultation with relevant stakeholders including Lancashire County Council.

iii. What is the basis and justification for the strategic employment site at Huncoat, and is this consistent with the Pennine Lancashire MAA/Spatial Strategy, including meeting the employment needs of Hyndburn?

The Council consider that the employment site at Huncoat should be considered a strategic site because it is a key element of the Core Strategy and the vision, aims and objectives of the Core Strategy would not be delivered without it.
Huncoat is very well sited in relation to the strategic road network and also benefits from having a local railway station. The site could have quick access to the M56/M66 and this makes it accessible from Greater Manchester, particularly those towns along the M62/60 corridor. The employment site at Huncoat was first allocated by the Hyndburn Local Plan which allocated 22ha of land at Huncoat for employment uses (Use Class B) and considered the allocation necessary to “(a) give effect to the Structure Plan which identifies the site as a strategically important business location and (b) improve the chances of achieving complete reclamation of the site.” Proposals have been brought forward for the site and planning permissions granted. The Core Strategy recognises that the Site at Huncoat would be suitable for development for more traditional employment uses and / or waste uses, subject to the site being accessed from a dedicated access onto the strategic road network.

The Council would not support the development of the strategic employment site or strategic housing site in isolation of the access road that connects these sites to the Strategic Road Network.

Although the planning permission for the Waste Technology Park has now lapsed and the development seems unlikely to proceed, the importance of the strategic location was recognised by Lancashire County Council at that time and continues to be through their Site Allocations DPD.

The importance of Huncoat is also recognised by the Spatial Guide for Pennine Lancashire. With regard to the strategic employment site at Huncoat, the guide states:

“The Huncoat Power Station site in Hyndburn, is strategically located at the junction of the M65 and the A56 route towards Manchester and will be available for high value employment investment.”

It is the M65 Corridor Plan in the PLSG that best illustrates the relationship between the Huncoat sites and other strategic sites along the motorway.

Extract from the Pennine Lancashire Spatial Guide – M65 Corridor Plan - that illustrates the relationship between the strategic sites at Huncoat (the pink circle illustrating housing development on the site of the former colliery, the purple circle illustrating employment development on the site of former power station).

---

5 Rochdale, Oldham and Bury and well as the northern suburbs of Manchester.
6 At paragraph 4.7
In addition to the M65 corridor plan, a key diagram was also prepared for the Spatial Guide.

Extract from the Pennine Lancashire Spatial Guide – Key Diagram illustrating Hyndburn.

Given its location and in particular its accessibility, the development of the strategic employment site at Huncoat could also help meet the employment land needs of neighbouring authorities.

Through the continued identification of the two strategic sites, and the management of existing sites in the manner proposed below, it is considered that the policies of the Core Strategy will ensure that sufficient land is available to meet the future employment needs of Hyndburn whilst also making a significant contribution to the wider economies of Pennine Lancashire and Lancashire.

The level of development on employment is currently very low and is only expected to increase towards the end of the first phase of the Core Strategy.

Although it is important to have a sufficient supply of land to meet future employment needs, it is also important to ensure that the needs of different sectors are also addressed. The Site Allocations and Development Management DPD’s will seek to ensure that land is identified at a more local level to meet these needs.
iv. Are the proposals for Huncoat in the Core Strategy consistent with the latest proposals for waste management facilities and a link road in the Lancashire Minerals & Waste Site Allocations DPD?

Yes, the proposals in the Core Strategy are broadly consistent with the latest proposals for waste management facilities and a link road in the Lancashire Minerals and waste Site Allocations DPD. They are also consistent with the approach that is advocated in the latest draft Local Transport Plan for Lancashire (LTP3).

v. What are the implications of the latest position on the Waste Technology Park and Whinney Hill Link Road, and will these have any implications for the deliverability of the proposal, particularly in terms of access, viability, funding and possible land contamination?

Lancashire County Council recently published the Draft Implementation Plan for the Local Transport Plan 2011-2021 for consultation. At paragraph 5.8.10 the document states:

“The construction of a Whinney Hill Link Road at Huncoat remains an important piece of local infrastructure. It would relieve the effects of industrial, quarry and landfill-related heavy goods traffic on local residential roads and provide access to employment land and housing development proposals for the local area. The County Council will work with Hyndburn Borough Council and developers to develop a funding package to deliver this link road.”

vi. What are the exceptional circumstances justifying the removal of land from the Green Belt and its impact on the purposes of the Green Belt?

It was recognised at an early stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy that Huncoat was likely to be an area of potential change. This was influenced by several factors:

- The presence of a large, undeveloped, greenfield housing site in the centre of Huncoat that was allocated in the Hyndburn Local Plan.
- The presence of a planning permission for the development of a Waste Technology Park on the site of the former Huncoat Power Station. This was granted by Lancashire County Council (to Lancashire County Council). The proposed Waste Technology Park would have formed a key element of the Lancashire Waste Strategy.
- The presence of a planning permission for the development of the Whinney Hill Link Road. The proposed Link Road would have taken traffic from Whinney Hill Quarry / landfill and nearby industrial areas to the strategic road network without having to pass through residential areas.
- The presence of a large area of undeveloped land allocated for employment uses in the Hyndburn Local Plan and the presence of an outline planning permission for the development of employment uses on land off Lowergate Road on part of the allocation.

Huncoat is well located in relation to the strategic road network with ready access to the A56 / M66 and the M65. It also benefits from having a local railway station and being located on main road into Accrington Town Centre. Given the scale of the potential changes in and
around Huncoat, it was considered necessary to undertake additional consultation with local residents in the area. The first consultation event took place on 22 January 2009 and although it was well attended the main comments made concerned the need for additional information on site boundaries and options. In response, the Council developed four options:

- An employment led solution
- A housing led solution
- A balanced development option
- An accessibility led option

These options are illustrated and explored in more detail in the Huncoat Topic Paper and are appended to that paper.

The second round of consultation took place on 12 August 2009 and was based on more detailed proposals. Considerable local opposition was raised to housing development in the centre of Huncoat with a large petition made to the Council recommending that the land in the centre of Huncoat be protected as open space for the benefit of the community.

The allocated housing site in Huncoat comprised a large area of land which had the potential to make a significant contribution towards the housing supply in Hyndburn. This contribution was important from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view and the Council advised that the status of the site could only be changed if a suitable alternative site was found.

A search for an alternative site was undertaken. There were no sites within the existing Urban Boundary large enough to compensate for the loss of the Huncoat site, and it was therefore necessary to consider sites outside the urban boundary. Recognising the locational benefits that Huncoat has, and the potential benefits offered by the development of a new link road, a site bounded by the proposed link road on the site of the former Huncoat Colliery was identified as a potential replacement for the central Huncoat Site.

On 30th March 2010 the Council’s Full Council resolved that the site in central Huncoat, much of which was owned by the Council, would not be released for housing and that it would be designated as protected open space. This resolution (559) was made on the basis of the alternative Huncoat Colliery site being taken forward. The resolution of Full Council is set out in Appendix 1.

It is recognised that in policy terms the Huncoat Colliery site is outside the existing urban boundary, however, the resolution made by the Council means that the central Huncoat site is no longer capable of being brought forward for development.

The process that the Council has gone down in planning for Huncoat has sought to engage the residents of Huncoat and arrive at a solution that was favoured by the community. Although at the time this was not dressed up as localism, the approach embodies the principles now espoused as localism. The main benefit that this brings to the planning process is that the plans for this area of Hyndburn have a degree of ownership that they would not have done had the Council sought to impose a solution.
As a consequence of the decisions taken in Huncoat, it is proposed to remove two areas of land from the Green Belt.

a. Huncoat Colliery (21.83ha), and
b. Land to the north of Altham Lane (5.34ha).

These will be considered in turn.

**Huncoat Colliery Site**

Huncoat Colliery was founded in 1885 but closed on 9th February 1968, allegedly with over 1mt of coal thought uneconomic to mine at the time. At its peak, production reached 1,300 tons of coal per day in 1956 to serve the adjacent power station. Although the colliery was “reclaimed” in 2002 it is unclear what the extent of the scheme was. Although most of the buildings appear to have been removed, there are still hard standings present of the site and at least two shafts are known to exist. It is suspected that foundations of old buildings may still be present and the site has not been returned to a beneficial afteruse.

The colliery site is located north of the railway line. The proposed boundary of the Green Belt has been drawn to reflect identifiable boundaries, i.e. the M65 Motorway and Clough Brook. It is not intended that this entire area be developed for housing, recognising the need for the landscape and ecology of Clough Brook to be protected and the need for the scheme to incorporate high quality landscaping and integrate with its rural hinterland.

PPG 2 stresses the need for Green Belt boundaries to follow identifiable features on the ground or on maps. Although the land to the north of the railway occupies 21.83ha, this area has been shown in response to the requirement in PPG 2. It is important to stress that the Council would not envisage all of the site being developed, particularly given the presence of ecological assets in this area. When this land was identified, it was considered necessary to provide approximately 400 houses. On the basis of 25-30 dwellings per hectare, it is envisaged that between 13.3 and 16ha of land may be required for development.

Although not stated in the Core Strategy, new housing on the site would be served from a new access road to Altham Lane. The development would be expected to contribute towards the cost of this access road.

In relation to the Draft National Planning Policy Framework (Draft NPPF) the Council note that although development on previously developed land is already permissible if the site is identified in the local plan as a major developed site, it is proposed to extend this policy to similar sites not already identified in a local plan. If this approach is adopted, it would presumably mean that very special circumstances would no longer need to be demonstrated. The approach taken by the Council in respect of this site is consistent with the draft NPPF.

The implications of the proposed change, in respect of Green Belt policy are set out in the summary below.
### Impact on Green Belt – Huncoat Colliery

1. **The Purposes of the Green Belt**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th><strong>check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The proposed change will serve to encompass an area of land that has been developed in the past and areas of which continue to have the appearance of a derelict site. Inclusion of this area in the Green Belt in accordance with the policies of the Core Strategy will help prevent the unrestricted sprawl of the urban area by ensuring that the area is properly planned with the local community through the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th><strong>to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The proposed change would extend the urban area of Huncoat in a northerly direction towards the line of the Whinney Hill Link Road and the M65. It would not extend the urban area towards Burnley and there would still be a sufficient width of Green Belt north of the M65 to prevent a risk of merger with Altham Business Park.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th><strong>to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The previously developed site is present and is bounded by the countryside. Inclusion of this area within the urban boundary would potentially prevent the allocation of another area of rural land elsewhere for the development of housing to meet the future housing needs of the Borough.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th><strong>to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The inclusion of this area of previously developed land within the urban boundary would have a neutral impact on the setting and special character of Accrington. However, the local community strongly believed that the development of the Colliery site, as opposed to the central Huncoat Site, would help preserve the setting and special character of Huncoat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E</th>
<th><strong>to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The development of this site would clearly assist in achieving urban regeneration and assist in the recycling of a large area of previously developed land.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **The Objectives of the Green Belt**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th><strong>to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The policy framework for this site seeks to positively improve opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population through the development of a Supplementary Planning document that would consider how access could be improved. There are a variety of public rights of way that would facilitate this.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th><strong>to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The policy framework for this site would provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation to be improved through the development of a Supplementary Planning document that would consider this.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th><strong>to retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The development of this site would need to be undertaken in a way that seeks to enhance the appearance of the area through the development of existing landscape features such as Clough Brook.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### D to improve damaged and derelict land around towns

Alteration of the boundary of the Green Belt in this area would allow a large area of previously developed land to be improved. This would make a significant difference to the physical appearance of the site. It is not known whether the site is contaminated.

### E to secure nature conservation interest

There are a number of areas in and around this site that have been identified as having ecological value. A key part of the Supplementary Planning Document would be to demonstrate how these areas can be protected and enhanced as part of the wider proposals for this area.

### F to retain land in agriculture, forestry and related uses

The land in question is not used for agriculture or forestry. Since the former colliery was “reclaimed” it has grown over and is not actively managed in any way.

### 3. Very Special Circumstances

Inclusion of this area of previously developed land within the urban area would bring a number of significant environmental and economic improvements:

- It would allow a large area of previously developed land to be utilised and developed to the benefit of the community.
- It would provide for the visual appearance of the land to be significantly improved and the blight associated with it removed.
- It would allow a potential pollution hazard to be addressed.
- It would provide for the improvement of neighbouring rural areas and their development for the benefit of the community.

---

**Land to the North of Altham Lane**

A triangular area of land bounded by Altham Lane to the south, the railway to the north and existing development to the west. The land comprises agricultural land that has not been previously developed, it is a greenfield site. The site has an area of 5.34 ha.

The practical effect of changing the boundary of the Green Belt to accommodate housing development on the colliery site is to enclose the land North of Altham Lane with development, effectively making the purpose of including this area as Green Belt redundant. This position is illustrated by Figure 8 below. Removal of this area is needed to enable a rational boundary for the Green Belt to be established.

The Core Strategy proposes that this area of land be incorporated into the Strategic Employment Site at Huncoat.

Although the primary justification for the removal of the site from the Green Belt relates to the need to draw a sensible boundary to the Green Belt, this site comprises an area of greenfield land which does not have any known development constraints. For this reason, inclusion of this area could help assist the viability of the larger site and make the area more attractive to potential developers.

The Core Strategy states that the site would be included within the Strategic Employment Site at Altham.
vii. What is the state of play on the feasibility study and the progress on finalising plans for Huncoat, and will further amendments be needed to the policies and text in the Core Strategy?

A feasibility study will not be undertaken prior to the examination. Lancashire County Council has provided details of the estimated costs of the two phases of the Whinney Hill Link Road. Phase 1 was estimated to cost approximately £2m.

The potential cost of the Whinney Hill Link Road has been an issue that the Council have discussed with the main parties. The principle behind the need for the road is accepted, however, the main parties recognise that there is a cost associated with the provision of the road and this cost will need to be met from a variety of sources. Having discussed this matter with the main parties, the Council believe that there would be little value in undertaking a feasibility study at the present time. The main reason for this is that the development of the strategic sites in Huncoat is proposed to take place in Phase 2 (years 5-10 of the Core Strategy) and that this work could be undertaken as part of a development brief for the sites concerned.

The Council also observe that viability studies that have been recently undertaken have been strongly influenced by the prevailing economic conditions. The Council therefore believe that the use of wording similar to that used by the Implementation Plan for the Local Transport Plan indicating that “the Borough Council will work with the County Council and developers to develop a funding package to deliver the Whinney Hill Link Road.” The Council will continue to explore potential sources of grant funding to assist with the delivery of the Whinney Hill Link Road. These will include Regional Growth Fund and funding associated with the Local Transport Plan.

B. GREAT HARWOOD

a. Housing in Great Harwood (Policy GH1)

i. Is the amount and proportion of new housing development to be developed within Great Harwood appropriate, soundly based, deliverable and justified with evidence (including the SHLAA)?

The derivation of the overall housing figure is explained at 5.1a. The response to matter 5.1c sets out how the proportion of housing for the spatial areas has been derived. The Housing Topic Paper provides background to the housing policies.

In line with the Balanced Development Strategy (proposed policy BD1 submitted by the Council after submission) states at part a) “the existing settlement pattern and hierarchy of centres will be maintained by concentrating development within the urban areas and in centres of a scale and type appropriate to their role. …..Modest growth is proposed in Great Harwood ……..”. The Council believe that the Balanced Development Strategy is sound as discussed at matter 3.
Policy GH1 provides further development of this in relation to housing and states that 15% of new housing will be in Great Harwood. Based on an overall requirement of about 3,200 dwellings as set out in 5.1a, this amounts to 2,400 dwellings over the 15 year plan period.

The Council consider that this approach is sound. Great Harwood is a fre standing settlement surrounded by Green Belt and is considered to be less accessible than other part of the Borough and is home to approximately 14% of the Borough’s population. It has a range of social and physical infrastructure which supports its population for most day to day needs. Sections 5.46 – 5.51 of the submitted Core Strategy provide more detail.

Great Harwood is of a suitable size and sustainable to be able to accommodate some development. 15% of new housing is an appropriate amount based on the proportion of the Borough’s population.

The Council also consider that the proportion and amount of housing set out under GH1 is deliverable and justified with evidence. There are a number of potential redevelopment opportunities in Great Harwood (see para.5.5 of the submitted document). The SHLAA (CS_Supp3.13) demonstrates the there is potential to meet 15% of the overall dwelling requirement and the sites are deliverable in the plan period (see table at 3.22 of the Housing Topic Paper). More recent work, referred to at 3.23 of the Housing Topic Paper reaffirms that this proportion can be met.

Dwellings not yet constructed on sites which already have planning permission also make a contribution to future supply. At 31st March 2011, there were 429 dwellings outstanding. Approximately 7% of the outstanding commitments are in Great Harwood.

The identification of specific sites to meet the housing requirements in accordance with spatial distribution set out in policies A1, GH2 and R1 will form part of the Site Allocations DPD.

b. Great Harwood Town Centre (Policy GH2)

i. Is the role and status of Great Harwood as a historic market town providing key local services and specialist/leisure shopping facilities appropriate, soundly based and justified with evidence?

The Balanced Development Strategy (expressed as proposed policy BD1) states at b) that “Great Harwood will develop as a historic market town where new retail and town centre uses will be supported in the town centre provided it is at an appropriate scale.” Policy GH2 reflects Great Harwood’s role as a historic market town and enables the town to continue to function as a Market town serving local needs and the immediate rural hinterland with retail and office development on a scale which reflects this. It seeks to permit the development of the town centre as a historic market town. Small scale retailing will be permitted in the town centre. Day to day shopping needs will be met if at an appropriate scale in sustainable locations where there are identified deficiencies and new office development of an appropriate scale will be permitted in the town centre.
After Accrington town centre, Great Harwood offers the greatest range of goods and services of any of the Borough’s centres, although it is of a considerably smaller scale and scope to Accrington town centre. Evidence from the Retail Study (CS_Supp3.11) shows that Great Harwood has a broad range of uses and provides an important role to the surrounding residential population.

Since the retail study was undertaken, two further supermarkets have been approved in Great Harwood. An ALDI store has been constructed and is operating and a TESCO supermarket is under construction at Heys Lane which have strengthened convenience food retailing in the town.

Based on the assessment of vitality and viability the retail study recommended that Great Harwood be classified as a district centre and that the role of these centres should be protected. Whilst the study recommended that Great Harwood be classified as a district centre, Great Harwood is considered to be a freestanding market town which serves local needs and the immediate rural hinterland. Therefore it is more akin to a market town as defined in within “town centre” of Annex B to PPS4.

The policy reflects the spatial element of wider policies and strategies which seek to regenerate and strengthen the town centre such as the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Hyndburn Regeneration and Economic Strategy (CS_Supp3.9).

The Council considers that this approach is sound.

c. Core Strategy policies

i. Are there any specific reasons why the policies in the Core Strategy should not be relevant, applicable and appropriate for Great Harwood?

The Council are unclear what is meant by this question. Those policies that do not specifically apply to the spatial component of the Borough (i.e. the thematic policies) would apply to Great Harwood in the same way as they would apply in other areas of the Borough.

C. RISHTON

a. Housing in Rishton (Policy R1)

i. Is the amount and proportion of new housing development to be developed within Rishton appropriate, soundly based, deliverable and justified with evidence (including the SHLAA)?

The derivation of the overall housing figure is explained at 5.1a. The response to matter 5.1c sets out how the proportion of housing for the spatial areas has been derived. The Housing Topic Paper provides background to the housing policies.

The Balanced Development Strategy (proposed policy BD1 submitted by the Council after submission) states at part a) “the existing settlement pattern and hierarchy of centres will be
Policy R1 provides further policy in relation to housing Rishton and states that approximately 10% of the Borough’s new housing will be in Rishton. Based on an overall requirement of about 3,200 dwellings as set out in 5.1a, this amounts to about 320 dwellings over the plan period.

The Council consider that this approach is sound. Rishton is a small town which is surrounded by greenbelt and therefore is physically separate from the main urban area of Accrington and its townships and form Great Harwood. It has an extensive range of services and social and physical infrastructure which serve its local residents albeit that these are not on the same scale as Accrington and Great Harwood. It is served by a local rail service an has good connectivity to the M65. About 8.5% of the Borough’s population lives in Rishton. Rishton is a sustainable settlement within which it would be appropriate to accommodate development.

The Green Belt boundary would restrict the expansion of Rishton and the Balanced Development Strategy seeks to maintain the general extent of the Green Belt. Nonetheless there are a number of development opportunities related to derelict or underused industrial premises along the Leeds-Liverpool canal corridor which runs through Rishton. These have been identified through the Employment Land Study and the SHLAA. R1 further states that apartment development will be supported in canalside locations. Policy R3 sets out criteria for canalside development to secure high quality design although the mix of uses will be set out in the Site Allocations DPD. The proposed housing in Rishton would also support the regeneration of the environment in the vicinity of the canal.

The council also consider that the proportion and amount of housing in Rishton set out under R1 is deliverable and justified with evidence. The SHLAA (CS_Supp3.13) indicates that Rishton has potential for about 301 dwellings and that the sites are deliverable in the plan period (see table at 3.22 of the Housing Topic Paper). Although this is marginally under the townships requirement, more recent work, referred to at 3.23 of the Housing Topic Paper confirms that the 10% proportion can be met with a small margin on top.

The identification of specific sites to meet the housing requirements in accordance with spatial distribution set out in policies A1, GH2 and R1 will form part of the Site Allocations DPD.

b. Rishton Local Centre (Policy R2)

i. Is the role and status of Rishton as a local centre providing key services to the local community appropriate, soundly based and justified with evidence?
Policy R2 provides for the strengthening and enhancement of Rishton as a local centre to provide key services to the local community.

The Retail Study undertook an assessment of the vitality and viability of Rishton. It concluded that Rishton is a viable and vital centre and has a clear role to play in serving the day to day needs of its local community and recommended that Rishton should be designated as local centre. In comparison with Accrington and Great Harwood which were also assessed, Rishton was the smallest centre in terms of the amount and range of goods and services. Based on the range of services available in Rishton (shops, bank, doctors surgery and library) the centre corresponds most closely to that of a district centre as defined in Annex B of PPS4. They are referred to as Local Centres in the Core Strategy.

The Council consider that this approach is sound.

D. KNUZDEN & WHITEBIRK

a. Strategic Employment Site at Whitebirk (Policy KW1)

i. What is the basis and justification for the Strategic Employment Site at Whitebirk (Lantern Park), and is this consistent with the Pennine Lancashire MAA & Spatial Strategy and the Blackburn with Darwen Core Strategy, including its contribution to meeting the employment needs of Hyndburn and the sub-regional employment strategy?

The M65 was developed in the 1980’s and 1990’s as a means of opening up the economy of Pennine Lancashire. Business and commerce must be well sited in relation to the strategic route networks and the importance of this was recognised by the Hyndburn Local Plan. The initial success of the M65 in achieving increased rates of economic development can be seen from the figures set out in the Economy Topic Paper, but since then rates of development have slowed.

The Hyndburn Local Plan identified extensive areas of land for the development of employment uses in the Borough, the largest sites being at Whitebirk and Huncoat, at the western and eastern edge of the Borough respectively. The relationship between these sites is well illustrated by the key diagram that has been prepared for the Pennine Lancashire Spatial Guide.

Since its allocation in the Local Plan, Whitebirk was identified as a Strategic Investment Site by the North West Development Agency (NWDA). In 2003 a planning application (ref 11/03/0608) was submitted in the joint names of the NWDA and the site owners. Determination of the application was initially delayed by the Highways Agency due to concerns about the impact of the development on the free flow of traffic on the M65 and its junction at Whitebirk Roundabout (Junction 6). The issues associated with the capacity of the motorway network have now been resolved through the use of a variety of planning conditions that the Highways Agency directed to be part of any planning permission granted. As part of the Highways Agency Direction, only 88% of the site can initially be developed in
the first phase, release of the remaining 12% dependent upon the numbers of vehicles entering and leaving the site and the success of public transport initiatives that will be implemented.

The planning permission will be issued when the s.106 agreement is signed. The s.106 agreement provides for a variety of public transport improvements to be made. Lancashire County Council has required the development of public transport interchanges at the northern and southern ends of the site as well as a means of transporting employees to and from their workplace and the interchanges. This would potentially be achieved through the use of a shuttle bus.

The development of the site at Whitebirk is a priority for the Pennine Lancashire Multi-Area Agreement and is a priority for the Pennine Lancashire Economic Strategy. Its inclusion in the Core Strategy is consistent with its allocation in the Hyndburn Local Plan and the site is still considered to be one of the best located employment sites in Hyndburn. It is also very well located to contribute towards the future employment needs of Blackburn with Darwen. It is anticipated that Whitebirk will be developed in Phases 1 and 2 of the Core Strategy.

The Council consider that 25% of the area of the Whitebirk site should contribute towards the Borough’s employment land needs.

Extract from the Pennine Lancashire Spatial Guide illustrating the key employment sites along the M65 Corridor and their relationship to neighbouring residential areas of growth. Purple – Employment; Pink – Housing.

ii. What is the current position on developing this site, including the latest position on the Section 106 agreement, and is the development deliverable within the plan period, in view of the constraints to development, traffic/highways implications, infrastructure and funding issues?
The Council believe that there are no major “planning” constraints that would prevent the development of this site. Indeed, work has been undertaken by public sector bodies to improve Whitebirk roundabout and reduce the potential burden on the developer and increase the proportion of the site that can now be developed for employment uses.

The Council are working with the developer to resolve a number of minor issues in relation to the planning conditions. It is understood that the developers are now in a position where they may be happy to sign the s.106 but there are a number of draft planning conditions that they consider would benefit from being reworded. These do not prejudice the principle of the development and should be resolved shortly. There are no funding issues associated with Whitebirk Strategic Site.

iii. Does the Core Strategy properly reflect the need for cross-boundary working in relation to the Whitebirk Strategic Employment Site?

The Council has worked with officers from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Regenerate Pennine Lancashire and Lancashire County Council (as Highway Authority) on this development and will continue to do so. Each of these organisations is aware of the issues relating to Whitebirk. The Council would question the need to add any additional text to the Core Strategy in respect of this issue.

iv. What is the basis, position and justification for the possible future extension of the Whitebirk employment site (Whitebirk 2), and the means by which it might be delivered (including Green Belt implications), and is the approach consistent with the Pennine Lancashire MAA and Blackburn with Darwen Core Strategy?

The Pennine Lancashire Multi-Area Agreement forms the basis of the justification for Whitebirk 2, however, the relevant text of the Core Strategy makes it clear that the Council do not expect this site to come forward during the plan period.

Early versions of the Core Strategy identified Whitebirk 2 (on land between Blackburn and Rishton) as a potential future site for a large scale strategic employment site in line with the aspirations of the MAA. However, this gave rise to a significant level of opposition from local residents and elected members, primarily in relation to the impact the development would have on the relatively narrow stretch of Green Belt / countryside between Blackburn and Rishton.

The Council subsequently modified the wording of the Core Strategy in relation to Whitebirk 2, making it clear that further work was needed to be undertaken before the most appropriate location for a further strategic employment site could be identified. Whilst the Council recognise the importance of working with neighbouring authorities, it is important to recognise that decisions concerning land or development within Hyndburn should be taken by the officers and elected members of Hyndburn.
v. **What is the latest position on the sub-regional review of strategic employment land supply and future requirements in Pennine Lancashire related to the Whitebirk 2 employment site?**

Due to the work associated with the examinations of the Core Strategy and Accrington AAP the Council will not be undertaking any work on the sub-regional review of strategic employment land until the examinations have been completed.

**E. RURAL AREAS**

a. **Amount and Distribution of Housing in Rural Areas (Policy RA1)**

i. **Is the policy seeking to limit new housing development to local needs in rural settlements appropriate, soundly based, deliverable and justified with evidence (including the SHLAA)?**

The Council believes that its approach is appropriate and soundly based. The response to matter 5.1c sets out how the proportion of housing for the spatial areas has been derived. The Housing Topic Paper provides background to the housing policies.

The Balanced Development Strategy (proposed policy BD1 suggested by the Council after submission) seeks to direct most development to Accrington and its townships with more limited development in Great Harwood and Rishton. Within the settlements of Belthorn and Altham it will be limited to that required to meet specific local needs.

The SHMA (section 8.37) shows that only 1.5% of households are located in rural areas. These include the villages and hamlets of Belthorn, Green Haworth, Tottleworth and Altham. All lie within close proximity to main urban areas (Blackburn in the case of Belthorn).

Tottleworth and Green Haworth are within the Green Belt where development would have to be in accordance with PPG2. Altham lies within a tightly drawn urban boundary. Belthorn lies within the administrative areas of both Hyndburn and Blackburn with Darwen BC. In relation to Hyndburn the settlement is washed over by countryside designation which would prevent general residential development.

With the exception of Belthorn, none would be regarded as having village centres which provide a range of goods and services to support the local community in a sustainable way. In the case of Belthorn the range of facilities is limited (e.g. a primary school, public house and shop).

The SHMA states that it is not unreasonable to expect people from rural parts of the Borough to move to urban areas. However it recognizes that there may be some need for affordable housing which should be established by local survey.

In terms of housing potential, the SHLAA only two sites were put forward at an early stage in the process in relation to these settlements but were subsequently excluded on the basis that they were Green belt. In terms of the SHLAA there is no identified potential in these settlements within the overall figure of 4,263 dwellings.
The Council considers its approach to housing in rural areas is sound.

b. Altham Business Park (Policy RA3)

i. What are the exceptional circumstances justifying the removal of land from the Green Belt and the impact on the purposes of the Green Belt?

Altham Business Park was developed at the same time as the M65 was completed. The Business Park has been the most successful business park in the Borough and has traditionally managed to attract some large businesses and employers due to its location within easy reach of the M65 and also on the doorstep of the Ribble Valley. There are few vacant plots within the Business Park.

What More UK is a private limited company and one of the UK’s leading manufacturers of plastic housewares, gardening and storage products. Incorporated in 1999, the company has grown rapidly to become one of the largest manufacturers of houseware products under their brand name Wham.

Although the company Headquarters is located at the Shuttleworth Mead Business Park in Padiham, the company have developed new, state of the art, manufacturing facilities and distribution centre at Altham Business Park. Using their phenomenal success in the UK market as a template, What More UK is now looking to the rest of the world. Having already established a major foothold in a number of European countries, the company continues to expand into markets across the world. What More UK is opening a whole new dimension to its business, introducing the world to the ‘What More Way’.

The company currently operates from several premises, however, in order to develop in a sustainable and cost-effective means it is seeking to consolidate its manufacturing and distribution operations at Altham. Expansion at Altham would not only help the company meet its potential but also significantly reduce travel between different premises/sites, bringing a variety of environmental benefits in addition to business efficiencies.

Inclusion of this area within Altham Business Park would represent a comparatively modest extension that would allow an important company to consolidate and develop its business in the Borough.

The proposed change to the boundary of the Business Park will not compromise the five functions of the Green Belt. The site occupies an area of 5.27ha. The land slopes up towards the south and for this reason the development would not appear overbearing or obtrusive when viewed from this direction (in the vicinity of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal). Views of the site from the north are more distant and whilst the development is likely to be visible, it would be seen in the context of the existing business park.

Policy RA3 of the Core Strategy recognises the importance of Altham Business Park and seeks to provide for its protection and development. Part (b) of the Policy states that a
“small scale extension to Altham Business Park into the Green belt will be supported, provided that it is to enable existing occupiers to meet their business needs.” The supporting text maintains this position but also stresses the need for any scheme for development of the site to be accompanied by a high quality landscaping scheme.

Planning to meet the needs of existing business and commerce is wholly in line with PPS 4 and the principles set out in the written Ministerial Statement “Planning for Growth” released on 23 March 2011. The Borough Council have been working with What More to see how the planning framework can be developed to help their business consolidate and grow. PPS 4 stresses the need for local planning authorities to support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting (Policy EC2.1b).

The Ministerial Statement confirms that The Government's top priority in reforming the planning system is to promote sustainable economic growth and jobs. Government's clear expectation is that the answer to development and growth should wherever possible be 'yes', except where this would compromise the key sustainable development principles set out in national planning policy.

The Statement indicates that local planning authorities should press ahead without delay in preparing up-to-date development plans, and should use that opportunity to be proactive in driving and supporting the growth that this country needs. They should make every effort to identify and meet the housing, business and other development needs of their areas, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth, taking full account of relevant economic signals such as land prices. In doing so it is necessary to take into consideration a range of factors, including the need to maintain a flexible and responsive supply of land for key sectors.

It is considered that the local authority have been working alongside local businesses to support their growth in the manner envisaged by the Ministerial Statement. In April 2011 two planning applications were submitted to the Council for the development of employment uses on the site. These applications were withdrawn because the Council were not satisfied with elements of the submission.

### Impact on Green Belt – Altham Business Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. The Purposes of the Green Belt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is proposed to remove a comparatively small area of land from the Green Belt to meet the needs of one of the Borough’s most successful companies. The proposed change is a reflection of the needs of the company, a major employer in the Borough, over the foreseeable future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The modest extension to the business park will not result in the merger of neighbouring towns or settlements. The business park is a sufficient distance from neighbouring urban areas to prevent merger of settlements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although the proposed extension of the urban boundary in this location will result in the loss of an area of countryside, the (small) scale of the proposed change will</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
help ensure that it will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the countryside.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>The proposed change would preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. It would not have an impact on the Altham Conservation Area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>The proposed extension to the Business Park is on greenfield land and would not therefore assist greatly in the redevelopment of derelict or other urban land.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. The Objectives of the Green Belt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>The proposed change would have a neutral impact on opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The proposed change would have a neutral impact on opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>The modest scale of the proposed change, coupled with its location immediately alongside the existing business park, should ensure that it would not have a significant adverse impact on the landscape of this area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To improve damaged and derelict land around towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>The proposed change would not serve to improve derelict or damaged land around towns, however, the policies of the Core Strategy seek to focus the majority of new development on previously developed sites within the existing urban area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To secure nature conservation interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>The proposed alteration to the boundary of the Green Belt would not have an impact on nature conservation interests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To retain land in agriculture, forestry and related uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>The inclusion of this site within the urban area would remove land from agricultural use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Very Special Circumstances

The Very Special Circumstances in this case relate to the need for the Council to promote sustainable economic growth and jobs. In this case there is a need for the planning system to work with local businesses in a way that allows them to consolidate and expand in a sustainable way. In this instance, the needs of this particular company have been given significant weight and this is considered to outweigh the loss of the greenfield land that this change would result in.

In August 2011 these planning applications were resubmitted to the Council. The submission included a planning statement that notes that there is no definition of “very

---

special circumstances” before proceeding to outline the very special circumstances\(^8\) that they believe to exist. The very special circumstances cited in the report that develop the Council’s understanding of the situation (in the table above) are set out as follows:

- There is a compelling need for the development to meet the specific operational requirements of the existing, successful adjacent business operator, Whatmore UK Limited. They are a significant employment provider and manufacturer in the Borough who operate in a very important sector, but one which has seen significant decline in recent years resulting in loss of employment. The Local Plan and Core Strategy are both supportive of local business and innovating to strengthen the manufacturing sector.
- The new premises would be physically and operationally linked to the existing premises in order to improve and expand the business operation. This is essential if the firm is to remain competitive and expand. It is essential that all facilities are co-located for business efficiency reasons but also to avoid the unnecessary transport of raw materials and product. As such, the proposal will bring wider sustainability benefits.
- There is insufficient land on Altham Business Park to meet the needs of What More UK Ltd. It would not be appropriate to take premises in another location as the plant needs to be linked with the premises at Shorten Brook Way (on Altham Business Park).

ii. Are there other options available for existing occupiers to meet their business needs?

At the time the Council commenced discussions with What More about their future there was no land available on the employment site adjacent to their premises. The company presently operate from a number of locations within Pennine Lancashire and are seeking to consolidate their operations on fewer sites, manufacturing taking place at Altham. To do this they required a site immediately adjacent to their premises.

Planning and regeneration officers from the Council actively work with local businesses in Hyndburn as a means of seeking to identify ways in which the Council can help them meet their future needs. In this instance the Council were keen to assist the development of one of the Borough’s more successful companies, a company that has made a significant investment in the Borough.

What More UK Ltd do not believe that there are other options available to them to meet their business needs. From a business point of view, the merits of consolidating on Altham Business Park are clear, however, these benefits would not be realised if the new premises were not adjacent to their existing premises.

---

\(^8\) Although the statement also considers the way in which the purposes of including land in the Green Belt are affected.