

Fylde Council Local Plan to 2032

FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL STATEMENT

OPENING STATEMENT

Stage 1 Hearing Sessions

March 2017



Opening Statement

1. We are pleased to have this opportunity to open the Stage 1 hearings of the public examination into the soundness of the Fylde Local Plan to 2032 and would like to welcome all those present today, be they participating round this table or attending as observers.
2. Planning Policy Manger Julie Glaister, Principal Planning Officers Eddie Graves and Stephen Smith and Planning Officer Sara Jones are here to lead on matters on behalf of the Council. They will be joined throughout the proceedings by Counsel, Jonathan Easton, and other members of staff and consultants who have prepared a range of evidence which have informed important elements of the plan
3. The public examination is the final stage in the preparation of this key planning document which, once adopted, will replace the saved policies of the Fylde Borough Local Plan. That plan was last reviewed in 2005 and was written at a time when strict caps were placed on new residential development in boroughs such as Fylde. Since the adoption of that plan there have been changes in Government which have brought with them significant changes in both legislation and national planning policy which have conspired to leave Fylde with a legacy of housing undersupply. Fylde has answered these challenges by promoting new development in sustainable locations meaning that, for the first time since the adoption of the NWRSS in September 2008, Fylde is now able to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land.
4. The new Local Plan responds to the new planning landscape by continuing to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the borough and planning to not only to meet the objectively assessed needs for the new homes that the borough requires, but to deliver the jobs and the infrastructure that will support the borough in a manner that is compatible with the specific context and constraints of Fylde.

5. The production of this new plan has been a long and sinuous journey, during which the Council has had to make a series of important decisions that have often been contentious or controversial. In doing so the Council has listened to the views of the various communities across Fylde. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the preparation of the Fylde Local Plan, including those who responded to the many stages of consultation and engagement on the Plan. Although it has not always been possible to fully accommodate the views of everyone, their input is valued and has helped inform and improve the Plan to produce a document that strikes an appropriate balance:
 - between promoting sustainable growth and preserving what is valued in the borough;
 - between local and strategic matters; and
 - between flexibility and certainty.
6. Fylde is a special place to live – the Council’s resident’s survey confirms that 97% of respondents share this view. Accordingly, the plan seeks to retain those things that make Fylde special, whilst providing the basis for the future prosperity of the borough.
7. It is important to appreciate that plan-making is largely about reaching informed judgments where - in most instances - there is no one universally accepted consensus or “right” answer. In this regard, we invite the Inspector to look to see whether the Council has explained its judgments coherently and whether its position on any given issue is a reasonable one in all the circumstances or is it fundamentally out of step on a point of real substance which might make a significant difference. Our firm position is that the Council has considered its robust and proportionate evidence base carefully and has reached a series of planning judgments that are entirely reasonable.
8. The Plan recognises the challenges that we face: the need for new homes, economic development, the need to invest in new infrastructure, connectivity, tourism and - as

far as is justified and practicable - to help our neighbours to deliver their own strategies.

9. The Plan is supported by robust and proportionate evidence base and has also undergone a sustainability appraisal that has assessed reasonable alternatives and considered the Plan's environmental, social and economic impacts as well as careful assessment of the potential impact of the plan on internationally important ecological sites and protected species.
10. The Council considers that the Plan is 'sound' on the basis that it has been positively prepared; is justified; is effective; and is consistent with national policy.
11. Alongside the Bryning with Warton and St Annes on the Sea Neighbourhood Development Plans which, by the time we come back for the second stage hearings, will have been to referendum, this development plan will help shape the future of Fylde and its residents and deliver the Council's strategic priorities ensuring that Fylde remains a great place to live and a great place to visit, that is clean and green and supported by a vibrant economy.
12. To conclude, the Council considers that the Local Plan provides a sound and positive strategy for achieving sustainable development and meeting Fylde's identified needs, is aspirational but realistic and we therefore welcome this public examination.