

Fylde Council Local Plan Examination

Hearing Sessions

Matter 2: Housing

Submission on behalf of Concert Living

February 2021

Introduction

1. This submission is made by De Pol Associates for and on behalf of Concert Living concerning Matter 2 (Housing).
2. The submission is made with respect to the Examination in Public (EiP) *Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions* (V1, 25 January 2021) and supplements the representations lodged with Fylde Council in respect of the Local Plan Consultation. The two should be read together.
3. This submission is concerned with Matter 2 and in particular questions 1 and 2.

Matter 2, Issue 2

Have the revisions to Policies DLF1 and H1 and relevant supporting text, in relation to housing needs and the housing requirement, been positively prepared and are they justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

Question 1.a

Is the assessment of housing need, using the standard method, consistent with national policy and does it accord with the methodology set out in the Planning Practice Guidance? Are there any 'exceptional circumstances' to justify an alternative approach?

4. NPPG states under the heading ‘*When might it be appropriate to plan for a higher housing need figure than the standard method indicates?*’ (paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 2a-010-20190220) that the standard method provides “*a minimum starting point*” in determining the number of homes needed and does not attempt to predict the impact that future Government policies, changing economic circumstances or other factors might have on demographic behaviour. It confirms that there may be circumstances where it is appropriate to consider whether “*actual housing need is higher than the standard method indicates*”. The NPPG goes on to identify the sort of circumstances where this may be the case and these are considered to apply to Fylde, i.e.

- Situations where increases in housing need are likely to exceed past trends because of growth strategies for the area, such as where funding is in place to promote and facilitate additional growth and where strategic infrastructure improvements are likely to drive an increase in the homes needed. Investment and initiatives such as the Warton Enterprise Zone have the potential to boost the demand for housing within the Fylde, over and above the levels that may be suggested by the Standard Method. Indeed, the evidence base for the authority’s recent adopted Local Plan Examination suggested that the LPA’s future housing requirement should be set at the upper end of the OAN range of 410-430 dpa to support economic growth in the area.
- Situations where previous levels of housing delivery in an area are significantly greater than the outcome from the standard method. The LPA’s net annual completions over the last 3 years since 2016/17 have been 455 dwellings, 470 dwellings and 490 dwellings. It is noted that completions prior to 2016/17 were lower, but as highlighted later this was in the context of the previous Local Plan being significantly time expired, not having any housing allocations or a development strategy in place to deliver the Borough’s housing need, and the Borough being entirely reliant on windfall development but constrained by defined settlement boundaries which had been drawn in a restrictive manner on the

basis that new housing was to be strictly regulated. Moreover, the LPA had imposed a housing moratorium and even once lifted continually refused large housing developments, forcing applicants to obtain permission via s.78 appeals.

5. It is clear that the local planning authority has failed to take account of these quite significant factors in undertaking the partial review. The council's decision not to use the standard method as a starting point and to use it as the figure is not in line with the NPPG approach.
6. Guidance in NPPG states that calculating housing need is "*the first step in the process of deciding how many homes need to be planned for. It should be undertaken separately from assessing land availability, establishing a housing requirement figure and preparing policies to address this such as site allocations*" (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 2a-001-20190220) and goes on to confirm that "*the standard method set out below identifies a minimum annual housing need figure. It does not produce a housing requirement figure*" (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 2a-002-20190220).
7. As part of the review the Local Authority is intending to continue to use the "Liverpool Method" for the assessment of shortfall. This approach will further exacerbate the situation of reducing housing delivery in the setting of the lower range figure and will not support the NPPF objective of "significantly boosting the supply of homes" as outlined in paragraph 59. It is considered that the "Sedgefield Method" should be used and this is explained further in our previous submission.
8. Fylde's approach is to use the standard method Local Housing Need figure as their de facto housing requirement by including it as the proposed lower end of the housing range. The guidance in NPPG establishes that this is not the correct approach, and this should be the starting point or first step, and that this does not generate a housing requirement for a Local Plan. As identified above there are a number reasons why Fylde should be looking to deliver beyond the minimum and these are identified and outline above.

Question 1.b

Is the inclusion of a minimum housing requirement figure as a range justified and effective?

9. It is considered that there is no justification for the use of a range figure in respect of the Local Plan review for Fylde when considering the alternatives. The proposed lower figure in the range offers nothing positive in terms of meeting the Framework objective to significantly boost the supply of housing. The Council has consistently delivered in excess of the proposed lower range figure of 275 dwelling per annum with the authority delivering no fewer than 455 dwellings in any year since 2016/17. The adoption of 275 as a lower range, would form the assessment figure for HDT and five year supply going forward, would represent a significant reduction from the previous housing requirement. The Council should continue to use the current figure or undertake a new SHMA to establish the housing requirement. It is considered that this would be more reflective of the Framework's objective to significantly boost the supply of housing.
10. Further to the above NPPF states in paragraph 65 that "*strategic policy-making authorities should establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area*", this refers to a single figure, not a range. NPPG (Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 68-040-20190722) states: "*where plan makers have successfully argued through plan-making and examination for a requirement set out as a range the Housing Delivery Test will measure authorities against the lower end of the range*". The use of the word argued confirms that the use of a range should not be considered the normal position and that a single housing requirement should ordinarily be applied. When taken together these references in national policy and guidance are clear that a housing requirement figure should be used, not a range, the fact that the authority has not sought to alter the upper figure in the range would suggest that this is not disputed by the authority and that the lower figure should be considered superfluous.
11. Paragraph 4.5 of the Council's Housing Needs and Requirements Background Paper (EDPR04) states that the Council has retained the existing 415 figure as an upper figure in the range to avoid the requirement to deallocate sites and avoid undermining the development strategy. This is an acknowledgement that the

delivery of 415 dwellings is an important part of the delivery of the Development Plan and that if this housing was not delivered it would undermine the development strategy. The Background paper then suggests that this will ensure effectiveness. However, by inserting the proposed lower housing figure the local authority is reducing effectiveness. Given that the delivery of 415 dwellings is necessary not to undermine the development strategy the lower figure will curtail the ability for other suitable and deliverable sites to come forward in the event that allocated sites are not delivered as envisaged by the plan. The use of the single housing requirement will ensure that the development strategy can be delivered and provide flexibility in the plan which would be lost if the lower range was imposed.

Question 2.a

What effect, if any, does a minimum housing requirement as a range of 6,895-8,715 net new homes during the plan period, have on the ability of the Council to deliver affordable housing to meet identified needs

12. NPPF Paragraph 20 states that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for housing (including affordable housing). The introduction of the lower housing figure has potential implications in this regard.
13. The first point of note is that the Council's evidence base does not appear to make any reference to affordable housing. The Housing Needs and Requirements Background Paper (EDPR04) makes no reference to affordable housing and any consideration of its delivery as part of this partial review.
14. NPPF paragraph 61 states that "the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policy" including affordable housing. NPPG provides extensive guidance in respect of the review of affordable housing with explanation as to how to calculate both unmet gross need and newly arising need. The Local authority has not been through this exercise and has disregarded any previous assessment which has been undertaken. The adopted Local Plan identified a need for 249 dwellings per annum.

15. It is entirely unclear, as part of this Partial Review, what the Local Authority considers affordable housing need to be. If the Council acknowledges the 249 dwellings as continuing to be the affordable housing need then the provision of a lower housing figure will inevitably curtail delivery.
16. Alternatively, the Council may argue that affordable housing is “baked into” the housing need figure. Table 1 of the Housing Needs and Requirements Background Paper (EDPR04), incorporates the required affordability adjustment factor which results in an uplift of 22 dwellings per annum, equivalent to eight percent of the housing need figure.
17. In either scenario it would appear prudent for the authority to review the affordable housing policy, policy H4, as part of this review. If the authority maintains that there is a need for 249 affordable dwellings per annum, then the affordable housing requirement should be reviewed in the setting of the much-reduced housing requirement. If it is the authority’s position that affordable housing is incorporated within the Local Housing Need calculation, then a requirement for sites to deliver 30 percent affordable housing would appear excessive.

Question 2.b

What effect, if any, does a minimum housing requirement as a range of 6,895-8,715 net new homes during the plan period, have on the ability of the Council to achieve its economic ambitions to deliver growth, specifically employment provision and jobs, in line with the overall strategy for the Borough?

18. The Local Authority has a number of employment led initiatives including the Warton Enterprise Zone. In reviewing the situation in 2014 as part of the SHMA Turley Associates identified the potential for between 3,500 and 4,500 jobs up to 2030 across the Fylde Coast area. Turley identified job growth as an important driver for housing in the area.
19. The Local Authority’s evidence base to support this partial review does not take account of any implications for a reduction in the housing requirement for assisting in the delivery of the Council’s economic strategy, in particular the delivery of the Enterprise Zones at Warton and Blackpool Airport.

20. As identified earlier NPPG makes specific reference in Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 2a-010-20201216 that housing requirements may need to be higher where there are growth strategies (Enterprise Zones) and where there are infrastructure improvements (M55 improvements). It is imperative that consideration given to this and housing is delivered which will support and meet the needs of the Council's economic strategy providing homes for people to fill the jobs which will ultimately be created. If this is not considered and assessed and ultimately factored into the housing requirement it cannot be determined if this will be achieved. The current proposal for a lower range figure creates the potential for a context in which this will not be achieved.