

# Planning Policy Cabinet Advisory Group— 17<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## Item 2: Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) Update

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Officers are nearing completion of the 2025 Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for the monitoring period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The AMR provides the statutory monitoring framework for the district, assessing the implementation and effectiveness of adopted planning policies through a range of social, economic and environmental indicators. It also reviews the existing evidence base to support the preparation of future planning policies and provides an update on progress in the preparation of forthcoming planning documents.

### 2.0 Important Changes to the 2024/25 AMR

- 2.1 In January 2025, the Local Plan Climate Emergency Review was adopted. This was the main local policy development during the reported monitoring period. As a result, additional monitoring indicators arising from the newly adopted Plan have been incorporated into the AMR to ensure that the monitoring framework remains robust and fully aligned with the most up-to-date Development Plan Document (DPD).
- 2.2 The previous iteration of the AMR reported on progress against the Local Development Scheme (LDS). This set out the timetable for the preparation of planning policy documents including key milestones, anticipated resources, and identified risks to delivery. Since the last monitoring period, Government reform introduced through the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 has removed the statutory requirement for local planning authorities to prepare and maintain a LDS. This has been replaced by a requirement to prepare and keep under review a Local Plan Timetable. The AMR has been updated accordingly to reflect this change in national policy, while continuing to report on key planning documents and processes.

### 3.0 Key Characteristics of the District

- 3.1 The AMR begins with a high-level spatial portrait of the district, setting out the key social, economic and environmental characteristics that define the planning context. It brings together headline information on the district's geography and

settlement pattern, accessibility, natural environment, built heritage, and social and economic conditions.

3.2 This section of the AMR establishes the baseline against which planning policies are monitored and assessed and provides the contextual framework for understanding development trends, opportunities and constraints across the district.

3.3 It then moves on to reporting on the five Strategic Objectives (SO). These are:

**SO1** Delivery of a thriving local economy that fosters investment and growth and supports the opportunities to deliver the economic potential of the district.

**SO2** Provision of a sufficient supply, quality and mix of housing to meet the changing needs of the population and support growth and investment.

**SO3** Protect and enhance the natural, historic and built environment of the district

**SO4** The provision of necessary infrastructure required to support both new and existing development and the creation of sustainable communities.

**SO5** Delivery of a safe and sustainable transport network that improves both connection within and out of the district, reducing the need to travel and encouraging more sustainable forms of transport.

#### 4.0 **SO1 Headlines**

4.1 Within the 2024/25 monitoring period, there was a reduction in planning applications for employment floorspace (whether for 'creation' or 'loss of'), from 19 applications in the 2023/24 monitoring period, to 12 in this monitoring period. These lower levels of planning application activity are consistent with wider national trends.

4.2 Approvals for employment-related development fell by 50% in 2024/25, with limited consents for large-scale new floorspace. Approved schemes would deliver 3,193 sqm of new employment space, while losses reduced slightly to 483 sqm. None of this recorded loss would be within allocated employment areas.

4.3 The 2025 Employment Land Review highlighted that while the overall supply of employment land is sufficient, the deliverability and geographic distribution of sites require review.

4.4 The Council has received the Town Centre Health Check Report as part of the Retail and Commercial Leisure Study. The report assesses the vitality and viability of Lancaster, Morecambe and Carnforth using Planning Practice Guidance key performance indicators. Vacancy rates vary across the district's main centres, with Lancaster recording 70 vacant units (13.3%), Morecambe 83 vacant units (25.6%), and Carnforth 16 vacant units (19.3%), compared to a UK average vacancy rate of 14.1%.

## 5.0 SO2 Headlines

- 5.1 Due to the December 2024 NPPF amendments, the district saw an increase in the local housing need figure from 485 in 2023/24 to 627 in 2024/25.
- 5.2 Housing completions decreased slightly from the last monitoring period, falling from 214 dwellings in 2023/24 (including 57 student and other residential institution units) to 196 dwellings in 2024/25, of which 12 were student units.
- 5.3 Of the 196 completions recorded during the monitoring period, 81 dwellings were affordable housing, representing 41% of total completions.
- 5.4 Housing delivery during the period was primarily concentrated within the Carnforth sub-area, with the ongoing development at Scotland Road, Carnforth accounting for all completions in this location. Completions were also recorded in a small number of villages, including Halton, Over Kellet and Dolphinholme.

## 6.0 SO3 Headlines

- 6.1 As in previous monitoring reports areas of biodiversity importance are monitored by the Council. Areas of biodiversity importance are defined as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS), Ramsar Sites, Biological Heritage Sites (BHS) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 6.2 A new monitoring indicator introduced through the Climate Emergency Review records approvals for energy efficiency, climate mitigation and adaptation retrofit schemes to existing dwellings. Approvals for the 2024/25 monitoring period are set out in Table 1 below.

Energy Efficiency Measure	Number of approvals
Solar	38
Heat Pump	30
Insulation	4

(Table 1: The number of approvals for solar, heat pumps and insulation for 2024/25)

6.3 Heritage assets are also closely monitored. There are 3338 Local Heritage Assets recorded across the district. As of the 2024/25 monitoring period, 11 listed buildings within the district are on the national 'Heritage at Risk' register produced by Historic England.

## **7.0 SO4 Headlines**

7.1 Throughout the last monitoring period, the Council has continued to approve schemes for new development. These schemes have sought to meet the districts needs for new housing, employment and retail as well as ensure that the green/blue infrastructure required by communities is also protected and new areas created.

7.2 To support the delivery of new development, the necessary supporting infrastructure is identified through the Local Plan process. As part of the New Local Plan, these requirements will be set out in an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and Infrastructure Delivery Schedule (IDS), which will identify the infrastructure required to support sustainable development, along with indicative costs, delivery timescales and the bodies responsible for delivery.

7.3 As part of the plan making process, the council will also undertake a Viability Study for the Local Plan Review. The role of Viability Assessment will be a critical component of the Local Plan process to ensure its expectations can realistically deliver viable development.

7.4 Infrastructure Funding Statements are also being prepared and reported for the 2024/25 monitoring period. The Infrastructure Funding Statements provide a summary of all developer contributions relating to Section 106 Agreements for the last financial year.

## **8.0 SO5 Headlines**

8.1 The district continues to benefit from strong transport connectivity across a range of modes. Rail accessibility is particularly good, with seven railway stations providing both internal and external connectivity. Network Rail has continued improvements to Lancaster Railway Station.

8.2 Bus passenger numbers totalled 36.5 million in the district for 2024/25. This is a 7.1% decrease over 2024 and as 13.3% lower than pre-pandemic. There are however planned changes and improvements to bus infrastructure from 2026.

8.3 The Lancaster Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2024) identified an aspirational cycling network of approximately 355km to improve

connectivity, safety and coverage across the district. Walking and Cycling Statistics for England indicate that 10% of adults cycled at least once a week in 2023/24, broadly in line with the England average (10.1%). This represents a decline from 12.8% in 2022/23, reflecting a continuing pattern of year-to-year fluctuation in cycling participation since 2016.