

# **Planning Policy Cabinet Advisory Group – 24 March 2026**

## **Item 4: Local Plan - Consultation report: Conclusions and findings from the Scoping and Early Participation consultation**

### **1.0 Background and Context**

- 1.1 The Local Plan Review is now working to the new plan making system that emerged through changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) and the Planning Infrastructure Bill (March 2025). In December 2024 the Government directed all local planning authorities in England to update their local plan preparation timetable and to submit the updated timetable directly to the government by 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025. Lancaster City Council published their new Local Plan Timetable in April 2025.
- 1.2 The Local Plan Timetable set out an ambitious route map for the delivery of the plan and reflected the Central Government's stated ambition around the delivery of Local Plan's within a 30-month timeframe. Guidance from the Government suggested that local planning authorities working under the new system should undertake a non-statutory period of 'Scoping and Early Participation' prior to commencing the formal period of plan making. The direction is that this scoping stage should last for no less than 4 months in time and allows local planning authorities to explore the potential scope of their plans and undertake early engagement with key stakeholders.

### **2.0 Purpose of the Scoping and Early Participation Engagement**

- 2.1 As members will be aware the City Council has undertaken two scoping consultations. The first took place in 2024 between 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and then the second more recently between 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025 and 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026. The additional stage of consultation was undertaken following the Council's decision to prepare a Local Plan under the new planning system.
- 2.2 It is important to highlight, and it has been emphasised to participants, that comments received during this initial round of Scoping consultation in 2024 are equally as relevant and will be treated in exactly the same way as those responses received during the latest (second round) of Scoping and Early Participation consultation. The engagement which has already taken place remains valid and both are robust components of preparing the Local Plan Review.
- 2.3 Despite the change in plan making system being the catalyst, the Scoping and Early Participation stage did present the opportunity to reflect on the engagement which had already taken place, combined with some of the evidence which had already been produced, to have more detailed conversations early in the plan-making process.

- 2.4 One of the fundamental aspects of the new system is the requirement for the council to prepare a single Local Plan for the whole district. This has meant our understanding around the scope and purpose of the Local Plan Review has shifted since we initially began the review in 2024. This is particularly pertinent in relation to the future role and status of the Arnside and Silverdale AONB DPD. We have therefore been able to have more detailed discussions with those affected within the Arnside and Silverdale National Landscape. (Further details, and the outcomes of which, are set out below).
- 2.5 The publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024 also brought about significant change, particularly in terms of housing delivery and altered approaches to the status of the Green Belt, both of which have significant implications for our District. Therefore, the opportunity to open up the initial lines of communication and engagement and go back to the beginning of the plan making process, was a beneficial exercise for all interested parties. Whilst the lines of communication are always open, it was a useful to be able to set aside a specific 4-month period to actively invite comments early on in the plan making process.

### **3.0 What We Engaged On**

- 3.1 Like the previous Scoping consultation back in early 2024, the content of this Scoping and Early Participation was very broad and based around two open-ended questions:
1. What matters or issues should be looked at by the new Local Plan?
  2. Why are these matters or issues important?

### **4.0 How We Engaged**

- 4.1 The consultation was launched online and was promoted via the Planning Policy newsletter and the Council website. The consultation webpage can be found here: [Early participation, get involved: closes 26 January 2026](#).
- 4.2 Discussions also continued with key stakeholders. For example, with the Environment Agency regarding the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and flood risk modelling. Conversations also continued with neighbouring authorities. We met with Westmorland and Furness Council to discuss strategic cross-boundary issues and Local Plan Timetables. A meeting was also held with both Councils and the Arnside and Silverdale National Landscape team to discuss their management plan and future call for sites. Regular project meetings are being maintained between the three organisations to ensure joint working and a consistent approach is taken through both the Lancaster District, and Westmorland and Furness, Local Plans in light of the new directive under the new system.
- 4.3 In addition to this we ran 3 public face to face drop-in events in the Arnside and Silverdale National Landscape (details provided in the table below) to give people the

chance to ask questions and discuss the call for sites process, as well as the change in direction away from the jointly adopted LCC & W&F AONB DPD which we will not be able to update due to the governments new ‘one area-one plan’ approach. The aim of the drop-in sessions was to allow us to:

- Promote that the City Council will be undertaking a new Local Plan which, upon completion, will supersede the current Arnsdale & Silverdale AONB DPD. Promote the purpose of the new Local Plan in that it has the scope to revisit all issues relating to the National Landscape, including policy approaches and land allocation; and
- Explore the role and function of the current AAP. What elements of the Plan are working well? Which don’t work as well? Are there any gaps with issues not being addressed?

Gaskell Memorial Hall (Silverdale)	Saturday 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2025, 10am-1pm
Warton Village Hall	Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2025, 4-7pm
Yealand Village Hall	Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> November 2025, 4-7pm

4.4 The drop-in events were well received and attended, with the most popular venue being Silverdale. Residents and landowners were in attendance and had the opportunity to discuss the Local Plan Review process and also potential options for submitting sites through the SHELAA process.

4.5 An online Business Forum was also held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2025. Officers provided a presentation setting out the purpose of a Local Plan, process, timescales and importantly how business can get involved in the preparation of the Local Plan. There were 14 attendees, and again, this event was well received.

## 5.0 Key Findings/Issues Raised

5.1 In terms of written responses, 24 were received to the Scoping and Early Participation consultation. 4 of which were from members of the public, 12 from developers/land promoters, 2 from neighbouring local authorities (Wyre Council and North Yorkshire Council), and 6 from other key stakeholders. These included National Highways, Lancashire County Council Schools Team, United Utilities, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and the Theatres Trust. All of

which emphasised their willingness to engage and be involved in the preparation of the emerging Local Plan.

- 5.2 Given that fifty percent of the responses received were from representatives of the development industry, it is not too surprising that the most common occurring theme amongst the written feedback was **housing**. A number of comments referred to the district's minimum housing requirement under the new standard method, and how this should be seen as the minimum starting point, with the need to include adjustments for affordable housing and account for potential economic growth strategies. Reference was also made to the Council's most recent 5-year housing land supply, which demonstrates 2.8 years' worth of supply against the current adopted housing requirement, and the need to make up for under delivery as part of the Local Plan Review. Land promoters also sought the opportunity to highlight the availability of their sites, which included the known strategic sites to the north, south and east of Lancaster.
- 5.3 In comparison to the comments received to the Scoping exercise in 2024, there was an increase in responses in relation to **employment**. Potentially sparked by the Employment Land Review that was published in May 2025, which was referred to in a number of responses. Concerns were also raised regarding the decreasing number of employment development approvals and completions within the district, and the absence of available stock and choice, quality floorspace and larger units, in suitable locations.
- 5.4 Comments relating to the **Green Belt** were also received, but this time calling for a need to review the Green Belt. In December 2024 a revised NPPF was published which significantly altered Green Belt policy, particularly in terms of releasing land from the Green Belt and introducing 'grey belt'. Those who raised the need to deliver more housing, also highlighted their support to undertake a Green Belt Assessment to identify land that meets the definition of 'grey belt'.
- 5.5 **Security** was also a theme which occurred more prominently in this second round of consultation, perhaps in part due to the nature of the organisations who responded. With sites such as the Halton Training camp highlighted for its role in national security.
- 5.6 Other topics covered included education, water management, transport, energy, protected landscapes, transport and community facilities.
- 5.7 The findings of the 2024 Scoping Consultation can be viewed here: [Findings: Scoping & Early Participation: 8 Feb 17 May 2024 | Local Plan Review](#). This webpage will be updated in due course to reflect the findings of this latest Scoping and Early Participation exercise.