

Dear Mr Dawson and Mr Dawson,

Many thanks for your additional comments, specifically in relation to your site off Wham Lane and the opportunities for bringing forward an affordable housing scheme.

The comments we have received relate to the delivery of Central Lancashire Core Strategy Policy 7: Affordable Housing and Special Needs Housing and how this has been taken forward within the Plan. Additionally, your comments seek a response as to whether site SR011 could qualify as a rural exception site. I aim to answer these queries below.

Policy 7 aims to provide a mechanism through which to deliver affordable housing and special needs housing across Central Lancashire within the plan period, up until 2026. As you have mentioned there are specific targets set out within the policy to achieve varying levels of affordable housing dependent upon location. In urban areas the authorities seek up to 30%, and in rural areas the authorities seek a higher target of 35%. Policy clause (a) does allow for the possibility of rural exception sites for 100% affordable housing within the Green Belt.

For a rural exception site to be considered as such it would need to be 100% affordable and there would need to be clear evidence of an up to date need within a specific area. This could be based on either a survey of people in the village or a 'call for interest' in a scheme that developers or the Council would be required to do. A means testing approach would also need to be undertaken by housing officers within the Council or a housing association to create a list of eligible people for any scheme. Normally this would require eligible occupants to live or work locally, in compliance with the definition of a rural exception site set out within the Glossary to the NPPF.

Any scheme that could be considered acceptable is likely to be small scale and would be subject to phasing to assess how successful the scheme is in terms of 'take up'. On a matter of clarity it is worth pointing out that the site is being suggested for Village Development which would not comply with the policy considerations for a rural exception site. As this would require the site to deliver 100% affordable housing and be limited to that use, whereas Village Development could be appropriate for a broader range of uses.

In terms of the delivery of affordable housing across the borough Policy 7 was adopted in July 2012 and as such no monitoring evidence has been produced to assess how effective affordable housing delivery is now this target approach has been included within the development plan. The Plan allocates enough housing land to deliver its 15 year housing requirement as well as an additional 20% buffer for 5 years to take account of previous under delivery. It is the Council's view that when the Plan is adopted and sites come forward for planning permission, the target for affordable housing will be delivered in line with Policy 7 and reported on annually through the Annual Monitoring Report. It is the Council's confirmed position that there is no need for a Green Belt review for either market or affordable housing.

In relation to national policy there is recognition within the NPPF about the importance of delivering affordable houses, and a description in paragraph 89 which states that limited affordable housing may be appropriate in the Green Belt. However, one of the key themes of the NPPF is the importance of the Green Belt and the need to maintain its openness. Limited development is appropriate depending on its type, scale and need.

Housing Need in the New Longton area

The Council have recently gone out to tender and appointed consultants to produce an update to their Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment (SHMA) to gain an up to date picture of housing needs across the borough. As part of this work understanding the need for affordable and special needs housing within different areas in the borough will be an important consideration.

After discussions with colleagues in the Housing Department they can confirm that need within the New Longton area for social rented accommodation is currently 35 households who have professed New Longton as a preference to live, with the vast majority looking for a one bed apartment and in the age bracket 56 years+. However, this data has been compiled for purposes other than planning policy and does not give an accurate picture of affordable housing need taking all aspects into consideration, which the update to the SHMA will do when it is completed.

Additionally, the Plan allocates a site off Spinney Close as Village Development which could be suitable for affordable housing if a need is established. The site is 0.6ha and could potentially deliver in the region of 15 to 18 affordable dwellings. The Council has also recently lost an appeal on Land off Long Moss Lane for 27 dwellings, of which 9 dwellings will be affordable housing.

In conclusion, I concur that we have evidence where you submitted the site for a mixture of uses including community uses alongside residential uses and that this has been your intention throughout the process. Due to the Green Belt classification of this site and the position of New Longton as a settlement that is not specifically listed within the hierarchy in Policy 1, the Council would consider either use to be inappropriate. As we have expressed in our earlier meetings, at the hearings and confirm again in writing our position remains the same and we consider the evidence highlighted above to ratify our position in regards to the Land off Wham Lane not being considered suitable as a rural exception site.