

Proposed Broad Location for New Development East Lancashire Road Corridor

Key Questions

What is the East Lancashire Road corridor?

The 'East Lancashire Road corridor' is a name we have used to describe a relatively narrow area to the north of the A580 East Lancashire Road, throughout its length in the borough, from Golborne in the west to Astley in the east.

What is a broad location for new development?

The current plan that we are working on is called the Core Strategy. With one exception, at Northleigh, it does not allocate land. It is a broad strategy for the future development of the whole of the borough. Within that strategy, areas where large scale or other significant development will be focussed are identified as 'broad locations for new development'. This will establish the principle of development in those locations. The details of the development – the choice of site or sites, the boundaries, the amount and type of development, the layout, and other details will be determined at later dates, through a separate plan-making process and the planning application process, in accordance with the Core Strategy.

What sort of development is proposed?

The proposal for the East Lancashire Road corridor is for lower density, higher value housing, including an element of affordable housing.

Why do we need more housing?

The population of the borough is forecast to increase from 307,000 to more than 323,000 by 2026. This is largely due to natural change with births exceeding deaths but it also due partly to in-migration.

In addition to the population change, the average household size in the borough is forecast to continue to decrease, from 2.32 to 2.12 people per household by 2026. This arises from people setting up home prior to having a family, living longer after their family has grown, and through family breakdown. As such the number of households in the borough is forecast to increase from 134,000 to 151,000 by 2026.

What will happen if the Council doesn't select sites for development - will this mean no more building will happen?

The council has a responsibility to ensure there is sufficient land identified to 2026 to meet future housing needs and that sites are deliverable. The Core Strategy and subsequent development plan documents will not be approved if the Planning Inspector is not convinced that the council has done this. If sufficient land of the right type and in the right location is not made available, there will be a shortage of new housing. This will mean that problems of affordability will worsen and that planning applications for housing would be difficult to refuse and would be won on appeal, possibly in inappropriate locations.

Why has the East Lancashire Road corridor been chosen?

The vast majority of new housing development will be in the 'east-west core' of the borough, from Wigan and Ashton in the west, through Ince, Platt Bridge, Hindley, Atherton and Leigh to Tyldesley in the east. The East Lancashire Road corridor is outside of this area but is a highly attractive location for housing development, particularly for lower density, higher value housing.

It is important to provide for such housing to ensure that the borough contributes fully to a competitive Manchester city-region. If we don't provide a full range of quality housing opportunities, higher earners will continue to drift away from the borough and people moving into the city-region for opportunities such as MediaCity:UK at Salford Quays will not look here.

The site options are generally less constrained than in the east-west core where there are issues of viability. These issues arise from the level of new infrastructure that needs to be provided, together with the significant reductions in the value of land, the availability of credit and public sector funding.

Some of the land value will be captured to fund essential infrastructure in the east-west core and help deliver regeneration.

What are the site options?

The site options are:

- Land at Rothwell's Farm, Lowton Road, Golborne – up to 17 hectares
- Land east of Stone Cross Lane, Lowton – up to 27 hectares
- Land at Pocket Nook Lane, Lowton – up to 69 hectares
- Land at Coldalhurst Lane, Larkhill, Astley – up to 14 hectares

Are these sites in the Green Belt?

The site options are not, and have never been, in the Green Belt. All of the site options are designated as safeguarded land under policy GB2 in the Replacement Wigan Unitary Development Plan 2006. This means that they are reserved for potential development in the future, if they are needed, without needing to alter the Green Belt boundary. They were similarly safeguarded in previous development plans dating back to 1984.

Will only one site be developed?

We cannot guarantee that it will only be one site but we do not anticipate needing more than one site before 2026. It could be only part of one site, it could be more.

How will the site(s) be chosen?

We will determine which site, or sites, and all of the other details appropriate to a development plan through a subsequent development plan document. The public will be invited to contribute at all key stages. The document will have to accord with the Core Strategy, including draft policy SP4 in the Revised Proposals and Draft Policies document, but otherwise it will go through similar processes of preparation as the Core Strategy, including community and stakeholder involvement, a draft plan and an examination-in-public. All evidence will be considered including the need for the development, the scale of development required, the capacity of infrastructure, the ability to integrate the site and the ability to deliver the development, as set out in the draft policy.

When will the houses be built?

Development could not take place until land is allocated in a subsequent development plan document and planning permission is secured. This would not be until 2014 at the earliest and it is likely to be later.

Who will build the houses and who will get the profit?

The sites are in private ownership and the houses will be built by private housing development companies. The land owners will benefit from enhanced land values and house builders will make a profit on development. However, some of that enhanced value will be captured for the wider community benefit through a local tariff or similar mechanisms. There will probably be some involvement by a registered social landlord (Housing Association) in the delivery of the affordable housing.

What effect will this new building have on traffic congestion? What is the council doing about this?

There are queuing issues at some junctions to/from and on the A580 East Lancashire Road at peak times. Work is ongoing to develop improved 'adaptive' traffic light controls to reduce queuing. Otherwise, details of vehicle access points into the chosen site(s) will need careful consideration in any relevant planning application. Each candidate site has the potential to be accessed from the existing road network. A new access directly off the A580 is less desirable as it would slow down traffic and increase congestion and risks of accidents.

Public transport, walking and cycling also need to be made more attractive alternatives to the private car.

Should the development be on previously-developed, brownfield land?

We have assessed the capacity of all brownfield land throughout the borough and it will provide over three-quarters of new housing land through to 2026. However, some greenfield land is needed to supplement the supply of brownfield land and there are no large brownfield sites available within the East Lancashire Road corridor.

Are the sites good quality agricultural land?

None of these sites are grades 1, 2 and 3a 'best and most versatile' agricultural land under the national agricultural land classification, which is protected from irreversible development by national planning policy. Other grades are 3b, 3c, 4 and 5. The sites are classified as:

- Land at Rothwell's Farm, Lowton Road, Golborne – Grade 3c
- Land east of Stone Cross Lane, Lowton – Grade 3b
- Land at Pocket Nook Lane, Lowton – Grade 3c
- Land at Coldalhurst Lane, Larkhill, Astley – Grade 3c

What will happen to the wildlife that lives on these sites?

Agricultural land is generally less rich as wildlife habitat the more intensively it is farmed. We will ensure that detailed surveys are carried out to inform the site allocation in the subsequent development plan document. Measures will be required to protect or enhance any significant wildlife habitat and species.

Is there capacity in schools and for other services and facilities?

The demand for places at local schools and the use of other services and facilities can be accommodated, particularly given the lead-in time once the Core Strategy is adopted.

Will it lead to more flooding?

Part of the Coldalhurst Lane site at Larkhill, Astley is part of the flood zone for Astley Brook. This would be likely to mean that a reduced area of the site could be developed. There are additional issues with the local pumping station that may need additional investment to increase capacity.

There are also issues of sewer flooding in parts of Lowton and measures have been introduced to tackle this. Further measures may be required to accommodate additional development.

There will be tight controls on development to ensure that surface water run-off is not increased and, if necessary, is reduced, in accordance with draft policy CP17 'Flooding' in the Revised Proposals and Draft Policies document.

Is there sufficient capacity in the electricity network?

There are no known issues with the current electricity network and future demand from development can be accommodated through network expansion, if necessary.

Will it spoil my view of the countryside?

If you overlook one of the sites now and at some point in the future it is developed, then your view will change. This is inevitable when development is allowed but we will impose safeguards and conditions through the planning application process, to ensure good design, quality landscaping and the protection of amenities, in line with our policies including draft policies CP10 'Design' and CP19 'Environmental protection' in the Revised Proposals and Draft Policies document.

How can I influence what happens? Does it matter what I think?

You can influence what happens by getting involved now in the preparation of the Core Strategy and, if necessary, through the preparation of a subsequent development plan document and the planning application process in the future.

The point of consulting local people is to take their views into account when deciding how to go forward. New development has to happen in the borough as we have to provide for new homes and jobs. Wherever development happens, local people will be understandably concerned about its impact on their area and community.

We will consider what people tell us and then make a recommendation to the Council on how best to proceed. As noted above there will be one further opportunity to comment after this stage before we submit the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State.

What happens next?

We have produced a separate handout explaining what happens next. It is also covered in chapter 6 of the Revised Proposals and Draft Policies document.