



Central Lancashire Local Plan 2023-2041

Statement of Common Ground Between the Central Lancashire Authorities (Chorley Council, Preston City Council and South Ribble Borough Council) and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

June 2025

CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Background of Central Lancashire	2
3. Strategic Geography.....	2
4. Joint Working: Central Lancashire Authorities and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.	3
5. Strategic Matters	4
Strategic Matter 1: Housing Development (Need and Distribution).....	4
Strategic Matter 2: Economic Development (Need and Distribution)	6
Strategic Matter 3: Transport.....	6
Strategic Matter 4: Natural Environment.....	7
Strategic Matter 5: Community Facilities	7
Strategic Matter 6: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Needs	7
6. Signatories	9

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been developed in order to address strategic planning matters between the parties consisting of the Central Lancashire Authorities (CLAs) of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble, and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwD).
- 1.2 The SoCG has been prepared to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirements. Paragraph 24 to 27 of the NPPF¹ state that “Local Planning Authorities are under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries”. Moreover, the “strategic policy-making authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statement of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these”. Paragraphs 20 to 23 set out how the duty to cooperate works and how strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries require effective and on-going cooperation. These matters include:
- Housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;
 - Infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
 - Community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and
 - Conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- 1.3 According to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)², a SoCG is a written record of the progress made by strategic policy-making authorities during the process of planning for strategic cross-boundary matters. It documents where effective co-operation is and is not happening throughout the plan-making process and is a way of demonstrating at examination that plans are deliverable over the plan period and based on effective joint working across local authority boundaries. It forms part of the evidence required to demonstrate compliance with the duty to cooperate.
- 1.4 Both NPPF and PPG make it clear that a SoCG should primarily be produced to document the strategic cross-boundary matters. Therefore, this SoCG is the

¹ NPPF Version December 2023

² Under the Section of Plan-Making

written record account of the progress achieved in the planning process for strategic matters in Central Lancashire and how the CLAs have worked effectively to fulfil their duty to cooperate. The approach taken in writing this statement is in accordance with the requirements of the PPG.

2. Background of Central Lancashire

- 2.1 Central Lancashire covers the geographical areas of Preston City Council, Chorley Borough Council and South Ribble Borough Council, which functions as one integrated local economy and commuting area. It is a single housing market area with high levels of self-containment, or families moving within the area.
- 2.2 A Central Lancashire Local Plan Team has been created and jointly funded by the three local authorities specifically to undertake the work required to deliver the review of the local plan. The team is accountable to all three local authorities, reporting back to each home team and guiding the process forward.

3. Strategic Geography

- 3.1 Central Lancashire comprises an urban core surrounded by attractive scenery ranging from the Pennine foothills/West Pennine Moors in the East, to the Lancashire Plain and the Ribble and Alt Estuary in the West. The area is bounded by Fylde and West Lancashire to the West, Ribble Valley and Blackburn with Darwen to the East, Wyre to the North and Greater Manchester to the South.
- 3.2 The Central Lancashire area is a diverse mix of urban and rural including towns, villages, and sparsely populated countryside. Some of the main landscape attractions and protected wildlife habitats in the area include the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, the West Pennine Moors SSSI, and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries. There are also significant areas of open space and attractive public parks for sport, leisure, and recreation. Grid-iron pattern streets typify the urban areas of Preston, Chorley, and Leyland, as workers housing was built tightly around the mills and industrial complexes.
- 3.3 The area covered by the Central Lancashire Local Plan is shown in the map below.



4. Joint Working: Central Lancashire Authorities and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

4.1 The purpose of the SoCG is to inform the Inspector appointed for the Central Lancashire Local Plan Examination and other parties about the areas of agreement or otherwise between the CLAs and BwD in relation to key strategic matters contained in the Central Lancashire Local Plan (2023-2041). Duty to cooperate engagement has been a consideration in the development of the policies, supporting explanatory text and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the draft Local Plan.

- 4.2 Meetings have been held between the Councils during the plan making process, to discuss and attempt to resolve issues arising through the production of the draft Plan, although some actions have not been resolved. This SoCG reflects the agreed position between the CLAs and BwD for submission to the Inspector of the Central Lancashire Local Plan Examination, and the areas where effective co-operation has and has not happened throughout the plan-making process.
- 4.3 BwD have submitted an objection to the Plan through the Regulation 19 consultation. As a very broad summary, BwD make the case that the CLLP does not pay sufficient heed to the national political and planning imperative to stimulate and enable sustainable economic and housing growth. Furthermore, BwD's objection contends that the Plan fails to meet all four of the soundness tests for Local Plans. This includes the concern that joint working with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council on cross-boundary strategic matters has not been fully effective. The detailed arguments made by BwD are not reproduced within this document. Summaries and responses to these can be found within the councils Regulation 19 Consultation Statement. The arguments and objectives of BwD's Regulation 19 representation are of a nature, where there are matters that the parties unfortunately cannot reach agreement at this stage. Both parties however hope to discuss these further during the examination. The scope of this statement therefore sets out the confirmed points of agreement, and disagreement, between the parties regarding the strategic matters.

5. Strategic Matters

Strategic Matter 1: Housing Development (Need and Distribution)

- 5.1 The CLAs jointly commissioned a Local Housing Needs and Demand Assessment along with a Central Lancashire Housing Study. The Housing Study has had a number of iterations with the most recent update published in December 2024.
- 5.2 The table below outlines the proposed housing split between the CLAs from the Housing Study compared to the current Central Lancashire Core Strategy requirement, the housing requirement proposed at Preferred Options and the standard method:

Authority	Current Core Strategy	Proposed at Preferred Options	Standard Method*	Recommended 1:1 Commuting Ratio
Chorley	417	384	506	410
Preston	507	500	269	441
South Ribble	417	450	169	386
Total	1,341	1,334	994	1,237

*Standard method as outlined in the NPPF published December 2023

- 5.3 The Housing Study identifies that a range of indicators continue to comprehensively support the conclusion that housing need within Central Lancashire exceeds the result of the Government’s Standard Method (2023 formula). The recommended scenario from the original Housing Study was the employment-led (Commuting Ratio ((CR) -1-to-1) scenario which produced a dwelling growth outcome of 1,334 per year. The equivalent figure for the updated employment-led (CR-1-to-1) scenario is either 1,137 per year (applying 2011 Census economic activity rates) or 1,237 per year (applying 2021 Census economic activity rates). The latter of these is the newly recommended housing need figure.
- 5.4 A redistribution of the three identified housing requirements has been applied to reflect the spatial strategy drivers to promote housing and related growth in the most sustainable locations and to enable existing commitments to come forward.
- 5.5 Following publication of the revised NPPF in December 2024, the annual housing need has been increased to 1,643 dwellings per annum, or 1,314 in order to achieve 80% of the annual housing need using the new standard method formula, in accordance with the transitional arrangements. The additional 77 dwellings per annum has been distributed between the CLAs, in order to meet the minimum 80% requirement of annual need.
- 5.6 The housing requirement is distributed between the districts as follows:

Chorley = 334
 Preston = 520
 South Ribble = 460

This is 329 per year below the Government’s new Standard Method housing need figure or almost 6,000 homes over the plan period. Nevertheless, the CLA’s remain confident that the Plan is in accordance with the NPPF’s transitional arrangements.

- 5.7 Whilst BwD dispute the plan’s housing requirement, no exchange of housing need across administrative boundaries is necessary. The scope of the agreement regarding housing requirements is therefore limited to this matter.

<p>Strategic Matter 1: Housing Development</p>	<p>The signatories agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the published evidence base, there is no identified housing need arising from the CLAs that is required to be met by BwD; • From the published evidence base, there is no identified housing need in BwD that is required to be met by the CLAs.
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Strategic Matter 2: Economic Development (Need and Distribution)

- 5.8 The CLAs commissioned an Employment Land Study to review the future employment land requirement for the three local authorities, in the light of changing market conditions. The study also provides an Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for the CLLP. The study separates need by industry, providing requirements for office land and industrial and warehouse uses. The combined OAN for the CLAs as per the most recent Employment Land Study is outlined in the table below:

Authority	Combined Employment Use OAN
Chorley	41.45 ha
Preston	74.43 ha
South Ribble	56.99 ha
Total	172.87 ha

- 5.9 The CLAs are proposing that the Plan's employment need will be met within the borders of Central Lancashire, with more land than required to meet the OAN being available through allocations and extant planning permissions. However, BwD argue that the Plan's provision for employment land will not meet the full employment needs of the Plan area, as set out in the detailed objection.
- 5.10 Whilst BwD dispute the plan's identified employment requirement, no exchange of employment need is necessary. The scope of the agreement regarding employment requirements is therefore limited to this matter

<p>Strategic Matter 2: Economic Development</p>	<p>The signatories agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the published evidence base, there is no identified economic need arising from the CLAs that is required to be met by BwD; • From the published evidence base, there is no identified economic need in BwD required to be met by the CLAs.
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Strategic Matter 3: Transport

- 5.11 Lancashire County Council is the Local Highways Authority for the CLAs and as such, has taken on the responsibility of commissioning the Transport Study for the CLLP. This Transport Study will form a key part of the evidence base for the CLLP.
- 5.12 BwD understand that highways are the responsibility of Lancashire County Council and that the CLAs do not determine the highways related mitigation measures that will be put in place to support new development.

5.13 BwD have not raised any strategic matters regarding transport.

Strategic Matter 3: Transport	The signatories agree that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no outstanding unresolved strategic issues relating to transport, based on the published evidence base and the identified housing and economic needs.
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Strategic Matter 4: Natural Environment

5.14 It is not anticipated that there will be any strategic cross-boundary issues related to the Natural Environment.

Strategic Matter 4: Environment	The signatories agree that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no outstanding unresolved strategic issues relating to the Natural Environment.
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Strategic Matter 5: Community Facilities

5.15 DtC discussions took place around community facilities related to schools, health, and community facilities. The CLAs assured BwD that the relevant organisations that manage community facilities have been engaged in the plan-making process.

5.16 The CLAs are aware of cross-border movement of pupils between the CLAs and some neighbouring authorities. Lancashire County Council is the education authority for the CLAs and as such are responsible for determining school places, extending, and establishing new schools. BwD is the education authority for BwD. The CLAs have discussed with BwD their understanding of the County Council's methodology and requested that specific education related issues be discussed directly with the County.

Strategic Matter 5: Community Facilities	The signatories agree that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no outstanding unresolved strategic issues relating to community facilities.
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Strategic Matter 6: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Needs

5.17 In 2024, the Council published a Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). This analysed the latest available

evidence to identify the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople across the study area which included all three CLAs.

- 5.18 The GTAA identifies the following additional need for permanent gypsy and traveller pitches across Central Lancashire over the plan period, which accounts for cultural need under the revised Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS):

	Chorley	Preston	South Ribble	Central Lancashire Total
5yr Authorised Pitch Shortfall (2024/25 to 2028/29)	10	17	0	27
Longer-term need				
<i>Over period 2029/30 to 2033/34</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Over period 2034/35 to 2038/39</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Over period 2039/40 to 2040/41</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>6</i>
Longer-term need TOTAL	3	19	0	22
TOTAL NET SHORTFALL 2024/25 to 2040/41	13	36	0	49

- 5.19 In Chorley, the pitch shortfall relates to future family needs on an authorised site, and current and future family needs arising from an unauthorised site.
- 5.20 The CLAs are proposing the introduction of negotiated stopping to address transit needs, as recommended in the GTAA.
- 5.21 The GTAA does not identify any need for travelling showpeople.
- 5.22 The CLAs are preparing a Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Topic Paper which will set out how the need identified in the GTAA will be met.
- 5.23 Through DtC meetings, it was determined that BwD do not have the capacity to meet unmet need in Central Lancashire. Consequently, at no point have the CLAs requested that BwD receive a proportion of the Plan's Gypsy/Traveller or Travelling Showpeople's needs. The reverse is also true.

<p>Strategic Matter 6: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Needs</p>	<p>The signatories agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unmet gypsy and traveller need in Chorley and Preston will not be met by BwD; • There is no unmet gypsy and traveller need in BwD required to be met in Central Lancashire.
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6. Signatories

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

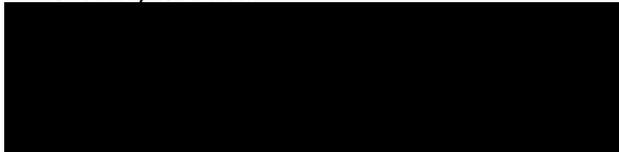
On behalf of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, I can confirm that:

- There is common ground on the draft planning policies set out in the emerging Central Lancashire Local Plan (2023-2041), with the exception of the specific policy objections set out in Section 4 of the Council's response to the Central Lancashire Local Plan Regulation 19 Consultation (namely SS1, SS2, SS3-6, HS1 and EC1).
- that there are no unresolved strategic issues in relation to the specific strategic matters set out at numbers 3,4,5 and 6 of Section 5 of this statement.

Signed:	
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Central Lancashire Authorities

Chorley Council



Zoe Whiteside, Head of Spatial Planning

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