



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
West Lancashire Borough Council**

September 2025

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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 West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC).
- 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. It is therefore appropriate to work strategically in collaboration to ensure our policy is joined up and complementary.
- 2.2 The joint working on planning-related matters began in 2008, when the three councils came together and produced a Central Lancashire Core Strategy, which was adopted in July 2012. It sets out the strategic planning policies for Central Lancashire. In 2018, a review of the Core Strategy and individual local plans began with a view to deliver a single Central Lancashire Local Plan (CLLP), reflecting both the shared strategic policy objectives and more detailed non-strategic policies.
- 2.3 A Central Lancashire Strategic Planning Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) has been established, made-up of elected members from each authority. This Committee has the responsibility to consider proposals, open them up to debate and move to endorse or challenge them at their discretion. Members from Lancashire County Council (LCC) also attend the JAC.
- 2.4 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 is in the heart of Lancashire within the North West Region and covers the three local authority districts of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble. It 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 West Lancashire 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 between the CLAs and WLBC 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 throughout the plan making process, to discuss and resolve issues arising through the production of the draft Plan. These meetings are identified in the Duty to Cooperate Statement. This SoCG reflects the agreed position between the CLAs and WLBC for submission to the Inspector of the Central Lancashire Local Plan Examination.
- 4.3 This Statement sets out the confirmed points of agreement between the parties with regard to 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 requirement has been increased slightly to 1,314 dwellings per annum in order to achieve 80% of the LHN using the new standard method formula, in accordance with the transitional arrangements. The additional 77 dwellings per annum has been distributed between the CLAs.

5.6 The annual housing requirements are as follows:

Chorley = 334
 Preston = 520
 South Ribble = 460

5.7 The CLAs are proposing that the housing need identified in the Local Plan will be met within the Plan area. As such, the parties have agreed that no housing need will be taken on by WLBC. The parties have also agreed that the CLAs will not take on any unmet need from WLBC at this time.

<p>Strategic Matter 1: Housing Development</p>	<p>The signatories agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed level of housing growth in Central Lancashire is appropriate in the context of the evidence base that supports the Local Plan; • There is no unmet housing need that is required to be met by WLBC; • There is no unmet housing need in WLBC that is required to be met by the CLAs at this time.
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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.
- 5.10 As the CLAs will be meeting their employment needs within the Plan area, the parties have agreed that there will be no employment land needs met by WLBC. The parties also agree that the CLAs will not be taking on any unmet need from WLBC at this time.
- 5.11 The parties also agree that the CLAs will continue to engage with WLBC on all strategic sites.

<p>Strategic Matter 2: Economic Development</p>	<p>The signatories agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed level of economic growth in Central Lancashire is appropriate in the context of the evidence base that supports the Local Plan; • There is no unmet economic need that is required to be met by WLBC; • There is no unmet economic need in WLBC required to be met by the CLAs at this time.
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Strategic Matter 3: Transport

- 5.12 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.
- 5.13 Through DtC discussions with WLBC it has been made clear that there are a number of areas of concern regarding the transport evidence. The CLAs have since confirmed to WLBC the methodology, scope and timeframes of the Transport Study and confirmed that it covers areas of WLBC, specifically areas near Tarleton.

- 5.14 The Stage 0, Stage 1(a), Stage 1 (b) and Stage 2 Transport Study work has been shared with WLBC for review. WLBC have no significant concerns with the findings of the Transport Study work and the parties have agreed to continue engaging on transport matters.

Strategic Matter 3: Transport	<p>The signatories agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WLBC have no significant concerns with the Transport Study work. • Both parties will continue to engage and work proactively on strategic transport matters, where the need arises.
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Strategic Matter 4: Natural Environment

- 5.15 Through DtC discussions with WLBC queries were raised as to whether the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) would consider recreational disturbance on the Sefton Coast Habitat Sites Zone of Influence and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA). The CLAs confirmed that this matter is addressed in the HRA and the CLAs are working with Natural England to confirm their expectations with regards if/how the plan should respond. A SoCG between the CLAs and Natural England has been prepared, which sets out areas of agreement in relation to the findings of the HRA and identifies next steps to address Natural England’s Regulation 19 representation. It states that the CLAs and Natural England will work together to agree suitable policy wording for Policy EN7 in relation to recreation pressure.
- 5.16 WLBC and the CLAs agree that, subject to further modification of Policy EN7 in line with Natural England advice, that the plan would not have an adverse environmental effect on SPAs and Ramsar Sites.
- 5.17 WLBC raised concern about whether the Shoreline Management Plan had been considered in the development of the Local Plan. The CLAs confirmed that the Shoreline Management Plan was incorporated into the Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) modelling. Policy Unit 11b 1.6 Hesketh Outmarsh East to White Bridge, Rufford (River Douglas left bank), Policy Unit 11B 1.7 White Bridge, Rufford to Old Railway Embankment, Much Hoole Marsh House (River Douglas right bank), and Policy Unit 11b 1.9 Hutton Marsh were noted. The CLAs commented that these areas are already protected by ecology policies/designations (including Biological Heritage Sites, Ramsar Sites, Wildlife Corridors) and Green Belt policy.
- 5.18 WLBC have concerns regarding Policy EN10 and wish to see amendments made to it. The CLAs consider Policy EN10 and the associated flood risk evidence to be sound. As set out in the SoCG between the CLAs and the Environment Agency, comments were received to the Regulation 19 consultation from the Environment Agency, LLFA and United Utilities which provided wording

changes that could be added to Policy EN10 to improve its readability. The CLAs have worked with the three bodies to consider proposed changes to improve readability of the policy and address the points made. These are to be put to the Inspector as proposed changes which could be considered during the hearing sessions. WLBC are unable to confirm there are no unresolved matters in relation to flood risk until they see the proposed changes.

- 5.19 WLBC also queried if the SFRA will be updated in line with the National Flood Risk 2 dataset (NaFRA2). The CLAs confirmed that work is currently being done and has not identified any significant additional flood risk. The update to the SFRA has therefore not resulted in any proposed changes to site allocations or policies.

<p>Strategic Matter 4: Environment</p>	<p>The signatories agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to additional modification of Policy EN7 as set out above, the plan will protect assets within the environmental catchment for habitats, in accordance with national planning policy and legislation. • WLBC are unable to confirm there are no unresolved matters relating to flood risk until they see the proposed changes to Policy EN10. • WLBC and the CLAs will work together to resolve the outstanding issues.
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Strategic Matter 5: Community Facilities

- 5.20 DtC discussions took place around community facilities related to schools, health, and community facilities. The CLAs assured WLBC that the relevant organisations that manage community facilities have been engaged in the plan-making process.
- 5.21 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. The CLAs are working with Lancashire County Council (LCC) to address the school place demand from the proposed housing allocations in the CLLP. LCC have confirmed to the CLAs that there will be no significant demand on school places in West Lancashire from the CLAs.

Strategic Matter 5: Community Facilities	<p>The signatories agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WLBC need sufficient time to review the education evidence before they can agree that there are no unresolved strategic matters relating to community facilities. • If any unresolved matters are identified the CLAs and WLBC will work together to resolve them.
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Strategic Matter 6: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Needs

5.22 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.

5.23 The GTAA identifies the following additional need for permanent gypsy and traveller pitches across Central Lancashire over the plan period:

	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

5.24 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.

5.25 The authorised site at Hut Lane has been allocated and it is envisaged that future family needs arising from that site over the plan period can be met within the site. The GTAA recommends regularisation of the unauthorised site to meet the current and future needs arising from that site over the plan period. Chorley Council is in receipt of an application to regularise the site, and if not considered suitable, will undertake further work to identify an alternative site to meet the identified need.

5.26 In Preston, the pitch shortfall relates to future family needs on an authorised site, and current and future family needs arising from an unauthorised site.

- 5.27 The authorised site at Leighton Street has been allocated, however it is envisaged that not all of the future family needs arising from that site over the plan period can be met on the site. The GTAA recommends regularisation of the unauthorised site to meet the current need arising from that site over the plan period, however it is envisaged that not all of the future family needs arising from that site over the plan period can be met on the site. Preston Council is committed to considering regularisation of the site, and if not considered suitable, will undertake further work to identify an alternative site to meet the identified need. The Council is also in active negotiations with community groups who have land holdings to find sites to meet the remaining current and future needs.
- 5.28 The CLAs are proposing the introduction of negotiated stopping to address transit needs, as recommended in the GTAA.
- 5.29 The GTAA does not identify any need for travelling showpeople.
- 5.30 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 in more detail.
- 5.31 Through DtC meetings, it was determined that WLBC do not have the capacity to meet unmet need in Central Lancashire.

<p>Strategic Matter 6: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Needs</p>	<p>The signatories agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed level of gypsy and traveller pitches, and proposals to meet unmet need in Central Lancashire, is appropriate in the context of the evidence base that supports the Local Plan; • The identified unmet gypsy and traveller need in Chorley and Preston will not be met by WLBC; • There is no identified unmet gypsy and traveller need in WLBC required to be met in Central Lancashire at this time.
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6. Signatories

West Lancashire Borough Council

On behalf of West Lancashire Borough Council, I can confirm that: There is common ground on how the CLAs and WLBC will continue to work together to address any unresolved strategic matters, upon review of the relevant evidence.	
Signed:	
Date:	5 th September 2025
Name:	Paul Charlson
Position	Assistant Director of Planning & Regulatory Services

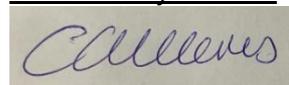
Central Lancashire Authorities

Chorley Council



Zoe Whiteside, Head of Spatial Planning

Preston City Council



Carolyn Williams, Planning Policy Manager

South Ribble Borough Council



Elizabeth Thornber, Head of Planning and Enforcement