

Our Ref: Central Lancs LP

Planning Policy

Chorley Council
Civic Offices
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14 April 2025

Dear Sir,

**CENTRAL LANCASHIRE LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION REGULATION 19
LAND EAST OF LOWER SIMPSON FOLD LANE, HIGHER WHEELTON**

We submit representations to the Regulation 19 version of the Central Lancashire Local Plan. The representations relate to a parcel on land to the west of the Settlement Boundary of Higher Wheelton on Blackburn Road ('the Site') (see below). We put forward the land as a potential site for residential development for circa 75 dwellings through the earlier stages of the Local Plan process. We note that the Site is not being progressed as a residential development site in the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan.

The purpose of the Regulation 19 consultation is to establish if the Local Plan is legally compliant, sound and satisfies the duty to cooperate. These representations are intended to help guide the formation of the Local Plan. In the context of Paragraph 36 of the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") (2025), the Council must demonstrate that its Local Plan would be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Strategy to Deliver Housing Target

The Council has summarised at para 4.24 of the Regulation 19 the strategy they have followed to identify sites to meet their housing need over the Plan period. This including "parking" sites within the Green Belt until a review of land outside of the Green Belt had been undertaken and it had been established if there was sufficient land available outside the Green Belt to meet the identified housing and employment needs.

The Council concluded that Chorley could **not** meet its housing need on sites outside the Green Belt. However, they identified that the housing need for the Plan area could be satisfied outside of Chorley (i.e. Preston and South Ribble) and therefore there is no need to release Green Belt sites such as the subject site.

The Subject Site

The Site comprises 5.01ha to the north of the A974 Blackburn Road and east of Lower Simpson Fold Lane in Higher Wheelton, Chorley. Higher Wheelton is a Tier 5 Centre in the Settlement Hierarchy. The Site is currently

undeveloped agricultural land, and is accessed via Lower Simpson Fold Lane, which leads to Lower Simpson Fold Farm and a few low-rise residential properties to the west of the Site. The Site is in single ownership.

The Site is located just outside but adjoining the Settlement Boundary of the Higher Weelton Village Centre.

Figure 1 – Site Context



Source – Google Maps

Blackburn Road is well served by public transport with bus with eight bus routes running past the front of the Site. The closest bus stop is just 80 metres from the boundary of the Site, with buses serving the wider Lancashire area, including Chorley and Blackburn.

There is no planning history of note relating to the Site.

The entire site falls within the designated Green Belt and within Flood Zone 1, which means that it has a low probability of flooding. There are no designated heritage assets either on or within close proximity to the Site.

Therefore, other than the Green Belt designation, we consider that the Site is suitable and available for development for housing, including larger family home, for which there is a recognised need and which would be in keeping with the existing character of Higher Wheelton.

Notwithstanding, emerging Local Plan Policy HS8 acknowledges that Higher Wheelton could be considered appropriate for Rural Exception Sites, which would enable the development of affordable housing to meet local

needs. Whilst the Site is not being put forward as a Rural Exception, it is anticipated that it could deliver a reasonable amount of affordable housing provision, and the right housing mix to meet local needs.

Soundness of Regulation 19 Local Plan

We consider that the Local Plan is unsound for the following main reasons:

- The distribution of housing across the Local Plan area is skewed by the existing Green Belt designations in Chorley and does not fully reflect the spread of housing need.
- Nearly 30% (by estimated number of dwellings) of the housing allocations for Chorley are on sites that require a wintering bird survey alongside any planning application to provide certainty that the loss of functionally linked land within the site allocation will not adversely affect the integrity of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites (HS2, Table 1). This being the case, there is material doubt whether any or all of these sites will come forward to meet the housing need over the Plan period.

Release of Green Belt Land

Given the uncertainty surrounding the delivery of a material degree of the proposed allocated housing sites, to make the Local Plan sound consideration should be given to either or a combination of the following:

- The inclusion of additional housing sites within the Chorley sub area which are deliverable over the Plan period subject to housing delivery targets being met
- The inclusion of “safeguarded sites” for housing that will be brought forward if the aforementioned allocated sites are found to be undeliverable.

In both cases, we would recommend a 3-5 year maximum time frame for review to ensure housing delivery remains on programme.

As such, notwithstanding its Green Belt allocation, the Site presents a suitable option to deliver additional housing to meet the needs of Higher Wheelton and the wider area.

We propose the land to the west of Lower Simpson Fold Lane as a potential site for residential development to be included as above. If developed in its entirety, it is anticipated that the Site as a whole could deliver in the region of 75 units which would make a significant contribution to mitigating the shortfall.

We trust that we have provided you with sufficient information to enable you to consider the Site as part of the latest Call for Sites Consultation. However, if you have any queries or require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Craig Blatchford (craig.blatchford@montagu-evans.co.uk or 07984 458485).

Yours faithfully,



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