

# **EXAMINATION OF THE CENTRAL LANCASHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2023-2041 EXAMINATION GUIDANCE NOTE FROM THE INSPECTORS**

## **Purpose of the Guidance Note**

1. This note provides guidance to representors involved in the Examination of the Central Lancashire Local Plan 2023 - 2041.
2. All representors should familiarise themselves with the contents of the note, in particular those who wish to submit further statements and/or take part in the hearing sessions.

## **Dates for Hearing Sessions**

3. The hearing sessions (which are part of the overall Examination) will take place between:

**Tuesday 2 December 2025 - Friday 5 December 2025**

**Tuesday 9 December 2025 - Friday 12 December 2025**

**Tuesday 13 January 2026 – Friday 16 January 2026**

**Tuesday 20 January 2026 – Wednesday 21 January 2026**

**Venues: Preston Town Hall, Leyland Civic Centre and Chorley Town Hall.**

4. There will be a morning and afternoon session on each day. A draft programme indicating the matters to be discussed at each hearing session is attached to this note although you should be aware that it may change. Details concerning the finalised programme are set out in paragraph 27 below.

## **The Inspectors' role in the Examination**

5. Our task is to consider the soundness of the plan, i.e. the **Central Lancashire Local Plan 2023-2041** (CD01). This document was the subject of Regulation 19 consultation between 24 February 2025 and 14 April 2025. In examining the Plan, we will have regard to the representations submitted in response to this consultation.
6. The National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, December 2023) sets out the criteria for determining soundness; namely that the plan is **Positively Prepared; Justified, Effective and Consistent with National Policy**.
7. We aim to work collaboratively with the Councils and the Examination

participants in a proactive and pragmatic manner to deliver a positive social, economic and environmental outcome for the district. However, this does not necessarily mean that the plan will be found to be sound.

8. Following the close of the hearings we will prepare a report to the Councils with our conclusions. The Councils have formally requested that we recommend any main modifications which are necessary to make the plan sound, if it is feasible that such modifications could make it sound. We will deal with broad issues in our report, and not with each individual representation.
9. Any main modifications we consider are likely to be necessary for the plan to be sound will be the subject of formal consultation and potentially considered as part of a revised Integrated Assessment and updated Habitats Regulations Assessment. Should this be necessary more information will be provided at that time. In submitting the plan for Examination the Councils have proposed a number of further modifications to it which are detailed in the Schedule of Proposed Modifications to the Published Plan (CD03). As part of the Examination we will consider whether or not any of these proposed modifications are necessary for the plan to be sound.

### **The Programme Officer**

10. The Programme Officer (the PO) for the Examination is Kerry Trueman who works independently of the Councils under our direction in connection with the Examination. Kerry can be contacted as follows:

Pendragon House, 1 Bertram Drive, Wirral CH47 0LG

Tel: 07582 310364

Email: [programme.officer@chorley.gov.uk](mailto:programme.officer@chorley.gov.uk)

11. The main tasks of the PO are: to act as a channel of communication between all parties and ourselves; to liaise with the parties to ensure the smooth running of the Examination; and to ensure that all documents received are recorded and distributed. Copies of the Examination documents are available on the Examination Website:

[Examination Documents - Central Lancashire Local Plan](#)

12. Any procedural questions or other matters that you wish to raise with us prior to the hearing sessions should be made through the programme officer and please let her know if you have any specific needs in relation to attendance/participation at the hearing sessions.

### **Progressing your representations on the plan**

13. **In examining the Plan we will give the same weight to written representations as to those made orally at hearings sessions.** Consequently, participation at a hearing session is only necessary if, in the light of the list of Matters, Issues and Questions for the Examination, you have relevant points to contribute to the debate.
14. Accompanying this note is a list of Matters, Issues and Questions for the Examination. We have identified 14 Matters on which the legal compliance and soundness of the plan depends and for each Matter there are a number of specific questions. These questions will form the basis of the discussion at the hearing sessions and should also be the basis on which any further written statements, to be submitted in advance of the hearings, are prepared.
15. The hearings are open to all to observe, but only those who previously made representations relevant to the matters being considered in response to the consultations on the plan, and who register a request to participate, will be allowed to speak. If you are in doubt as to which Matter your representation relates to, please contact the PO to discuss this.
16. Notwithstanding any indications you may have previously made, anyone who believes it is necessary for them, and who wishes to participate in a hearing session should register their interest in doing so with the PO by **17:00 on Thursday 23 October 2025.**

### **The hearing sessions and further statements**

17. Each Matter will be the subject of separate discussion, although the discussion on some Matters may take place over several hearing sessions. The hearings will take the form of a roundtable discussion which we shall lead. They will not involve the formal presentation of cases by participants or cross-examination. We shall take account of all written representations already submitted and it is not the purpose of the hearings for these to be repeated. The list of Matters, Issues and Questions will form the agenda for each session.
18. The hearings will be inquisitorial, rather than adversarial. We shall endeavour to progress them in an effective and efficient manner. As part of that process, it is our aim to minimise the amount of material necessary to come to informed conclusions on the issues of soundness. In that way we will conduct a short, focussed series of hearings and, in turn, produce a short, focussed report.
19. The Councils are required to produce a further statement for each of the 14 Matters in which it should answer all of the individual questions set out in the list of Matters, Issues and Questions.
20. Whilst it is not a requirement, other participants (those who submitted

representations as part of the public consultations either in support of or objection to the plan) can also submit further statements, but only on the questions of relevance to their original representation.

21. Further statements should be a **maximum** of 3000 words for each Matter and we anticipate that many will not need to be as long as this, particularly those addressing only a small number of questions. The word limit does not include Appendices but these should only be included where directly relevant and necessary and should also be as succinct as possible. Extensive Appendices will be returned. The word limit does not apply to the Councils because they are required to answer every question, although we would encourage them to be as concise as possible, providing references to specific sections of the already submitted evidence wherever relevant. Statements should be simply stapled rather than bound.
22. In preparing statements you should:
  1. **only** answer the specific question(s) of relevance to your original representation, whilst clearly identifying the number(s) of the question(s) you are seeking to answer;
  2. compile a separate statement for each Matter; and
  3. have regard to the evidence submitted by the Councils available on the Examination Website.

In turn, in answering each question the Councils should have regard to the representations made on the plan that are of relevance to that question.

23. Whilst they are not specifically invited, Statements of Common Ground between Examination participants on issues of direct relevance to the matters under examination will also be accepted.
24. We are examining the plan as submitted by the Councils. Therefore, we will not, at this stage, be considering the merits for development of sites for development not included in the plan ("omission sites"). Should we determine that there is a need for additional or different sites to be allocated, we will, in the first instance, ask the Councils to consider how they would wish to proceed with the Examination.
25. An electronic version and 1 paper copy of each further statement (and any Statements of Common Ground) should be submitted to the PO (contact details as above) by **17:00 Thursday 6 November 2025**. Unless there are exceptional circumstances it is unlikely that late submissions will be accepted.
26. Aside from these further statements (and any Statements of Common Ground) no other written evidence will be accepted unless we specifically request it. All statements will be posted on the Examination webpage, so that they are available to all participants and anyone else who wishes to read them. Because they will be available in this way they will not be

circulated directly to participants. However, anyone who is unable to access them on the webpage may request copies from the PO.

### **The hearings programme**

27. An initial programme for the hearings is attached. A final version of the programme will be published on the Examination web site around two weeks prior to the start of the hearings. It will be for individual participants to check the progress of the hearings, either on the web site or with the PO, and to ensure that they are present at the right time.
28. The hearings sessions will normally run between 09:30 and 13:00 and 14:00 and 17:30 each day. A short break will usually be taken mid-morning and mid-afternoon. However, please note that start times for the "PM" sessions will depend on how long the morning session takes and may be before the lunchtime break. We will not start the second session of the day before 11.30.

### **Site visits**

29. Insofar as we consider it necessary to our assessment of the soundness of the plan we will visit sites and areas referred to in the representations before, during, or after the hearings. We will do these on an unaccompanied basis other than in the, relatively unlikely, event that we find that we need to go on to private land.

### **Finally ...**

30. We emphasise:
  - We shall have equal regard to views put orally or in writing;
  - the need for succinctness; please respect the letter and spirit of the 3,000 word limit in further statements with only limited and directly relevant appendices;
  - that your hearing statement(s) should focus on answering the questions we have posed in the Matters, Issues and Questions;
  - that you must meet the **17:00, 23 October 2025** deadline to advise the PO of your wish to participate in a hearing session; and
  - that you must meet the **17:00, 6 November 2025** deadline for the submission of further statements in paper and electronic form.

*Anne Jordan and Alison Partington*

INSPECTORS

**Central Lancashire Local Plan Examination  
Provisional Hearings Programme (may be subject to change)**

**Week 1**

**Tuesday 2 December at 9.30**

AM - Matter 1a & 1b Legal Compliance and Overarching Issues

PM - Matter 2 Spatial Strategy

**Wednesday 3 December at 9.30**

AM - Matter 3 The Housing Requirement

PM – Matter 4 Strategic Sites & Mixed Use Allocations

**Thursday 4 December at 9.30**

AM - Matter 5 Housing Allocations Preston

PM – Matter 5 Housing Allocations Preston

**Friday 5 December at 9.30**

Reserve Session

**Week 2**

**Tuesday 9 December at 9.30**

AM – Matter 5 Housing Allocations Chorley

PM - Matter 5 Housing Allocations Chorley

**Wednesday 10 December at 9.30**

AM – Matter 5 Housing Allocations South Ribble

PM - Matter 5 Housing Allocations South Ribble

**Thursday 11 December at 9.30**

AM - Matter 6 Housing Supply

PM - Matter 6 Housing Supply

**Friday 12 December at 9.30**

Reserve Session

**Week 3**

**Tuesday 13 January at 9.30**

AM – Matters 8 & 9 Employment Land Need and Allocations

PM – Matters 8 & 9 Employment Land Need and Allocations

**Wednesday 14 January at 9.30**

AM - Matter 7 Housing Policies

PM - Matter 10 Economic Development Policies

**Thursday 15 January at 9.30**

AM - Matter 11 Healthy & Inclusive Communities Policies

PM - Matters 13 & 14 Climate Change Policies, Sustainable Travel Policies, Infrastructure Policies and Monitoring

**Friday 16 January at 9.30**

Reserve Session

**Week 4**

**Tuesday 20 January at 9.30**

AM – Matter 12 Environment Policies

PM - Matter 12 Environment Policies

**Wednesday 21 January at 9.30**

Reserve session