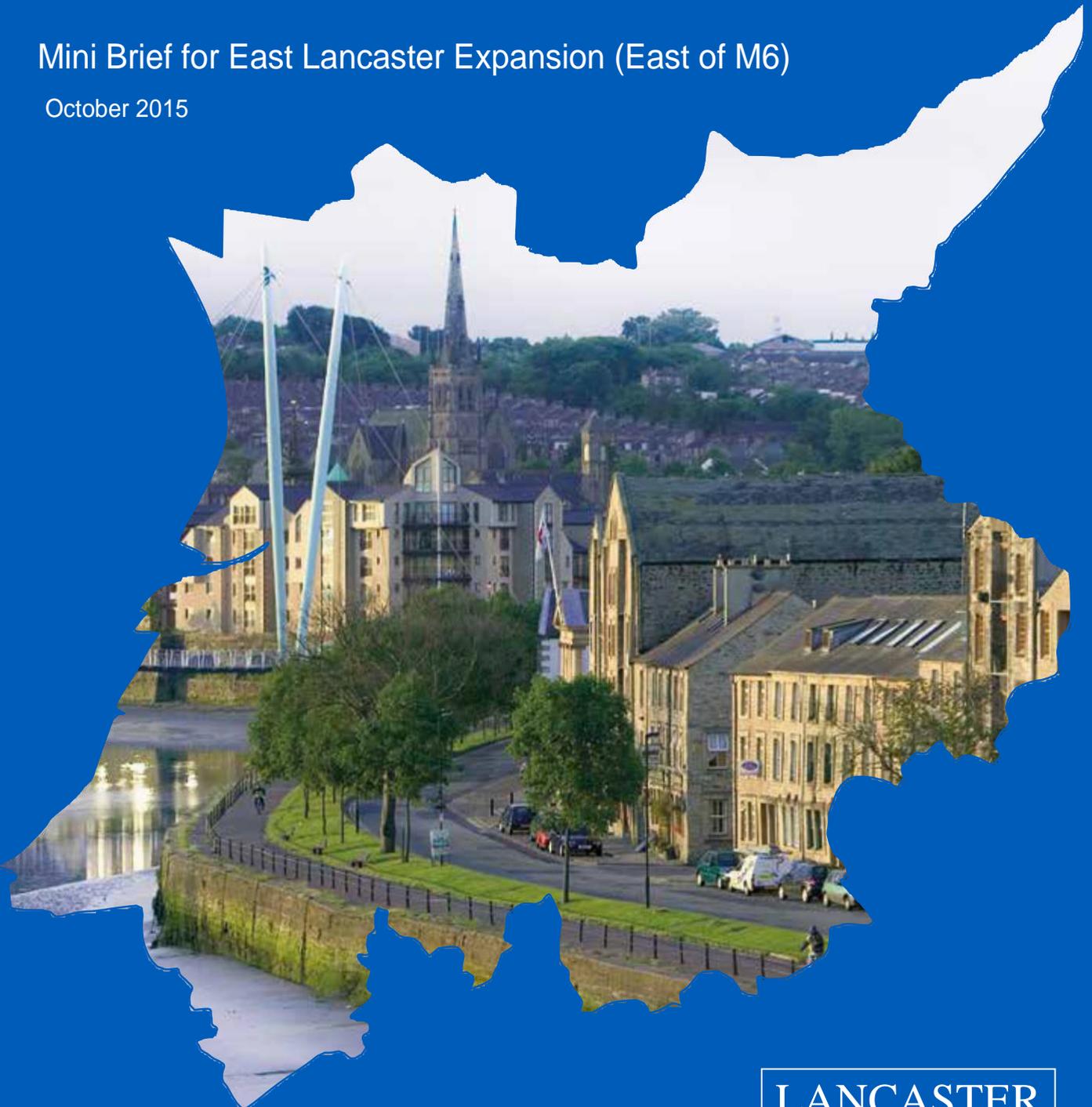


A Local Plan for Lancaster District 2011-2031

Mini Brief for East Lancaster Expansion (East of M6)

October 2015



LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the 'People, Homes and Jobs' Consultation which is currently taking place, the City Council have prepared a series of mini-briefs for each of the strategic sites identified. Whilst these briefs will not form part of any future local plan they will provide evidence and understanding of the issues which affect each of the strategic sites and, importantly, an acknowledgement that further investigation is still required to form a complete understanding over whether these sites are suitable for allocation and future development.
- 1.2 The aim of these mini-briefs is to provide an explanation of how development may be achieved on these sites, through the identification of issues and constraints, how sites may be accessed and the infrastructure requirements which each site will generate. The mini-briefs have been discussed with a number of infrastructure providers (such as Lancashire County Council and United Utilities) and ongoing dialogue will continue with all relevant providers as the City Council continue to draw up their local development plan.
- 1.3 It is important to note that it is not the mini-briefs which are subject of consultation, it is the principles of developing strategic sites which are important and should be commented on. The mini-briefs do not claim to contain all the information on each site but provide useful background information.
- 1.4 This mini-brief relates to land identified to the east of Lancaster, east of the M6 and Junction 34 stretching from the River Lune south across the A583 towards Moss Syke Wood.
- 1.5 The identification of this site could deliver residential and economic development, including the provision of 1,500 new homes.

2. Character of Locality

Description of the Site

- 2.1 This area comprises two sites, separated by the A683 which runs between Lancaster and Kirkby Lonsdale. Land to the north of this road is a Greenfield site which runs down to the banks of the River Lune. The land to the south of the road is open countryside which stretches south in the direction of Quernmore. Both sites are used as pastoral farmland.

Relationship with Surrounding Uses

- 2.2 Both sites are in the open countryside and are beyond the urban boundary of Lancaster, which is well defined by the M6 motorway. Both sites are adjacent to the works currently being undertaken on Junction 34 as part of the M6 / Heysham Link Road.

Land Ownership

- 2.3 The site is split into a number of private land ownerships, some of this land is known to be available for development purposes, however this must be reconfirmed and the remaining sites investigated for their availability.

3. Landscape and Topography

Landscape Character

- 3.1 These sites are best described as undulating pastoral farmland, which rises south of the River Lune. The land to the north of the A683 is well defined by a range of tree-lines and hedgerows. The land to the south of the A683 is much more open and boundaries are less well defined. To the far south

there are a number of wooded copses, with Moss Syke Wood being the largest area of woodland.

- 3.2 The site is predominantly identified as Drumlin Field in the Lancashire Character Assessment. These areas are characterised within rolling drumlins. The description of this landscape notes that the regular green hillocks with steep sides and broad rounded tops. This area is noted to have underlying limestone and is distinguished by large scale undulating hills of pasture.

Topography of the Site

- 3.3 Both sites are undulating in nature and rise from north to south, away from the banks of the River Lune. Further south there are clear and distinct ridgelines which have wider views over East Lancaster.

Flooding and Flood Risk

- 3.4 The site does include areas which are considered to be at risk from flooding, in particular land which is directly adjacent to the River Lune. There are no known flooding risks associated with Denny Beck, which forms the eastern boundary to both sites. Whilst there is no presence of flood risk any development proposals for these areas will still be expected to take into account the impact that it may have on potential flood risk and appropriately alleviate any potential flood risks through engineering and design.
- 3.5 There may be issues of flooding related to surface water drainage and, should these sites come forward for development in the future it will certainly require adequate and appropriate surface water drainage systems to deal with the increase in impermeable surfaces. Drainage systems in any new development should ensure that it does not affect the drainage systems put in place to drain water from the new motorway junction.

4. Highways and Access

Local Highways Capacity

- 4.1 The main route through the site, the A683 between Lancaster and Kirkby Lonsdale is a main A route and there is no known capacity issues beyond the impacts currently being felt from the Link Road construction work. This is recognised to be strong regional route connecting Lancashire to Yorkshire. From discussions with Lancashire County Council Highway's Engineers the City Council's understanding is that there are no existing capacity issues on this section of road.
- 4.2 The only other roads in this location are only farm tracks. The largest of which is Grimeshaw Lane which runs through the site.

Access into the Site

- 4.3 Access to both sites will clearly have to be made from the A683 which runs between both sites. The principles of obtaining such access to the site from the A6 have been discussed with Lancashire County Council Highways Engineers and it's the City Council's understanding that access can be achieved.

Traffic Movement through the Site

- 4.4 Given the lack of surrounding road network, all accesses will have to be made onto the A683 which will create a circular pattern of traffic movements within both sites. It is recognised that the lack of permeability into existing traffic networks is a disadvantage to this site although opportunities to access this site via Site UE3 across the motorway should be investigated.

Other Transport Requirements

- 4.5 Given the residential nature of this proposal there will be a requirement to consider how new residents will access Lancaster City Centre and the wider district by means other than just private car. This will be challenging for this site given its isolated location east of the M6 – which itself acts as a strong physical barrier against access to Lancaster and the west of the district.
- 4.6 However, the A683 does provide a regular bus service between Lancaster and Kirkby Lonsdale, increased growth in residential properties in this area may provide the opportunity to increase bus patronage and secure this rural bus service for the longer term. Furthermore the north of this site includes the Lancaster – Caton cycle route, which is part of a wider and regional cycle / pedestrian network. Should any development come forward as part of the local development plan then it should pursue strong linkages with both of these networks.

5. Existing and Required Infrastructure

Education Provision

- 5.1 Education provision in this area is limited and will require the use of primary education provision in East Lancaster, Halton or Caton. Such provision may include Lancaster Ridge Primary School, Lancaster Christ Church CE School, St Wilfred CE Primary (Halton), Caton Community Primary School or Caton St Paul's CE School. No school mentioned however is considered to be in close proximity to these sites. In terms of secondary school provision, this development would be expected to access secondary school facilities in Lancaster, closest of which is Lancaster Community High School.
- 5.2 The current capacity at these schools is a 10% surplus in places at Lancaster Ridge Primary School, Lancaster Christ Church CE School a surplus of 2%, St Wilfred's CE School has a surplus of 6%, Caton Community Primary School 41% surplus and Caton St Paul's CE School has a 3% surplus in school places. In terms of secondary school provision, Lancaster Community High School has a surplus of 13% in school places.
- 5.3 Given the scale of the proposal and its remoteness from existing primary school provision, it is highly likely that new and improved education facilities will be required. The existing capacity in schools in this area for 2015 still needs to be clarified and the requirement for new facilities is currently unknown, however this will be investigated with Lancashire County Council as the local development plan is prepared.

Health Provision

- 5.4 Given the isolated nature of this site the closest GP facilities are located in Lancaster, Halton or Caton. Further investigation will be required over the existing capacities in local surgeries and whether the development of this site would cause over capacity issues. To understand this matter further the City Council will be working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to understand the current pressures to GPs in this area and, if capacity issues do exist, how they can be overcome.

Community Facilities

- 5.5 Given the isolated nature of this site the level of community facilities in close proximity is highly limited. Should development come forward on these sites as part of the local development plan then new facilities will be necessary and will form a key element of any new local centre in the east of Lancaster.

Utilities Requirements

- 5.6 After discussions with United Utilities it is important to note that a new network will have to be provided for both fresh water and waste water supplies. Such improvements will be required to facilitate any future growth but at this stage there are no reasons to suggest that this cannot be

facilitated for any future development proposals.

- 5.7 Given the proximity to Lancaster, telecommunication and broadband networks are considered to be acceptable and there are opportunities to improve such networks further. However to understand how such opportunities can be realized then ongoing dialogue with BT and network providers will be necessary.
- 5.8 There are no known problems with either gas or electricity supplies in the locality, further discussion are required with electricity and gas providers to understand the improvements to the network required should development be brought forward on this site.

Retail and Commercial Needs

- 5.9 There is currently no local centre to the east of Lancaster offering basic services. The closest area offering services will be Caton or the Ridge Estate. This is a sporadic offer which will not fulfil the needs of new residents should this site come forward within the local development plan.
- 5.10 As a result any development proposals will have to consider how local services can be delivered on this site and will have to seek the inclusion of a local centre – preferably on the land to the south of the A683. Any retail needs provided on this site should be for local needs only.
- 5.11 Given the accessibility to the A683 and Caton Road, wider needs can be clearly met in Lancaster City Centre.

Open Space Requirements

- 5.12 There will clearly be requirements for open space provision should these development sites come forward, this will include the provision of new amenity green space and recreational space. Financial requirements may also be required to improve and upgrade existing facilities elsewhere in the locality. These requirements will be investigated should the site come forward and be prepared in liaison with the City Council's Environmental Services Team.

6. The Natural Environment

Local Biodiversity and Habitats

- 6.1 This site does not contain any specific environmental designations within the local development plan. Whilst no specific environment designation exist that is not to say that there are not areas of the site which are of local importance. The City Council is working with the Lancashire Environmental Record Network (LERN) and Natural England to fully understand the environmental and biological character of this area.
- 6.2 Should these sites come forward for development these areas of local importance – such as coppices or ponds should sought to be included within the development and can provide distinctive features.
- 6.3 The site is adjacent to, but not within, the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Green Corridors

- 6.4 There are no designated green corridors in this site. However, the environmental value of Denny Beck as an environmental feature should be maximised and should be considered in its role as part of a wider ecological network. Fragmentation of such a network should be avoided and new development will be expected to protect such networks and improve / strengthen them where opportunities arise.

7. Further Work Required

7.1 In preparing this mini-brief the City Council have clearly identified that further issues need to be explored prior to this land at East Lancaster being identified for future development within the Draft Land Allocations DPD. Key issues for this area of East Lancaster include the following:

- Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA);
- The need for improved education facilities in the local area;
- The need for improved health facilities in the local area; and
- Provision for new local centre to meet the basic service needs for new residents.

7.2 The City Council will continue dialogue with all the relevant stakeholders and interest groups to fill gaps in information and evidence. This will ensure that at the time of publishing the draft local development plan the City Council will present a clear indication of how such sites will be brought forward.