

NORTH WEST SITE SEARCHING INDEX

The Government published the consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Outcome of the Proposed Standard Method (OPSM) on 30 July 2024[1]. The map and call out text below for each authority (or joint planning body, as applicable) indicates whether a council may be in need of additional sites to meet housing needs in the immediate, medium or long term [2]. The Site Searching Index has been compiled using:

1

- The last published housing land supply figure of each local planning authority. Sources for these vary from authority to authority, and may include 5-year supply statements or authority monitoring reports.
- In the absence of those documents, the latest position may have been described in an Inspector report on the examination of a council's Local Plans.
- Accordingly, base dates for published supply assessments vary.

2

- A 5% or 20% delivery buffer is applied to the Proposed Standard Method figure for each authority, as per paragraph 76 of the consultation draft NPPF.
- The selection of a buffer is determined by each council's last published position or the outcome of the last housing delivery test.
- This provides each council's five year housing land supply position.

3

- A view on the site requirements for each authority is provided, taking account of:
- Whether the council has an up to date local plan.
 - Paragraphs 226 - 228 of the consultation draft NPPF. These propose that for the purposes of local plan preparation, the NPPF will apply from the date of publication, plus one month unless, inter alia:
 - The council has reached the Regulation 19 consultation on its emerging local plan; and
 - The housing requirement in that draft plan is no more than 200 dwellings below the OPSM.

Cumberland (Carlisle, Allerdale & Copeland)	OPSM Supply: 4.96
Supply position to be assessed following publication of the final NPPF. Cumberland Council is in the process of commencing a new local plan. The NPPF consultation poses an interesting question for Cumberland in that whilst all three former local plans are over five years old, Copeland is just completing examination of its local plan with a requirement of 1,464dpa. Until a new Cumberland Local Plan is progressed, this would seemingly leave Allerdale and Carlisle needing to meet the balance of the OPSM of 1,071 dwellings per annum.	

Fylde	OPSM Supply: 4.49
All delivery periods. The Fylde Local Plan Review (December 2021) is now almost three years old and with the likely significant changes in National Policy about to take place, the Council will need to start the preparation of a new plan. On the basis of the Council's last published five-year housing land supply, and the housing figure in the Outcome of the Proposed Standard Method (457dpa) the Council would have a supply of 4.49 years and so more sites will be needed.	

Chorley	OPSM Supply: 2.72
All delivery periods. Strategic policies are more than five years old and the Council's published position already acknowledges the existing five-year housing land supply shortage (3.2 years). Further, the LDS states the emerging Central Lancashire Local Plan (CLLP, being prepared with South Ribble and Preston) will not reach Regulation 19 until February 2025 by which point it is expected the new NPPF will have been published (plus one month). The CLLP Regulation 18 consultation proposed an annual requirement of 1,334 dpa (stepped between the three authorities), whereas the OPSM for the three authorities would see a requirement of 1,898 dpa; a starting point for assessing needs which is almost 600 more homes per year.	

Sefton	OPSM Supply: 3.47
All delivery periods. The Council has already committed to preparing a new local plan (at the time of the last supply statement, Sefton were waiting for the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act to receive Royal Assent, later achieved on 26 October 2023). Against the last published supply statement and figure derived from the OPSM (1,446dpa), the Council would have a housing land supply equivalent to 3.47 years.	

Liverpool	OPSM Supply: 4.59
Medium to longer term prospects. The Council adopted a new Local Plan in 2022 with a housing requirement of 1,739dpa. The OPSM for Liverpool is 2,090dpa, which would result in a housing supply of 4.59 years against their last published supply position (2022). Previous annual average completions have been below the Local Plan requirement and the last supply position was only 5.5 years, therefore if delivery does not improve the Council may need additional sites in the short to medium term to help meet housing needs.	

St. Helens	OPSM Supply: 2.76
Medium-longer term prospects. St Helens adopted their Local Plan in July 2022 with a requirement of 486 dpa. The Council's last published statement of the supply was 5.1 years which would reduce to 2.76 years against the housing figure in the Outcome of the Proposed Standard Method (825dpa). If delivery does not improve, the supply position may necessitate additional immediate sites, but otherwise with other changes in national policy it is likely St Helens will have to commence a new local plan with a requirement for additional sites.	

Halton	OPSM Supply: 4.63
Medium-longer term prospects. Halton's Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP) is relatively new (March 2022) and has a housing requirement of 350dpa. The OPSM of 540dpa would see the starting point for the housing requirement increase by 190 homes per year which is presently within the 200 unit threshold in the NPPF consultation and so with a last published supply figure of 14.5 years, there is no immediate requirement for sites. With other changes in national policy it is likely Halton will have to commence a new local plan for 2027 with a requirement for additional sites to meet future needs.	

Warrington	OPSM Supply: 3.55
Medium-longer term prospects. The Warrington Local Plan was recently adopted in December 2023 with a six year housing land supply. If the figure derived from the Proposed Outcome to the Standard Method (1,146) follows through, this will pose a significantly higher future requirement for Warrington than is currently planned of almost 400 homes per year (taking an annualised average requirement against their stepped housing requirement). With changes to national policy and the Standard Method, this would likely trigger a requirement for a new Local Plan in the next five years.	

Preston	OPSM Supply: 3.62
All delivery periods. Strategic policies are more than five years old and the OPSM of 662dpa would see the Council's five-year housing land supply position reduce to just over 3.5 years, compared to the last published position of 9.3 years. Further, the LDS states the emerging Central Lancashire Local Plan (CLLP, being prepared with South Ribble and Preston) will not reach Regulation 19 until February 2025 by which point it is expected the new NPPF will have been published (plus one month). The CLLP Regulation 18 consultation proposed an annual requirement of 1,334 dpa (stepped between the three authorities), whereas the OPSM for the three authorities would see a requirement of 1,898 dpa; a starting point for assessing needs which is almost 600 more homes per year.	

Blackpool	OPSM Supply: 2.53
All delivery periods. The Council's Local Plan is more than five years old and when considered against the OPSM (632 dpa) and the Council's last published supply position of 1,680 homes (April 2023 Supply Statement), there is a deficit in excess of 1,600 homes over the course of the next five years alone. The new Local Plan to 2042 is presently in the early formative stages and the Council is undertaking a 'Call for Sites' exercise.	

West Lancashire	OPSM Supply: 3.30
All delivery periods. The Local Plan is now over ten years old and the emerging Local Plan is not yet at the Regulation 18 consultation stage. Against their last published position (March 2022) and the OPSM, housing West Lancashire's housing land supply would reduce from 10.8 years to 3.3 years, meaning more sites will be required.	

Wirral	OPSM Supply: 2.44
Medium-longer term prospects. The Council's emerging Local Plan is currently undergoing Examination and it may soon be adopted with a proposed housing requirement of 900dpa. This compares to the OPSM of 1,755dpa. Presently, the Inspector has recommended that in order to make the plan sound, the Council should introduce a stepped housing requirement with 500 dpa in the early years. If homes are not delivered as forecast in the trajectory, the Council will likely need additional sites to help meet housing needs.	

Knowsley	OPSM Supply: 4.2
Medium-longer term prospects. The Council completed a review of the Knowsley Core Strategy in January 2023. This concluded there was no need to update any of their policies or their housing requirement of 450dpa; however, the difference between OPSM and the current requirement is significant (255dpa), exceeding the 200 dwelling figure in the NPPF consultation. With other changes in national policy it is likely Knowsley will have to commence a new local plan with a requirement for additional sites.	

Cheshire West & Chester	OPSM Supply: 2.36
All delivery periods. The Council's Local Plan is now almost 10 years old and OPSM would see the requirement increase by just under 1,500 dpa. Based on the last published housing land supply position (11.9 years, reduced to 2.36 years), the Council will need to find additional sites for over 5,500 homes in the next five years alone.	

Cheshire East	OPSM Supply: 4.46
All delivery periods. The Council's current Local Plan is in excess of five years old and the Council has commenced a new Local Plan, along with a call for sites. The application of the OPSM (2,530dpa), would more than double the current Standard Method requirement (977dpa). Indicatively, there could be a need to find sites for an additional 1,400 homes in the next five years alone.	

Westmorland and Furness (Barrow, Eden & South Lakeland)	OPSM Supply: 2.78
All delivery periods. Westmorland and Furness has commenced a new Local Plan. All three legacy authorities (Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland) plans are more than five years old. When the last published supply position is considered against the Outcome of the Proposed Standard Method, there is supply of 2.78 years, so additional sites will be needed.	

Lancaster	OPSM Supply: 2.52
All delivery periods. Lancaster's published position is that it cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing sites and it has already commenced work on a new Local Plan. Against the Council's last published position and OPSM, the supply position is 2.52 years.	

Wyre	OPSM Supply: 5.42
Medium-longer term prospects. The Council has commenced preparation of a new local plan and they have acknowledged that if the housing figure in OPSM is taken forward by Government (637dpa), they will need to identify land for a further 6,000 homes to address needs in the middle to back part of the proposed plan period.	

Hyndburn	OPSM Supply: 3.06
Medium-longer term prospects. The Council's emerging Local Plan has reached the Regulation 19 consultation and the emerging housing requirement is 194 dpa. This is 119dpa short of OPSM for the area, but is within the 200 unit threshold in the NPPF consultation. Presently (and subject to Examination) the emerging plan's housing trajectory shows supply only just meeting the proposed housing requirement. Any delays in delivery over the next five years may then prompt earlier action on a local plan review, which would necessarily have to address the requirements of the OPSM.	

Burnley	Proposed method Supply: 3.53
Medium-longer term prospects. The Council completed a review of their Local Plan (which has a housing requirement of 194dpa) in 2023 and concluded the Plan did not require review. The OPSM (369) is some 175dpa higher than the current plan requirement and so on the basis of this and forthcoming changes to national policy, the Council will likely have to commence a new local plan in order to find additional medium-longer term sites.	

South Ribble	OPSM Supply: 4.17
All delivery periods. Strategic policies are more than five years old and the housing figure in the Outcome of the Proposed Standard Method (546dpa) would result in the five-year housing land supply reducing to 4.17 years (down from 12.97 years), with a five-year deficit of just under 500 homes. Further, the LDS states the emerging Central Lancashire Local Plan (CLLP, being prepared with South Ribble and Preston) will not reach Regulation 19 until February 2025 by which point it is expected the new NPPF will have been published (plus one month). The CLLP in the Regulation 18 consultation proposed an annual requirement of 1,334 dpa (stepped between the three authorities), whereas the Outcome of the Proposed SM for the three authorities would see a requirement of 1,898 dpa, a starting point for assessing needs which is almost 600 homes more than would be needed every year from the three councils.	

Manchester, Wigan, Bolton, Bury, Salford, Tameside, Oldham, Rochdale, Trafford	OPSM Supply: 2.81
Individual supply position to be assessed following publication of the final NPPF. Places for Everyone (PFE) was adopted by the 9 GM Authorities on 21 March 2024. This proposes an annual average combined housing requirement of 10,305dpa. This is distributed and phased across the 9 council areas with a stepped joint requirement of 9,063 in the first five years to 2025, increasing to 10,305 in the next five years and then 10,719 for the remaining nine years of the plan to 2039 (table 7.2, pg. 140). The combined OPSM of 13,036dpa is therefore significantly higher than that of the PFE in all periods. Individually, Manchester and Salford's requirements would be reduced in all PFE delivery periods against the OPSM. For the other seven authorities the OPSM significantly exceeds the PFE requirements in all delivery periods. Overall, for the five year period starting 1 April 2024, PFE housing requirements will be circa 16,000 homes short of the OPSM.	

Ribble Valley	OPSM Supply: 4.87
All delivery periods. The Council's Core Strategy is now some years out of date and progress on a new Local Plan has not been made since May/July 2022. The Council's most recent housing land supply statement is dated April 2022 and whilst recent housing completions have been high, this recorded a year-on-year decline in the total supply from housing sites. Therefore, whilst calculation of Council's supply position against the OPSM (330dpa) would suggest a marginal position in five year supply (4.87 years), it is expected a more up to date assessment of the supply would show the Council will need to identify more sites for both their emerging local plan and to meet housing needs in the short term.	

Pendle	OPSM Supply: 2.08
Medium-longer term prospects, but potentially for shorter term sites as well. The Council consulted on the Regulation 18 Local Plan in May 2023 and according to the LDS they are due to go to the Regulation 19 consultation stage in October 2024. The Preferred Options proposed a housing requirement of 140dpa, and this would need to be increased to at least 182dpa in the Regulation 19 consultation to be within the 200pa threshold described in the consultation NPPF (and OPSM of 382dpa). The Preferred Options acknowledged the Housing and Economic Development Assessment (HEDNA) recommended a housing requirement of 270dpa, so the Council could conceivably seek to raise their proposed requirement in excess of the indicative 182 figure in order to close the gap to the Proposed Standard Method figure, which would necessitate the identification of additional sites.	

Blackburn with Darwen	OPSM Supply: 5.79
Longer term prospects. The Council has recently adopted a new Local Plan which has a requirement of 447dpa. This is within 200 units of the OPSM (564dpa). There is presently no existing or forecast housing land supply deficit against the last published supply position within the AMR 2023 and Inspector Report into the Local Plan (7 years vs. 5.79 years).	

Stockport	OPSM Supply: 2.81
All delivery periods. The Council's last published housing land supply statement claimed a supply of 3.78 years. This would reduce to 2.81 years against the OPSM (1,906dpa). The emerging Stockport Local Plan reached Regulation 18 in July 2024 (with a requirement of 985dpa), but this was withdrawn after the consultation on the NPPF and Proposed Standard Method were published. Additional sites will need to be identified.	

Footnotes:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>
2. The site searching index is a guide and is based on the draft NPPF consultation, which is not national policy. You should always undertake your own due diligence on potential housing sites and housing land supply before progressing any land contract.