

CORE STRATEGY EVIDENCE BASE
EMPLOYMENT LAND TECHNICAL PAPER
BLACKPOOL COUNCIL
MAY 2012

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This technical paper provides further justification and explanation of the approach taken by the Council to meeting future employment land requirements over the plan period to 2027, as set out in the Blackpool Core Strategy Revised Preferred Option May 2012. It draws on information and data from published sources, including Core Strategy evidence base on employment matters.
- 1.2 The paper is focused on industry, business and office development needs. Tourism, retail and other town centre uses (apart from offices) are considered elsewhere as separate parts of the Core Strategy evidence base.
- 1.3 This technical paper has been produced in May 2012 and is based on information available to date, including 2010 figures from the Blackpool 2010 Employment Land Review update. Once more up-to-date information is available¹, the paper will be subsequently updated.
- 1.4 The following sections of the paper provide information on:
- Proposed Core Strategy content relating to employment matters
 - Blackpool's existing employment land
 - Establishing the future employment land requirement
 - Meeting the requirement

2.0 CORE STRATEGY

- 2.1 The Core Strategy will look to ensure that sufficient employment land is available over the 15 year plan period to 2027, to positively encourage investment and development that will provide sustainable jobs and support local economic growth. Due to Blackpool's tight boundary and a shortage of development land, there is recognition that meeting Blackpool's future employment needs is integrally linked with the wider Fylde Coast employment market area.

¹ Including a Blackpool Employment Land Review update in summer 2012 and the expected release of updated employment evidence base studies from the neighbouring authorities of Fylde and Wyre

Spatial Vision

2.2 Key elements of the spatial vision relevant to employment matters² are:

As the main economic centre of the Fylde Coast, Blackpool has a diverse and prosperous economy with a thriving culture of enterprise and entrepreneurship. It retains a strong educational offer supporting a skilled and educated workforce encouraging aspiration and ambition. A sustainable integrated transport system supports a competitive Fylde Coast economy with safe and convenient access to jobs and services...

Blackpool Town Centre is thriving at the heart of the resort core and provides an important sub-regional retail, cultural and business centre for Fylde Coast residents...

Blackpool has created a more equal society with sustainable communities having fair access to quality jobs, housing, shopping, health, education, open space, sport and recreation...

South Blackpool makes an important contribution to rebalancing the housing market and growing the Fylde Coast economy by providing improved choice in quality homes and jobs in sustainable locations to meet the community's needs and support regeneration...

Strategic Objectives

2.3 The Core Strategy objectives relevant to employment matters³ are:

1. *Ensure a balanced approach to regeneration and growth with sustainable development which meets the needs of Blackpool's people now and into the future*
3. *Strengthen the local economy through sustainable investment in new enterprise, entrepreneurship and business start-ups, creating better paid jobs and a wider choice of employment*
15. *Secure investment in retail, leisure and other town centre uses in Blackpool Town Centre to strengthen the offer with high quality shopping, restaurants, leisure, entertainment and offices, making the town centre the first choice shopping destination for Fylde Coast residents and an attractive place to visit and do business*
17. *Support economic growth at the Blackpool Airport Corridor and on lands close to Junction 4 of the M55*

Employment Policies

2.4 *Policy CS1: Strategic Location of Development* identifies that Blackpool's future growth, development and investment will be focused on Inner Area Regeneration; comprising Blackpool Town Centre, The Resort Core and Neighbourhoods within the inner areas. Supporting growth in South Blackpool will be promoted to help meet wider housing and employment needs, whilst recognising the important character of remaining lands at Marton Moss.

2.5 *Policy CS3: Economic Development and Employment* identifies where the focus for sustainable economic development will be to support and grow the local economy and meet the employment needs of Blackpool and the Fylde Coast Sub-Region. This focus is on existing industrial / business land

² Excluding tourism, retail and other town centre uses (apart from offices)

³ Excluding tourism, retail and other town centre uses (apart from offices)

within Blackpool; promoting office development, enterprise and business start-ups in Blackpool Town Centre; and recognising lands at South Blackpool as the most sustainable location for sub-regional economic growth and their importance in contributing towards meeting the future employment needs of Blackpool's population. To improve employment opportunities for Blackpool's residents the focus is on developing an effective skills agenda, securing inward investment and supporting responsible entrepreneurship.

- 2.6 *Policy CS16: Blackpool Town Centre* identifies opportunities to strengthen it as business, retail, cultural and leisure destination for residents and visitors, which includes growing an office sector. *Policy CS18* identifies the Central Business District within Blackpool Town Centre as being central to promoting office development within the town centre.
- 2.7 *Policy CS25: South Blackpool Employment Growth* supports proposals for major new industrial / business development (Class B uses) at sustainable locations to support sub-regional economic growth, including Blackpool Airport Corridor and lands close to Junction 4 of the M55. In addition, redevelopment of existing employment sites within South Blackpool to provide high quality modern business / industrial facilities (Class B uses) will be supported.

3.0 EXISTING EMPLOYMENT LAND

Blackpool

- 3.1 Prior to the Core Strategy, the last review of employment land in Blackpool was undertaken for the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-16 (adopted in 2006). In this Plan, no new allocations of employment land were made, as it was considered the existing employment estates and limited lands available within them would provide a sufficient supply of land to meet Blackpool's development needs for 40 hectares of land during the plan period to 2016. This level of provision was fixed through the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan. Blackpool's tight boundary and acute shortage of development land meant opportunities to identify good quality employment land were limited, and so great importance was attached to retaining and improving existing employment land.
- 3.2 Since the adoption of the Blackpool Local Plan (2006), three Core Strategy evidence base documents have been published to date, providing detail on existing employment land provision:
- Blackpool 2010 Employment Land Review update (May 2010)
 - Blackpool 2009 Employment Land Review update (May 2009)
 - Blackpool 2007 Employment Land Review (March 2008)
- 3.3 The most recent employment land update to inform the Core Strategy was undertaken in 2010. It monitors all available employment land and take-up of available land over a 12 month period to 31st March 2010. This assessment followed the 2009 update and the 2007 Employment Land Review (published March 2008). The 2007 Review contained a detailed assessment of all the main existing industrial business estates, their vitality and viability, and their importance to Blackpool's future economic growth and development. It assesses in detail the existing portfolio of available industrial and business sites and the future requirements for employment land.
- 3.4 The Council will undertake a further employment land review in summer 2012. Updated information will inform the Core Strategy Pre-Submission document where appropriate.

- 3.5 There are 13 main industrial / business locations within Blackpool which are established business areas and safeguarded for employment use in the Blackpool Local Plan (2006). These locations, their size and the remaining available employment land are set out in Table 1, using March 2010 data. Table 1 also includes an additional site at Warren Drive, which has an extant planning permission for office development granted in 2004. These locations amount to 185 hectares of land in total; 23.5 hectares of which is undeveloped and remains available for employment development.
- 3.6 The 2007 review provides a qualitative assessment of how well the 13 main industrial / business locations match market requirements. It considers the general accessibility, location and environment of each of the estates and how that is reflected in the pattern of uses and levels of vacancy. The review found that these estates are largely occupied, viable for industrial / business use and remain suitable and appropriate locations for business and industry use.
- 3.7 The employment land reviews also consider the market attractiveness of the 23.5 hectares of remaining land available for employment development⁴, which provides information about the marketing of each site, any current constraints, and the prospects for future development. The assessment shows that 9.1 hectares (ha) of these lands, on Blackpool Business Park (5.2ha), North Blackpool Technology Park (3.5ha) and Kincaig Road (0.4ha), can genuinely be considered attractive sites which are suitable, available and developable. Much of this land is subject to firm developer interest.

Table 1: Blackpool Employment Land Supply (March 2010)

Industrial / Business Estate	Estate Size (Ha)	Land Available (Ha)
Blackpool Business Park	23.7	5.2
Nth Blackpool Technology Park	8.1	3.5
Preston New Road	11.9	4.7
Clifton Road (5 sites)	47.1	3.7
Vicarage Lane	15.5	0.8
Kincaig Estate	17	0.4
Mowbray Drive	16.4	0.3
Chiswick Grove	4.6	-
Devonshire / Mansfield Road	3.4	-
Squires Gate Estate	19	1.9
Sycamore Estate	5.2	-
Warbreck Hill	8.6	-
Blackpool Fylde Estate (Part)	1.5	-
Warren Drive ⁵	3	3
Total	185	23.5

⁴ Using the criteria set out in the Employment Land Review Guidance Note (2004)

⁵ Not within one of the 13 main employment areas identified in the current Blackpool Local Plan (2006); but has an extant planning permission for office development.

- 3.8 In addition to the 13 main industrial / business locations, the 2007 review also considers the future of two older, smaller estates within the built-up area. Cocker Street and Hoo Hill Estates comprise 2.5 hectares of land in total and are identified as mixed-use industrial improvement zones in the current Blackpool Local Plan (2006). Both estates have future potential for housing redevelopment on part of the estate to assist with delivery of wider improvements to their layout, environment and efficiency. In particular, the 2007 review questions whether there remains sufficient demand for the Cocker Street estate as an employment location – although it remains desirable to ensure appropriate local scale employment opportunities in that area.
- 3.9 Aside from the main estates, there is a significant amount of unallocated smaller individual sites / back-street premises concentrated in the town’s inner areas which provide important job opportunities. Recognising their continued importance and the mix of problems that arise on some sites, saved Policy DE4 of the Blackpool Local Plan (2006) took a balanced approach and set out that development of smaller industrial business sites for other uses will only be permitted where clear environmental problems mean that wider community benefits outweigh the loss of employment. Whilst there is the potential for redevelopment of smaller employment sites, the 2007 review considered that the loss of any of these sites would not require any additional industrial / business land to be identified to compensate for this.
- 3.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages the provision for more flexibility where there is no reasonable prospect of an employment site being used for that purpose. In Blackpool’s case, some flexibility is allowed in current planning policy for the two individual employment sites outside of the main employment locations (Cocker Street and Hoo Hill Estates) as well as some of the unallocated sites / back street premises with environmental problems. However, this flexibility would not be appropriate for the 13 main industrial / business locations currently safeguarded for employment use, as the 2007 review undertaken confirms they perform a continuing important role as part of Blackpool’s strategic employment land supply in terms of their vitality and viability.

Fylde Coast Sub-Region

- 3.11 Employment markets are not defined by local authority boundaries; and in Blackpool’s case it functions within the wider Fylde Coast Sub-Region employment market along with the neighbouring authorities of Fylde and Wyre. This is apparent through strong travel to work and employment patterns, with a shared tourism and cultural offer; regionally and nationally significant advanced manufacturing; public sector administration; and a shared infrastructure including Blackpool Airport and strategic highway, rail and tram networks.
- 3.12 Given the shortage of good quality business / industrial land within the Borough, the Council co-operates with neighbouring authorities to promote the economic development of sites across the Fylde Coast Sub-Region to support sub-regional growth. This includes lands in Fylde immediately on the edge of the Blackpool urban area close to Blackpool Airport and Junction 4 of the M55, BAE Systems Enterprise Zone (Warton), Hillhouse (Thornton), and the Port of Fleetwood. In particular, lands in Fylde close to Blackpool Airport and Junction 4 of the M55 (Blackpool Fylde Estate and Whitehills) are essentially an extension of the Blackpool urban area and play an important role in complementing and supporting Blackpool’s economic growth.

4.0 ESTABLISHING THE FUTURE EMPLOYMENT LAND REQUIREMENT

Blackpool

- 4.1 Levels of employment land provision have in the past been fixed through the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan, although no requirement was set out in the North West Regional Spatial Strategy (NWRSS) for individual local authorities or for the Fylde Sub-Region⁶. Hence the 2007 Employment Land Review determines the key issues for Blackpool and an appropriate method for assessing future employment land requirements.
- 4.2 Three key issues for Blackpool are important in determining future employment land requirements:
- The overall amount of business / industrial land available to meet future needs is low (23.5ha)
 - The number of attractive, suitable and available sites is limited (9ha), with much of the remaining land subject to firm developer interest
 - The Borough's tight knit boundary and demonstrable lack of future development land means opportunities for further employment expansion within the Borough are extremely limited.
- 4.3 These very specific local circumstances are key and do not justify a highly elaborate approach involving a detailed technical modelling of alternative implications and choices for future business space requirements within Blackpool. With an acute shortage of development land within the Borough, and a limited level of past take-up compared to more traditional industrial / business areas, it is essential that a realistic view is taken to identify an appropriate level of supply which accurately matches foreseeable market requirements.
- 4.4 Against this background, the way forward for the assessment of future employment land requirements is substantially based on what is realistically achievable using historic employment land take-up data in order to project requirements during the plan period to 2027.
- 4.5 The review of employment land take-up in Blackpool between 1991 and 2010 shows a total take-up of 30.9ha, representing an average of 1.6ha per annum. There were no significant one-off developments in Blackpool that distorted take-up figures over this period, however qualitative variations in the availability of land have been a significant factor. Much of the early part of the period (1991-2001) spanned a time when Blackpool's supply of land was characterised by an absence of sites on modern business parks. During the later period (2001 – 2010), the availability of new, modern business park lands concentrated within Blackpool Business Park and North Blackpool Technology Park, meant take-up of land in Blackpool was less constrained. Total take-up over this later period was 19.8 hectares, representing a higher average take-up of 2.2 hectares per annum, which is a more valid projection.
- 4.6 Projecting this higher figure forward over the fifteen year plan period to 2027 and providing the opportunity for a 20% flexibility factor (consistent with past approaches and the NWRSS) would suggest a future requirement of 35-40 hectares⁷ of additional employment land to meet Blackpool's needs in addition to existing developed business space. Paragraph 3.5 has established that only 23.5 hectares of undeveloped employment land is available.

⁶ In Blackpool's case the requirements were set at the Central Lancashire City Region level.

⁷ 15 x 2.2h p.a. (+ 20% flexibility)

- 4.7 This assessment is based on gross past take-up rates and does not include business churn. The 2007, 2009 and 2010 Employment Land Review (update) did not look at employment site vacancies as vacancy rates were generally low⁸. However, due to recent vacancy patterns, it is proposed to look at business churn in the 2012 review. The implications of this will inform an updated technical paper and the proposed policies in the Publication Core Strategy⁹.

Fylde Coast Sub-Region

- 4.8 Given that Blackpool functions within the wider Fylde Coast Sub-Region employment market, any employment forecasts for the Borough cannot be met in isolation without also jointly considering future employment development for the Sub-Region. The agreed Fylde Coast Employment Land Review Summary Statement (2010) sets out the current position in terms of past take-up and land availability across the Sub-Region¹⁰. The total take-up of employment land within the Fylde Coast Sub-Region between 2001 and 2010 was 46.6ha, representing an average of 5.2ha per annum. Using the same method applied to calculate Blackpool's future requirement, projecting this take-up figure forward over the fifteen year plan period to 2027 and providing some flexibility would suggest a future requirement of approximately 95 hectares¹¹ of additional employment land across the Fylde Coast.
- 4.9 Whilst existing employment land available for take up across the three authorities (23.5ha in Blackpool, 13.4ha in Fylde and 102.74ha in Wyre¹²) would suggest there is more than enough land available to meet this requirement in quantitative terms, these must be quality sites in sustainable locations to strengthen the Fylde Coast economy and position it so that it can compete with - and complement - employment opportunities elsewhere within the region. This is a key issue given its more peripheral location within the North West. It is therefore critical to generate a sub-regional portfolio of sustainable employment land provision, capitalising on the particular assets, strengths and opportunities of the sub-region as a whole. This portfolio must provide a range of quality employment development sites capable of attracting inward investment to support new business growth; as well as smaller, more centrally located employment sites within close proximity to public transport networks.

5.0 MEETING THE REQUIREMENT

- 5.1 As previously highlighted, Blackpool's limited development land is a significant constraint to meeting future need within its own boundary. The Borough has an intensely built-up urban area; approximately 80% of which is developed. Remaining undeveloped lands largely comprise of protected open space which provides important recreational and amenity benefits for residents and visitors; or small sites more suited for small-scale (often windfall) development. Blackpool is built up to its northern and southern boundaries, with the few remaining areas of undeveloped open land to the south and east of the town comprising public open space, sites of nature conservation value, Green Belt and Countryside Areas. Due to the intensely built-up urban area, much of this open land has important landscape, nature conservation and environmental value; integral to the local distinctiveness of Blackpool and valued by the local community.

⁸ With the exception of the Squires Gate Estate in South Blackpool; identified in the 2007 Review as having regeneration potential

⁹ For example, relatively high levels of business churn may mean the amount of land available within existing allocated employment sites is closer aligned with the future requirement for 35-40 hectares than what the 2010 data is showing as available (23.5ha)

¹⁰ Based on 2010 data, which is expected to be updated by all three neighbouring authorities in 2012

¹¹ 15 x 5.2h p.a. + 20% flexibility

¹² This high figure shows that Wyre's circumstances are different from Blackpool and Fylde as there is an over-supply of employment land in the Borough, which is why the Wyre Core Strategy proposes to rationalise and re-allocate some of its existing employment land

- 5.2 These constraints are reflected in the Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper (2008), which limited the choices proposed in the six alternative spatial options to accommodate 40 hectares of additional employment land¹³ and 7,500 new homes¹⁴ to meet Blackpool's future needs. Public consultation and analysis of each option, including the benefits and disbenefits, informed the Preferred Option (2010). It was recognised at the outset that the preferred option was likely to be finding the right balance through a combination of options, and would be reliant on lands within and on the edge of Blackpool.
- 5.3 In considering the options, elements of options 2, 4 and 5 performed strongest. Option 2 targeted growth and development in the inner area, town centre and resort core to achieve the Council's vision for regeneration; although due to the limited lands available, further development in sustainable locations on the edge of the existing urban area would be required. The most sustainable locations were considered to be Marton Moss (option 4) and the M55 hub (option 5). Marton Moss is the only major area in the Borough which remains undeveloped and it was proposed to develop lands to deliver a wide mix of homes; although the particular characteristics of the Moss would limit the opportunities for employment provision. Reflecting the commitment to sub-regional growth at the M55 Hub, option 5 considered that lands in Fylde in conjunction with lands in Blackpool could be sustainably developed for a mix of uses to help complement and support Blackpool's economic growth.
- 5.4 This combination of options established Blackpool's preferred spatial strategy for inner area regeneration complemented by supporting growth.
- 5.5 Other options considered for future development, but discounted, included urban concentration (option 1) and peripheral suburban expansion (option 3). Whilst option 1 would help achieve the Council's vision for regeneration and promote development in sustainable locations; there were concerns about substantial further intensification of development within the urban area. The limited sites available would only deliver small-scale development unsuitable to provide additional employment opportunities; there could even be a reduction in employment land due to pressure for competing development i.e. residential. Option 3 considered peripheral greenfield locations on the edge of Blackpool to help accommodate development requirements; however this raised considerable environmental concerns as it included less sustainable locations to the east of the town, and would have encroached onto Green Belt and Countryside land. There would be little scope for employment expansion on these sites, both in terms of size and market attractiveness.
- 5.6 The Revised Preferred Option (2012) is informed by the Issues and Options (2008) and Preferred Option (2010), including representations received on each document, in addition to the Localism Agenda, NPPF and the Duty to Co-operate, which have recently emerged. Subsequently, it no longer promotes some elements of the preferred options (2, 4 and 5). In particular, it proposes a different approach to Marton Moss and the M55 Hub. In terms of the Moss, whilst option 4 was subsequently taken forward as a preferred option, further consultation has established the need to safeguard and enhance the Moss character, which is considered integral to the local distinctiveness of Blackpool and is valued by the local community. Further justification for this change is detailed in the Housing Technical Paper (2012). In terms of the M55 Hub, this no longer has growth point status and a consolidated employment figure for Blackpool and the urban edge within Fylde is no longer being

¹³This figure was based on the 2007 Employment Land Review. 40ha was a combined net outstanding requirement for Blackpool and its cross boundary urban edge within Fylde (70ha gross requirement less 30ha of existing available employment land). This combined requirement is now obsolete and the Council is now adopting a different approach through the Duty to Co-operate.

¹⁴This figure was based on the NWRSS requirement and is now out of date. Further information on housing matters is set out in a separate Housing Technical Paper (2012).

promoted by the Council in response to representations received and the emergence of the Duty to Co-operate. However, lands around Junction 4 of the M55 and Blackpool Airport Corridor on the Fylde / Blackpool boundary continue to be recognised as a priority for sub-regional growth in the Duty to Co-operate, and further development here, in what is essentially an extension to Blackpool's urban area, would continue to play an important role in complementing and supporting Blackpool's economic growth.

- 5.7 This revised approach aligns with Blackpool's preferred spatial strategy for inner area regeneration complemented by supporting growth, although there is now also a focus on the enhancement of Marton Moss through promoting a neighbourhood planning approach.
- 5.8 The analysis undertaken and subsequent choices made regarding locations for future development confirms that Blackpool is unable to meet its own employment needs within its boundary. The implication of discounting lands within the Borough on the edge of the urban area, including Marton Moss, mean there will be no additional sizeable / quality development land identified as being available for employment. In which case, Blackpool's future strategy must be to capitalise on existing assets within the Borough, including existing employment estates and the town centre (an important sub-regional centre for business opportunities); and to continue to co-operate with neighbouring authorities to agree the sub-regional employment land requirement which would complement and support Blackpool's economic growth.

Capitalise more on existing assets within Blackpool

- 5.9 The 13 main industrial / business locations (amounting to 182 hectares of land¹⁵) will continue to perform an important role as part of Blackpool's strategic employment land supply, and therefore will remain safeguarded for employment use. It is established that approximately 23.5 hectares of this land is undeveloped. Although limited, it represents a reasonable level of provision against Blackpool's future requirement for an additional 35-40 hectares¹⁶ (equates to a 10 year supply). However, it is also established that only around 9 hectares of this undeveloped land contains genuinely attractive sites which are suitable, available and developable. These are concentrated on Blackpool Business Park and North Blackpool Technology Park; much of which is subject to firm developer interest.
- 5.10 Making more undeveloped sites attractive to the market, and improving occupancy of existing sites, is an important element of future supply. This can be achieved by promoting the regeneration and redevelopment of some employment areas, to help to make the best use of existing employment land and buildings and provide better opportunities for future employment development. In particular, opportunities exist for regeneration and expansion of substantial vacant and underused space on the Squires Gate Industrial Estate in conjunction with the adjoining estates close to the airport; as well as opportunities for regeneration of lands on Clifton Road currently occupied by Progress House and the Gas Works site.
- 5.11 Greater emphasis on Blackpool Town Centre, capitalising on infrastructure and accessibility strengths, will develop a more prosperous commercial and business sector and strengthen the town centre economy. There is an opportunity to provide a functional central business district for the town centre, as there is currently little office activity and quality space available, with much of this dispersed to

¹⁵ The sites are identified in Table 1 (page 4)

¹⁶ Based on 2010 data - If data collected in summer 2012 shows more recent take-up is less than 2.2hectares per annum and there is considerable land available on existing employment sites, then this provision will be a better match against future requirement.

locations around the town. The Central Business District scheme forms a key component of this, providing the opportunity to deliver a high quality mixed use scheme, help develop the employment offer and provide a crucial economic driver for the Fylde Coast Sub-Region.

- 5.12 This approach to capitalising on existing assets to improve market attractiveness and encourage investment is complemented by Core Strategy core policies, which aim to improve the quality of place and make Blackpool a more attractive place to invest; reduce the need to travel by providing easy access to jobs (and homes); and improve employment prospects for local people.

Co-operate on sub-regional employment development

- 5.13 It is well documented¹⁷ that Blackpool's circumstances are such that meeting its future long term needs is integrally linked with the wider Fylde Coast employment market area. This highlights the importance of continued co-operation between the three Fylde authorities to support the economic growth and development of the sub-region through the Duty to Co-operate. The Duty to Co-operate recognises the need to strengthen the economic performance of the Fylde Coast; without future co-operation, the Sub-Region is likely to under-perform. Key issues include agreeing the sub-regional employment land requirement and key spatial priorities for economic development in the Fylde Coast.
- 5.14 Paragraph 3.12 of this Paper sets out key sites across the Fylde Coast promoted by the Council to support sub-regional growth (and to complement and support Blackpool's economic growth). These are lands around Junction 4 of the M55 and Blackpool Airport Corridor on the Fylde / Blackpool boundary, BAE Systems Enterprise Zone (Warton), Hillhouse (Thornton), and the Port of Fleetwood. With the exception of the Port of Fleetwood, these sites are identified as key spatial priorities for future economic development identified in the Duty to Co-operate Memorandum of Understanding in addition to the A6 corridor (Garstang) and Central Business District (Blackpool Town Centre).
- 5.15 Whilst the sub-regional employment land requirement has not been identified through the Duty to Co-operate to date, co-operation regarding the extent of lands promoted for employment development around Junction 4 of the M55 motorway (including Whitehills and Whyndyke¹⁸) and Blackpool Airport immediately on the edge of Blackpool in neighbouring Fylde will be particularly important. These are high profile locations capable of re-positioning the sub-regional image, due to their proximity to the strategic transport network and with key links to urban centres¹⁹. The prime location and sufficient scale of lands available would attract significant inward investment, creating considerable employment opportunities for the wider sub-region. Their location on the edge of Blackpool means that future development of these lands would essentially be a sustainable extension of the Blackpool urban area, and would help complement and support Blackpool's economic growth²⁰. The existing transport network provides good accessibility between jobs in this location and homes within Blackpool and the wider sub-region; and further development and associated infrastructure would support more sustainable patterns of development and travel to work on both sides of the boundary.

¹⁷ Including the Fylde Employment Land Review Summary Statement, Fylde Coast Multi Area Agreement, Central Lancashire City Region Development Plan and Lancashire Economic Partnership Employment Land Strategy (Genecon 2006)

¹⁸ Proposed as a future location for a mixed-use development scheme, including employment development

¹⁹ The high profile location is supported by the Lancashire Economic Partnership Employment Land Strategy (Genecon 2006), which identifies Whitehills and Blackpool Airport Business Area as prestige sites for sub-regional growth.

²⁰ The specific importance of these lands in Fylde in supporting Blackpool's economic development is set out in the Fylde Employment Land Review Summary Statement (2010) and the Lancashire Economic Partnership Employment Land Strategy (Genecon 2006).

- 5.16 Wyre also contains key sites of sub-regional significance, including lands at Hillhouse (Thornton)²¹, and a number of important employment sites which provide jobs for Blackpool residents, including lands close to Blackpool's urban edge at Norcross. Blackpool Council will continue to co-operate with the future economic development of these lands to support sub-regional growth. However, in comparison, the Council considers that lands on the edge of Blackpool in Fylde are more accessible to the majority of Blackpool residents, and would encourage more sustainable travel patterns from Blackpool; which is why they are identified as having a specific role to play in complementing and supporting Blackpool's economic growth, as opposed to lands in Wyre.
- 5.17 On balance, it is considered that continued co-operation with the neighbouring authorities of Fylde and Wyre for sub-regional growth (which is a long-term commitment by the three authorities) would not undermine Blackpool's local economy and would deliver the strongest economic, social and environmental benefits. If Blackpool and the two neighbouring authorities do not embrace this approach, then the reality is Blackpool's circumstances mean there is only 23.5 hectares of land available for employment development within the Borough; which would not meet Blackpool's future longer term needs and could potentially undermine job growth and the Blackpool economy.

Background Papers

The following documents have informed this Paper:

- Duty to Co-operate Memorandum of Understanding (working document)
- Blackpool 2010 Employment Land Review update (May 2010)
- Blackpool 2009 Employment Land Review update (May 2009)
- Blackpool 2007 Employment Land Review (March 2008)
- Blackpool Core Strategy Issues and Options (June 2008)
- Blackpool Core Strategy Issues and Options Report to Executive including Preferred Option Interim Report Appendix (February 2009)
- Blackpool Statement of Consultation Reports
- Blackpool Preferred Option (May 2010)
- Blackpool Housing Technical Paper (May 2012)
- Blackpool Revised Preferred Option (expected June 2012)
- Fylde Employment Land Review Summary Statement (2010)
- Wyre Preferred Option (March 2012)
- Central Lancashire City Region Development Plan (2006)
- Lancashire Economic Partnership Employment Land Strategy (Genecon 2006)
- North West Regional Spatial Strategy (September 2008)
- National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

²¹ Also identified as a prestige site in the 2006 Genecon Study.