

Hello, Good Morning and Welcome to Banqueting Hall and the Borough of Barrow-in-Furness.

On behalf of Barrow Borough Council, I would like to welcome the Inspector, Karen Ridge, and all those attending and participating in the Examination.

I would also like to thank the Programme Officer, Carolyn Woodend, for her management of the examination process and also Helen Houston and her team for all their hard work and effort in reaching this stage in the process.

Before I take you through the Councils Opening Statement, I thought it would be useful to provide a brief summary of the content:

1. Introduction to the Borough of Barrow-in-Furness;
2. What the new Local Plan is about and how it has shaped the Council's own overall priorities;
3. A snapshot about the Borough over the last 175 years – *in around 5 minutes*;
4. How to achieve the aim of a sustainable balanced growth, through the adoption of the new Barrow Borough Plan;
5. Brief Conclusion – setting out the benefits of an adopted Local Plan

1.
Barrow's Town Hall is at the heart of the town and the clock tower can be viewed from almost anywhere in the town. Built from local red sandstone, it was formally opened in 1887 (131 years ago). The town of Barrow-in-Furness is a planned town, laid out by Sir James Ramsden, the first Mayor of Barrow, an Engineer and Victorian entrepreneur.

Barrow and its 11 islands look across the Irish sea towards the Isle of Man to the west. Morecambe Bay, with its vast intertidal areas lies to the south and the Duddon Estuary to the north. On a fine day you can see Blackpool tower from Rampside and Roa Island.

Barrow is an area of deep contrasts. We have globally renowned companies supplying international markets alongside internationally important nature reserves and wild coastal landscapes. Barrow has an increasingly diverse economy with particular expertise in submarine construction, energy and offshore engineering and technology. Over the next five years we have huge growth in all these sectors as well as other investments in the Travel to Work Area.

2.
The new Local Plan for Barrow Borough will shape the future of the borough and contains plans and policies that will guide development out to 2031.

The **Barrow Borough Local Plan** is a key mechanism for the Council to deliver four of the five Council priorities as set out in the recently produced Council Plan, which will help towards securing a sustainable long term economic future for the Borough and attracting inward investment.

Four of the five key priorities are:

- **Priority 1.** Developing the local economy to secure a long term economic future for all our community. Providing **Employment**– opportunities for relocation and job creation via provision of sites for employment related development and support for existing businesses. One of the objectives is to lobby for improvements in road and rail infrastructure through partnerships.
- **Priority 2.** A strong and vibrant town centre community.
- **Priority 3.** Closing the gap on health inequalities.
- **Priority 4.** Providing a greater choice of good quality housing on a range of sites across the Borough and regenerating the oldest and poorest housing in the Borough.

In addition, a cross cutting theme relates to the Environment – that is the preservation and promotion of our outstanding natural environment and conservation and improvements to the built environment and public realm through regeneration and tourism initiatives.

The Local Plan will impact upon a wide range of people and organisations. The Council consulted with both statutory consultees and the public to gather feedback on and help us improve the content of the Draft Local Plan. We approached a wide range of stakeholders, including both statutory and non-statutory consultees. Public consultation began in 2012, when the Council asked local people and stakeholders what they thought should be included in the Local Plan, in terms of what the Borough needs, where it should go and how it should be done.

3.

The Borough of Barrow-in-Furness is a stunning part of the world, with fantastic seascapes against the backdrop of the Lake District fells. The Borough includes the principal town of Barrow-in-Furness, Walney Island and the parishes of Dalton with Newton, Askam and Ireleth and Lindal and Marton.

Prior to the industrial revolution the medieval market town of Dalton-in-Furness was the main town in the area. This ancient capital of Furness and birthplace of George Romney, the renowned portrait painter, lies a few miles to the north. The recent discovery of a Viking Hoard nearby (which is now on display in the Dock Museum) illustrates the settlement of this area in the 9th and 10th centuries.

Barrow grew from a village to a major town in the early 19th century as the industrial revolution in England fuelled a need for iron, which opened up the peninsula to haematite mining. In 1843 there were only 32 dwellings and 2 pubs in the hamlet. Today 175 years further on, Barrow is now home to around 67,500 people, 14% of Cumbria's population.

The coast is the Borough's playground and the sea has had such a strong influence on the area from the arrival of the Vikings, the Cistercian Monks of Furness Abbey's trading activities in Medieval times, to the town's shipbuilding heritage, right through to 21st century recreational activities such as kitesurfing and jet skiing.

The Borough has a wealth of natural and built heritage from the magnificent ruins of Furness Abbey and the charming mysteries of Piel Castle, to peaceful expanses of rural beach and nature reserves. The Borough has a world class coastal heritage with nature reserves, Ramsar designations and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Yet as we all know Barrow does have a **Wild side**with no less than four Nature Reserves:

- **South Walney Nature Reserve** (operated by Cumbria Wildlife Trust) is situated on the south end of Walney Island, the area has considerable ecological interest. *Then we have **Foulney Nature Reserve*** is also managed by Cumbria Wildlife Trust and during the summer, its main conservation feature is its breeding terns – Arctic, Common and Little – which travel vast distances to nest on the island’s shingle banks.

Also

- **North Walney National Nature Reserve** (Natural England manage the reserve) can be found a mile north of the beach at Earnse Bay. It is a peaceful sanctuary with dramatic views over the Irish Sea, and real wilderness quality. The reserve is also a haven for wildlife, including a small population of the nationally rare natterjack toad. These nocturnal amphibians are rarely seen, but can often be heard in springtime, at dusk. Additionally, over 130 species of birds have been recorded on and around the reserve.

And lastly

- **Sandscale Haws Nature Reserve** is a nationally important **National Trust** reserve which has a unique and dynamic coastal landscape. Over 500 different flowering plants have been recorded on the reserve. Sandscale Haws is also famous for its natterjack toads and great crested newts.

The Port of Barrow is sheltered by the 10 miles expanse of Walney Island and serves in an offshore support role particularly to offshore wind farms and the initiatives of Cumbria’s Energy Coast, as well as trading in other specialist cargoes and as a cruise ship port for the Lake District. The port has been identified for significant development.

Orsted (formerly Dong Energy) is the world leader in developing and building offshore wind farms. With three wind farms already operated in the Irish Sea and one further in development, Orsted are continuing to invest in the area, creating local jobs and powering UK homes with clean **energy**.

BARROW-IN-FURNESS has a rich heritage and a proud tradition for World Leading Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Excellence. The sector has a significant concentration in the Furness Peninsula.

Today, the Devonshire Dock Hall, is being extended and modernised, as part of BAE Systems Site Redevelopment Programme and the hall dominates the skyline in the southern part of the town, just as its submarine building and engineering skills are the bedrock of the town’s prosperity attracting world class Engineers.

Furness Economic Development Forum (FEDF) Is a public-private sector partnership. Its objective is to support the economic growth of the Furness area. The Forum is working closely with the Cumbria LEP to facilitate economic growth. The delivery plan's key message is to promote the importance of advanced manufacturing and advanced manufacturing skills to the Cumbrian and Furness economy.

Barrow is also the main cultural, commercial and retail centre for South West Cumbria. Arts and Culture are part of day to day life, with thriving theatre groups, dance and digital media especially film making. The Forum is a Council owned theatre and arts complex with a year-round programme of events, whilst the Nan Tait Centre is home to Art Gene and the Cooke's Studios is a centre for digital media, dance and other arts related organisations

The Council has suffered a substantial reduction in resources since 2010. Between 2010 and 2020, excluding inflation the amount of money we have to spend on our community will have reduced by 40% as a result of reductions in grant from central government. In 2016/17 we were – proportionately – the worst hit local authority in England.

As such we have a limited staff resource, the small team that have worked on the Local Plan have produced much of the work in house, engaging consultants where necessary. Throughout the preparation of the Plan the team has been fully supported by other teams within the Council including Property Information, Development Management, Estates and Public Protection.

We are a geographically small, densely populated (although our population is falling slightly) and urbanised Local Authority, completely different to any other Cumbrian District Council. As we form only part of our Travel to Work Area and operate within a two-tier system of local government, sometimes key economic decisions which affect the Borough lie beyond our immediate control. The BAE shipyard continues to dominate the economy though there are other significant growth sectors.

4.
Since the adoption of our Saved Local Plan there have been significant changes in national planning policy. **The Local Plan** responds to this by positively seeking opportunities to meet the development needs of the borough and planning to meet objectively assessed needs for homes, jobs and facilities, in a way compatible with the specific context and constraints of Barrow Borough whilst protecting and enhancing our assets.

Given Barrow Borough's location, character and local circumstances there are occasions where broad national policy would not be effective or appropriate. Where this is the case, we have developed an approach - supported by evidence - that would be effective in meeting the borough's specific needs.

This is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework which states in paragraph 10 that: "Plans... need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas."

The **Barrow Borough Local Plan** will be the statutory document that will shape the future of the Borough, containing the plans and policies that will guide development through to 2031, its vision

seeks to address the key planning issues that are currently facing the Borough. These issues include population decline, health inequalities, lack of housing choice and unemployment. The vision also seeks to promote the Borough's greatest assets to attract and retain people and businesses in the area, such as its natural environment, its highly skilled workforce and its strong communities.

Future development in the Borough needs to be guided by decisions that improve the quality of life for everyone in the Borough and which protect and enhance the natural and built environment. This will address some of the challenges faced, particularly in the town centre and help towards securing a sustainable long term economic future for the Borough and attracting inward investment.

Throughout the development of the Local Plan, which has included **five Drafts**, the Council has undertaken consultation at each stage, the details of which can be found in the Consultation Statement. All engagement during the development of the Local Plan has been guided by the Statement of Community Involvement.

Constructive Engagement throughout the Plans production with statutory consultees including Natural England, the Environment Agency, Historic England, Highways England and United Utilities has helped to shape the submitted Plan.

It is hoped this process has led to the development of policies which are supported to achieve a robust Plan capable of delivering sustainable development across the Borough.

This Local Plan will pursue an overarching strategy of sustainable balanced growth, by distributing development across the Borough, on a range of development sites. The Plan has identified sites across the borough to meet the objectively assessed housing need out to 2031. This Strategy seeks to promote the opportunities and strengths enjoyed by the Borough and achieve sustainable development that enhances the quality of its offer in terms of housing, employment, leisure and culture, and encourages inward investment.

The Council considers that the Plan strikes an appropriate balance between promoting sustainable growth and preserving what is valued in the borough, between local and strategic matters and between flexibility and certainty.

The Plan is supported by robust and proportionate evidence for example on housing, employment, infrastructure and viability. It has also undergone a Sustainability Appraisal to assess reasonable alternatives and consider the Plan's environmental, social and economic impacts.

5.
And lastly in Conclusion, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the preparation of the Barrow Borough Local Plan, including those who responded to the various stages of consultation and engagement. Their input **is** valued and has helped inform and improve the Plan.

The nature of planning means that, as with every Local Plan, there are some unresolved matters for participants and representors which will be scrutinised during this examination.

The Council are keen to adopt the Local Plan as soon as possible - in line with government aspirations - and to begin implementing its policies so that the borough benefits from an up-to-date planning framework for the following three reasons, to:

- deliver sustainable growth and sustainable communities
- tackle the problems the Borough faces; and
- protect and enhance the things that are most valued about the Borough.

***To Conclude**, the Council considers that the Local Plan provides a sound, positive, justified and effective strategy for achieving sustainable development and meeting Barrow Borough's identified needs.*

We therefore welcome this opportunity to proactively discuss matters during this Public Examination.

Thank you

Steve Solsby
Assistant Director
Barrow Borough Council