

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL REPORT

NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Introduction

- 0.1 Knowsley Council is producing a Local Plan which will deal with the spatial issues that will affect the people who will live, learn, work and relax in the Borough. The overarching document of the Local Plan will be the “Local Plan: Core Strategy” which will outline the Council’s vision for Knowsley up to the year 2028, and will set out the strategic framework to promote, guide and manage future growth and development in the Borough.
- 0.2 The Local Plan: Core Strategy was submitted on the 19th July 2013 and the initial Local Plan Examination hearing sessions took place in November 2013. Following these hearing sessions, the Inspector appointed to undertake the examination issued his interim findings in January 2014. In response to these findings, and also to reflect other required amendments, the Council proposed a number of modifications to the Plan. These proposed modifications were subject to SA, made available for public consultation and considered in detail at the reconvened hearings which took place in July 2014. In light of the evidence given at these hearings, a series of further modifications to the Local Plan have been proposed by the Council.
- 0.3 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a systematic process used to assess the extent to which a plan or strategy will help to achieve relevant social, environmental and economic objectives. It also suggests ways of avoiding or reducing negative impacts.
- 0.4 This Report outlines the findings of the SA of the proposed modifications to the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy. It supersedes the SA Report produced in June 2014 to accompany the initial series of proposed modifications to the Plan and assesses both the initial series of suggested modifications to the Plan and also the further modifications that have been proposed by the Council following the reconvened hearings. Specifically, it assesses each of the modifications that are proposed to the Plan in order to consider which of these modifications are ‘significant’ and merit further SA. An appraisal has been undertaken of each of the modifications that are considered to be ‘significant’ in SA terms.
- 0.5 The SA also provides an appraisal of four alternative strategic options in relation to the release of sites from the Green Belt in order to meet Knowsley’s development needs. The delivery of these sites, to be known as Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs), is supported by a number of new policies and a number of site specific options have been developed for each of the options. This SA provides an appraisal of these policies and options.

The appraisal has also considered two alternative sites which have been proposed for release from the Green Belt by the landowners and discussed at the Core Strategy hearings in November 2013

- 0.6 This SA report provides an addendum to the Final Sustainability Appraisal Report submitted alongside the Local Plan: Core Strategy in July 2013 and should be read in conjunction with this report. In assessing the proposed modifications to the Local Plan, this report seeks only to assess whether the proposed modifications and further modifications change the effect the Local Plan has on the SA Objectives, and, as a result, on the sustainability of the Plan as a whole.

Requirement to Undertake a Sustainability Appraisal

- 0.7 Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning the planning system. In order to ensure that new plans and strategies contribute towards sustainable development, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced the requirement for a SA to be carried out on all new or revised Local Plans (formerly known as Local Development Frameworks). Whilst the Localism Act 2011 and the recent publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) have resulted in a number of significant changes to the planning system, there is a continued requirement for Local Plan documents to be subject to SA throughout their preparation.
- 0.8 In addition, local planning authorities must comply with European Union Directive 2001/42/EC, which requires a formal Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of plans and programmes that are likely to have a significant effect on the environment.
- 0.9 While SA and SEA are distinct processes many of their requirements overlap. This report has been produced to meet the requirements of both. Throughout this report, all references to SA should be taken to include the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC.

Sustainability Objectives

- 0.10 The SA considers the potential implications of the proposed modifications and further modifications to the Local Plan: Core Strategy by assessing a series of policies, options, alternative sites and other proposed modifications against a number of social, environmental and economic objectives. Accordingly, the establishment of these objectives is central to the SA process.
- 0.11 Drawing upon the sustainability issues identified through analysis of baseline data and the review of other relevant plans and strategies, twenty-two objectives that reflect Knowsley's priorities for achieving a sustainable

borough have been identified in the SA Scoping Report¹. This framework of sustainability objectives has formed the basis of the appraisal of the modifications to the Plan and was also used to appraise the Proposed Submission document.

Appraisal Results: Positive and Negative Effects

- 0.12 The SA process identified that in the majority of instances, the proposed modifications and proposed further modifications to the Local Plan: Core Strategy would not significantly alter the intent of the Plan. Accordingly, many of the modifications are unlikely to have a significant material impact on the performance of the Plan in the SA process and do not therefore merit further appraisal. Nevertheless, the assessment did identify a number of modifications that could be 'significant' in SA terms.
- 0.13 These modifications that could be 'significant' in SA terms have been appraised using the methodology set out in the Local Plan: Core Strategy SA Scoping Report and the SA Report of the Proposed Submission version of the Plan. The appraisal of the modifications to the plan included an assessment of four strategic options in relation to the allocation of Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs). This appraisal has demonstrated that although each of these options would have a similar impact on the majority of the sustainability objectives, converting all of the 'reserved' locations to SUE site allocations and allowing development early in the Plan period (Option 1) would provide a greater level of certainty that these sites would come forward and therefore increase the likelihood of there being a positive impact on a number of objectives, particularly in the early part of the Plan period.

Sustainable Urban Extension policies

- 0.14 The appraisal of the new policies that are proposed for inclusion within the Plan to support the development of the SUEs concluded that, taken as a whole, these policies are likely to support the delivery of new housing and employment development and could therefore support the objectives that relate to providing good quality housing; improving the competitiveness of business and increasing the number of new businesses; and reducing unemployment. However, as these policies would support the release of a number of predominantly greenfield sites in the Green Belt, these policies would, on the whole, have the potential to have a negative or uncertain impact on the objectives that relate to landscape character; green infrastructure; and protecting land and soil. The appraisal demonstrated that the proposed further modifications to these policies would not significantly alter their performance in the SA process.

Sustainable Urban Extension Options

- 0.15 The appraisal of the options in relation to the delivery of individual SUEs highlighted that each of the site specific options would have a range of

¹ Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (Knowsley Council, 2009)
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positive and negative impacts. It also highlighted that in a number of instances the key differences between the options related to the degree of certainty that an impact would take place and the timeframes over which it would occur.

Alternative Sites

- 0.16 The appraisal of the revised proposals for Land at Lydiate Lane concluded that the revisions to the site boundary would reduce the extent to which the potential development of the site would have a negative impact on certain environmental objectives. Nevertheless, the appraisal also considered that the modifications reduced the extent to which it would have a positive impact on several social and economic objectives.
- 0.17 The appraisal of the Land at Burtons Way concluded that this site has the potential to have a positive impact on some sustainability objectives, including those that relate to providing good quality housing; improving the accessibility of goods and services; reducing the need to travel; and enhancing the vitality and viability of Knowsley's town and local centres. Nevertheless, due to the relatively limited capacity of the location, the SA considered that the potential development of the Land at Burtons Way would not have a significant impact on many of the objectives. In addition, the appraisal process has also highlighted that the proposed use of the site for housing could have a negative or uncertain impact on several sustainability objectives

Thematic Policies

- 0.18 The appraisal of the modifications to the Core Strategy policies concluded that, in many instances, the proposed alterations would not significantly alter the performance of the policies in the SA process and that the proposed further modifications would not significantly alter the performance of the policies in the SA process. There are however a number of instances where the modifications to the policies change the level of certainty that an impact will occur. In addition, a number of the amendments alter the timeframe over which an impact will occur.

Next Steps

- 0.19 The proposed modifications to the Plan, together with the accompanying SA report will be subject to consultation in autumn 2014. Further details regarding the consultation, including the deadline for receipt of comments, can be found on the Council's website at: www.knowsley.gov.uk/localplan.