

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

KNOWSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

HEARING STATEMENT 16B

MATTER 4: RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON MAIN MODIFICATIONS

Sustainable Urban Extension (SUEs)

4.3 *Having regard to emerging matters including revisions to PPG relating to Green Belt protection, new household projections, evidence of increased densities on certain housing sites, and so on, and in light of further public opposition, are the proposed SUEs at the following locations justified and consistent with national policy?*

- (a) *South of Whiston***
- (b) *South of M62 (employment location)***
- (c) *East of Halewood***
- (d) *Knowsley Lane, Huyton***
- (e) *Edenhurst Avenue, Huyton***
- (f) *A58, Prescot***
- (g) *Carr Lane, Prescot***

4.3.1 The Council's Statements 15A, 15B and 15C outline its views regarding the recent changes to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), new household projections and housing land supply. None of these statements identify any issues that require a strategic change to the Plan or its approach to Green Belt release, including any changes to the proposed allocation of "Sustainable Urban Extensions" (SUEs) as set out in the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy (KLPCS).

4.3.2 The Council acknowledges that public consultation on the Proposed Modifications to the KLPCS in autumn 2014 gave rise to a level of response which was higher than at previous stages of public consultation. This included a significant level of public opposition focussed on the proposed allocation of SUEs. Many of the representations received objected to the proposed use of Green Belt land for development in principle, rather than specifically objecting to the Proposed Modifications to the KLPCS which propose the allocation of the SUEs and accompanying policies (i.e. Policies SUE1, SUE2 and SUE2a-c) (CS09a).

4.3.3 Each of the proposed SUEs had been identified as "reserve" locations for release from the Green Belt in the emerging KLPCS since the "Preferred Options" stage in 2011. The case for the identification of these locations and their subsequent proposed allocation as SUEs is outlined in evidence base documents including the Green Belt Study (EB07), Green Belt Technical Report (TR03) and Sustainable Urban Extensions Technical Report (TR07). This process has also been supported by a full "Sustainability Appraisal" (SA)

of potential Green Belt sites (SD08/08a) and of the Proposed Modifications (SD09). The vast majority of representations relating to the proposed SUEs cover matters which have been addressed within this evidence base and/or have been addressed by the Council through responses to previous stages of consultation. Many of the issues raised have also been considered in detail through the Examination in Public of the KLPCS to date, including at two rounds of hearings in November 2013 and July 2014. Reflecting this, the Inspector's two Interim Findings documents set out various interim conclusions about the Council's approach to the proposed SUEs (EX26 and EX34).

4.3.4 The Council outlined its comments in response to a summary of all matters raised in response to the Proposed Modifications consultation in the "Accounting for Proposed Modifications Representations" document (SD35). Specific sections of document SD35 relate to each of the proposed SUEs listed within the Inspector's question, as set out below:

- South Whiston and South of M62 – section 25, page 149 – 176;
- East of Halewood – section 24, page 138 – 148;
- Knowsley Lane, Huyton – section 20, page 100 – 110;
- Edenhurst Avenue, Huyton – section 21, page 111 – 122;
- A58 Prescott – section 22, page 123 – 131; and
- Carr Lane, Prescott – section 23, page 132 – 137.

4.3.5 The issues commonly raised in Proposed Modifications representations and summarised in document SD35 in relation to one or more of the proposed SUEs mentioned above relate to:

- Green Belt release / Green Belt principles;
- Proposed SUE boundaries;
- Existing uses;
- Proposed uses / mix of uses;
- Density of proposed development;
- Highways;
- Flora and fauna / ecology;
- Flooding;
- Air quality;
- Infrastructure;
- Impacts on adjacent areas; and
- Master planning (affecting the proposed SUEs at South Whiston / South of M62, East of Halewood and Knowsley Lane, Huyton only).

4.3.6 Document SD35 also includes sections on non-site specific matters raised in relation to: the proposed SUEs (section 17, page 83-94); other/alternative sites (section 27, page 188-191); and the Sustainability Appraisal of the KLPCS (section 37, page 211-225).

4.3.7 The Council's responses in document SD35 do not identify any further modifications to the KLPCS in relation to the proposed SUEs. As noted, many

of the issues raised had already been considered as part of the plan making process and Local Plan hearing sessions to date, and the Council considers that they do not raise any new soundness or legal compliance issues, including specifically any issues which affect the Council's case regarding the exceptional circumstances which must be satisfied for Green Belt release in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework").

4.3.8 The remaining parts of this statement respond to specific issues raised in the Proposed Modifications representations which have not been specifically considered within the Examination to date, or for which there is new or revised evidence. This offers the Council the opportunity to clarify whether these additional specific matters affect the soundness and legal compliance of the KLPCS. The section below should be read in conjunction with the relevant parts of document SD35 (as referred to in paragraph 4.3.4 above), which set out the Council's comments on the issues raised by representors.

- (a) South of Whiston
- (b) South of M62 (employment location)

4.3.9 Representations received from Highways England (formerly the Highways Agency) (Rep ID 204) and St.Helens Council (Rep ID 487) requested that additional evidence be provided about the impact of the proposed "South of Whiston" and "Land South of M62" SUE on the strategic road network and roads in the St.Helens area. The Council commissioned Mott MacDonald to produce the "South of Whiston and Land South of M62, Analysis of Highway Impacts Study Stage 1" (AD62). This followed the publication of a "Statement of Common Ground" (AD59) which committed the Council to work closely with the Agency in bringing forward further evidence. The study uses the Liverpool City Region Transport Model to model flows on the highway network in peak periods in order to identify areas that will become congested as a result of the developments.

4.3.10 The study identified selected areas in Knowsley (Huyton and Prescot) and St.Helens (Rainhill) which could become over capacity following the development of the proposed SUE unless appropriate mitigation measures are implemented. The study, including a second stage yet to be completed, will inform the Council's development of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to guide the development of this SUE. It will also provide evidence to help inform a detailed Transport Assessment, which would need to be submitted by an applicant with any future planning application for the development of the SUE, to ensure that adequate highway mitigation measures are identified and funding sought from the developer through a legal agreement.

4.3.11 Highways England has now withdrawn its representations and will be involved in the second stage of the study in due course. This issue is not considered to affect the soundness of the KLPCS. Policy SUE2c), clause 2a) confirms that any development of this SUE must include any measures needed to address the impact of the development on traffic generation in the area.

- 4.3.12 Representations were received from St.Helens Council and members of the public raising concerns about the impact of the proposed “South of Whiston” and “Land South of M62” SUE on education provision. In response the Council prepared the “Education Capacity – Technical Note” (AD61) which addresses these concerns by setting out existing and projected school capacity and demand for school places. This also investigates what the potential additional demand for school places may be as a result of the future development of Knowsley as proposed in the KLPCS. The note concludes that due to the proposed SUE at South Whiston, there is likely to be additional pressure placed on primary school provision. The findings are consistent with KLPCS Policy SUE 2c which outlines that proposals for the development of the site should give consideration to delivering a new primary school of an appropriate scale to meet the needs of the South of Whiston SUE, and/or appropriate financial contributions to meet these needs off-site.
- 4.3.13 With regard to cross boundary issues, the study finds that a number of pupils resident in Knowsley and St Helens cross into the applicable neighbouring authority to attend schools. The greatest level of movement is experienced at secondary school level and by Knowsley resident pupils attending Rainhill High School in St.Helens Council area. The study notes that the level of this movement has remained relatively consistent historically. As a result of the development of the South of Whiston SUE, the study identifies that in the future pupils living a greater distance from Rainhill High School may not be able to access places at this school. These pupils are likely to be disproportionately Knowsley residents within the Huyton area. Notwithstanding this issue, the study notes that these pupils will still be able to access secondary education locally due to existing secondary school provision in St Helens and Knowsley.
- 4.3.14 The Council does not consider this to be an issue which affects the soundness of the KLPCS, and considers that this can be appropriately addressed through the master planning of the South Whiston SUE and the planning application process in due course.
- 4.3.15 The Coal Authority (Rep ID 88) suggested that the issue of minerals sterilisation should be addressed within the SUE Allocation profile for South Whiston and Land South of the M62. The Council considers that issues of prior minerals extraction, mineral safeguarding and mining legacy can be appropriately considered through the master planning process and when a planning application is received (in particular through the application of KLPCS Policy CS25) and do not warrant any further modifications to the KLPCS. The Coal Authority does not object to the allocation of any of the individual SUEs, including South Whiston and Land South of the M62.
- 4.3.16 Several representations questioned the impacts of the proposed SUE on local employment levels in the Whiston area and elsewhere. Policy CS4 clause 1(f) of the KLPCS encourages recruitment targeted towards communities living in and around development sites. This ensures that any voluntary agreement(s) that the developer enters into with regard to local employment can be attributed positive weight when determining planning applications. The policy

also supports wider initiatives encouraged through the Council's "Economic Regeneration Strategy" (PG32) to provide training and support attainment levels of residents. It is not however considered appropriate to impose specific restriction or targets relating to the use of local labour. Such an approach would conflict with paragraphs 14 and 19 of the Framework, and undermine Knowsley's economic links to the wider Liverpool City Region.

4.3.17 Selected representations questioned the benefits of the proposed SUE in addressing issues of social deprivation in Whiston, and suggested that the development may exacerbate social challenges within the area. There is no evidence to suggest that appropriately designed new development would cause significant harm to the quality of life of existing residents to an extent which renders the KLPCS unsound. Furthermore the design of development will be subject to detailed requirements under other Local Plan policies, relating for example to sustainable development and preventing impact upon surroundings when a planning application is submitted. The Sustainability Appraisal of the KLPCS (SD32) considers social impacts of the KLPCS policies, including the SUE policies.

(c) East of Halewood

4.3.18 As was the case for the South Whiston and Land South of M62 SUE, objections were raised to the East of Halewood SUE on the grounds of local education provision. The "Education Capacity – Technical Note" (AD61) found that Halewood may experience a small deficit in primary school places by 2028 as a result of the development of the proposed SUE. It is anticipated that this pressure could be met via existing surplus places and/or opportunities to expand existing primary school sites within Halewood. The Council does not consider this to be an issue which affects the soundness of the KLPCS, and considers that this can be best addressed through the master planning of the East of Halewood SUE and the planning application process in due course.

4.3.19 One representation from a member of the public notes the proximity of the chemical works on Lower Road (Pentagon Fine Chemicals), located to the South East of the proposed SUE at East of Halewood. The Pentagon Fine Chemicals site is at its nearest point about 1.2 kilometres to the east of the proposed East of Halewood SUE. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has for many years identified the Pentagon Fine Chemicals site as a hazardous installation. Under schedule 4(e) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 the Council must consult the HSE on any planning application for housing and other specified forms of development if the application site falls within a consultation zone identified by the HSE. For the purposes of operating these arrangements the HSE has identified 3 concentric zones around the Pentagon Fine Chemicals site. The East of Halewood SUE falls partly within the "outer" but entirely outside the "inner" and "middle" of these consultation zones. The HSE has been consulted at all stages of preparation of the KLPCS but has not raised any objections at any stage. The HSE's "Current Approach to Land Use

Planning” document¹ confirms in paragraph 5 that the HSE will not normally advise against housing development being permitted within the “outer” (or indeed the “middle”) consultation zone of a hazardous installation. Furthermore, the Council will continue to liaise with the HSE as site-specific guidance is developed for the East of Halewood SUE as part of the proposed Supplementary Planning Document for the site.

(d) Knowsley Lane, Huyton

4.3.20 The Coal Authority suggested that the issue of minerals sterilisation should be addressed within the SUE Allocation profile for Knowsley Lane, Huyton. The Council considers that the consideration of issues of prior minerals extraction, mineral safeguarding and mining legacy can be appropriately considered through the master planning process and when a planning application is received (in particular through the application of KLPCS Policy CS25).

(e) Edenhurst Avenue, Huyton

4.3.21 Several representations argued that the comparatively small size of Edenhurst Avenue SUE meant that its development would make a limited contribution to housing growth and therefore there was no need to include the site to ensure the success of the KLPCS. The Council argues that the Edenhurst Avenue site, like all other proposed SUEs has been selected on the basis of robust evidence. Although the site has a nominal capacity of only 86 dwellings, this would make an important contribution to delivering housing growth, particularly in the Roby/South Huyton area. As with all the SUEs, the site capacity given in Appendix E of the KLPCS is only nominal and it may be possible for a degree of flexibility regarding site capacity to be exercised through the planning application process, provided the proposal which is submitted complies with relevant KLPCS policies and is justified by evidence.

4.3.22 Representations from members of public objected to the allocation of the SUE on the grounds that its allocation may make it available for use by travellers. KLPCS Policy CS18 sets out the Council’s approach to accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. Targets for accommodation and site allocations are proposed to be set out in the “Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies” document. The preparation of this document is yet to be commenced. There is no evidence that the Edenhurst Avenue SUE site, or any other site, is currently being considered for such an allocation. The Council is aware of no proposals for such a use on this site and any such proposals on this or any other site would be considered on its merits in accordance with the relevant Local Plan policies.

(f) A58 Prescott

4.3.23 Some representors objected to the proposed SUE at land bounded by the A58 in Prescott on the grounds that it would have the potential to encourage

¹ Available to view on the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/landuseplanning/lupcurrent.pdf>

applications for “fracking” (i.e. the process hydraulic fracturing of rock to access fuel in the form of shale gas). There is no evidence to suggest that the allocation of a site as a SUE will make it any more or less acceptable in terms of proposals for fracking. The Council is aware of no proposals for fracking at this site and any proposed planning or licence applications for any such uses would need to be considered on their merits in accordance with the relevant Local Plan policies.

(g) Carr Lane, Prescot

4.3.24 Specific objections were raised about the prematurity of proposing to allocate the Carr Lane SUE until there is certainty about the South Prescot Regeneration Area. There is now increased certainty that the area adjacent to the Carr Lane SUE will be developed for residential use, and hence the Council proposed to modify the approach to Carr Lane SUE within Policy SUE1 to reflect this.