

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF KNOWSLEY

To: The Chairman and Members of Cabinet

Meeting: 14 December 2011

Wards Affected: Borough-wide

Portfolio area: Regeneration, Economy and Skills

Key Decision

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (LDF) – UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The “Preferred Options Report” of the Knowsley LDF Core Strategy underwent a major consultation exercise in the summer of 2011. This report provides feedback to Cabinet on the outcomes of the consultation. It also: seeks approval to publish the Report of Consultation; provides an update on the LDF evidence base and the changing legislative and policy context within which the LDF is being prepared; and sets out the proposed next steps in preparing the LDF.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the results of consultation on the LDF Core Strategy Preferred Options Report – see section 4 of the report;
- 2.2 Approve the publication of the LDF Core Strategy: Preferred Options Report of Consultation (see Appendix 2);
- 2.3 Note the findings of the Liverpool City Region Housing and Economic Evidence Base, Final Report (see section 5 and Appendix 3);
- 2.4 Note the changing national legislative and policy context within which the LDF is being prepared (see section 6); and
- 2.5 Endorse the proposed next steps (see section 7).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The **Local Development Framework (LDF)** will guide the future "place shaping" of Knowsley up to 2027, and will therefore provide an important

delivery vehicle for the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy (2008). The LDF is being prepared as a "family" of documents the most important of which will be the **Core Strategy**. This will set out a vision and strategy for the future development of Knowsley and each of its communities. Further details, including the allocation of specific sites for development are proposed to follow in subsequent LDF documents.

3.2 Following earlier rounds of stakeholder engagement, on 8 June 2011 Cabinet approved the **Core Strategy Preferred Options Report** for consultation purposes. The subsequent consultation took place over a ten week period between 27 June and 5 September 2011, the outcomes of which are set out in section 4 below.

3.3 The Preferred Options Report set out a draft proposed spatial vision for Knowsley, supported by 8 strategic objectives, and 27 preferred policy options. The strategy included targets for 7,650 new dwellings (in addition to demolition replacements) and 40-80 hectares of new employment development to be delivered between 2010 and 2027.

3.4 The strategy also proposed a strong focus on development and regeneration within the urban areas of Huyton/Stockbridge Village, Kirkby, Prescott/Whiston and Halewood, particularly in the early years. Six "Principal Regeneration Areas" were identified, within which there is opportunity to promote comprehensive change, at:

- North Huyton and Stockbridge Village
- Kirkby Town Centre
- Knowsley Industrial and Business Parks
- Tower Hill, Kirkby
- South Prescott
- Prescott Town Centre

3.5 Due to restricted capacity on sites in the current urban areas, the strategy proposed that Green Belt boundaries be reviewed to meet longer term development needs up to 2027 and beyond, and 10 broad locations were identified as the preferred areas to review these boundaries.

3.6 The Preferred Options Report also included policies covering (amongst other issues): transport; town centres and shopping; affordability, types and distribution of new housing; greenspaces and the environment; design quality; and infrastructure delivery.

4. FEEDBACK FROM THE CONSULTATION ON THE PREFERRED OPTIONS

4.1 The consultation was wide ranging and included: leafleting to all Knowsley residential addresses; press releases; staffed events in each township; use of the Council website, Facebook and Twitter; e-mails/letters to landowners, developers, statutory agencies, environmental and community groups, neighbouring local authorities, and private individuals; and presentations to the Knowsley Partnership and its thematic groups, the Health and Wellbeing

Board, Area Partnership Boards, groups representing young people and the elderly, and Town and Parish Councils.

4.2 During the consultation period, comments were invited on:

- The summary leaflet
- The full Preferred Options Report
- Various supporting documents (listed in the report to Cabinet on 8th June) including the draft “Knowsley and Sefton Green Belt study – Knowsley report”, sustainability appraisal and other technical documents.

4.3 The results of the consultation are set out in a Report of Consultation. Due to the scale and complexity of the consultation response it is not possible to analyse all the responses in this covering report. However, the section below identifies some of the key outcomes from the consultation.

4.4 In moving forward with the Core Strategy, it will be important for the Council to consider the issues raised by consultees rather than just the numbers of comments supporting or objecting to the documents. The section below therefore, whilst including a summary quantitative analysis of responses received, also focuses on the issues raised.

4.5 Many individual respondents commented on numerous parts of the consultation documents, sometimes raising objections to some parts of the documents whilst supporting other parts. Each comment raised in relation to specific parts of the documents was separately logged meaning that the numbers of “comments attributable” recorded (2,385) exceeds the number of “respondents” (1,866).

4.6 The overall numbers of responses are summarised in Table 1.

TABLE 1 OVERALL NUMBER OF RESPONSES		
<u>Method of Response</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Comments Attributable</u>
Online		
Consultation Portal	4 (plus 71 anonymous comments)	88
Email	69	510
Facebook	9	9
Paper		
Letter	48	113
Summary Leaflet Response Form	253	253
Petition Signatories	1412 (6 petitions)	1412
Total	1866	2385

4.7 Of the 2,385 “comments attributable”, 170 were directly “supportive” while 1,585 were “non supportive” i.e. were either objecting or requested changes to the documents. 1,412 of the “non supportive” comments were attributed to petition signatories. Table 2 analyses the numbers of “supportive” and “non supportive” comments to the consultation documents.

TABLE 2 ANALYSIS OF “SUPPORTIVE” AND “NON SUPPORTIVE” COMMENTS				
Total Number of Individual Comments	Supportive Comments	Non Supportive Comments	Other Comments	Total Comments
Summary Leaflet*	79	111	63	253
Full Preferred Options Report**	91	65	555	711
Petitions	0	1412	0	1412
Facebook	0	0	9	9
Total	170	1585	536	2385
*based on responses to the answer of the first question in the leaflet				
**comments were only logged as “supportive” or “non-supportive” where they directly related to policy content (i.e. Preferred Policy Options CS1 – CS27).				

Responses to the Summary Leaflet

4.8 253 responses to the Summary Leaflet were received. Of these, 79 (31%) expressed overall support for the proposals set out in the leaflet. 111 (44%) expressed objections to the proposals. 63 (25%) either said they did not know, raised other comments or left this question blank.

4.9 The leaflet also asked questions about whether respondents had any comments in relation to specific areas of Knowsley, what they liked and disliked about the proposed strategy for this area, or had any other comments. The comments received are set out in Section 6A of the Report of Consultation. Some of the common themes in the responses were:

- Objection to the preferred approach of utilising Green Belt land to meet future development needs, including objections to specific Green Belt locations identified.
- Support for town centre regeneration, particularly in Kirkby and Halewood.
- Support for the provision of new houses including affordable housing.
- Concern about the status of Prescott Town Centre.
- Questions concerning the distribution of regeneration activity around the Borough.
- Concern about other local non-planning issues e.g. provision of bus services, litter and anti-social behaviour.

Responses to the full “Preferred Options” Report

- 4.10 In total 711 “attributable comments” were received in relation to the full “Preferred Options” document. Appendix 1 to this report sets out the numbers of comments made on each of the 27 Preferred Policy Options in the document (i.e. CS1 – C27), and how many supported, objected to, or raised other comments. The issues raised are also briefly summarised below (*Members should refer to Section 6B of the full Report of Consultation at Appendix 2 for more extensive details of the comments received in relation to each of the preferred policy options*).
- 4.11 Chapter 5 “Spatial Strategy” (including Preferred Policy Options CS1 to CS8) was one of the main areas of comment. The main themes arising in the comments on this chapter included:
- Support for efforts to plan for growth in Knowsley, including more jobs and houses.
 - Support for efforts to enhance and rebalance housing markets with different types, sizes and tenures of new housing.
 - Emphasis that development of brownfield land should be prioritised over greenfield and Green Belt land.
 - Concern about the approach to identifying locations for growth (see below).
 - Questions around identifying the scale of housing and employment land required to 2027, including in relation to emerging policy and legislation.
 - Support for greater consideration to be given to providing a range of employment sites and premises.
- 4.12 The preferred policy option concerning Green Belts (CS5) in this chapter gave rise to the highest number of comments out of any individual policy area (57), of which 7 were supportive and 22 were non supportive. Some of the main themes in the responses to this policy included:
- Questions around the need for Green Belt release, the validity of the approach to Green Belt Study, the process of selecting preferred locations and the methodology for phasing the release of tiers of sites for development.
 - Concerns about the impact of releasing Green Belt land for new development on: habitats and flora/fauna, flood risk, agriculture, access and congestion, anti-social behaviour and noise, infrastructure provision, existing recreation and amenity value, house prices and tranquillity of existing residential areas.
 - Strong public and other stakeholder objection to the potential release of Green Belt land for development at: Location 8: Land to the South of Whiston; Location 4: Land at Edenhurst Avenue (Huyton); Location 7: Land to the east of Halewood; Location 3: Land at Knowsley Lane (Huyton); Location 1: Land at Bank Lane, Location 6: Land at Carr Lane (Prescot); Location 9: Land at Cronton Colliery and Location 10: Land at Knowsley Village.

- Strong developer / landowner support for the inclusion of all Green Belt locations as potential areas of future development.
- A range of alternative locations were suggested by landowners and developers for release of Green Belt land for development, including: Woolton Waste Water Treatment Works and adjacent land (Halewood); Land South of M57 Junction 4 (Knowsley Village); Shrogs Farm / Radshaw Nook (Kirkby); and Land at Former Walton Sewage Farm / Axis Business Park (near Gillmoss).

4.13 Remaining chapters of the document gave rise to smaller numbers of comments (see Appendix 1 for details). The comments received on these included:

- Both support and objection to the retail-led regeneration of Kirkby Town Centre including questions around the scale of floorspace being planned.
- Questions around feasibility of delivering housing and employment at South Prescott.
- Questions around deliverability of improvements in Prescott Town Centre.
- The Council should consider undertaking additional flood risk assessment work, to provide detail of site specific flood risks.
- Support for recognition of importance of Green Infrastructure.
- Biodiversity should be emphasised to a greater degree.
- Concern about protection and enhancement of existing open spaces and playing pitches.
- Minerals safeguarding areas should be introduced.

Comments received on Supporting Documents

4.14 As stated above, the consultation also included a range of supporting technical documents. The feedback on these included:

- Comments related to the draft Knowsley and Sefton Green Belt Study – Knowsley Report, for example questioning its methodology, the application of this, and its conclusions.
- Comments were received questioning the methodology for the Council's two technical papers relating to housing and employment growth.
- Comments were also received about the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment and Health Impact Assessment.

Petitions

4.15 6 petitions were received during the consultation, including some which were duplicates of standard letters, and others which included space for signatories to sign. These included:

- 1 petition (794 signatures) objected to the identification of land to the south of Whiston for potential housing development.
- 1 petition (412 signatures) objected to the identification of land to the east of Halewood for potential housing development.

- 3 petitions (153 signatures) objected to the identification of land at Edenhurst Avenue (Huyton) for potential housing development.
- 1 petition (53 letters) objected to the identification of land at Knowsley Lane (Huyton) for potential mixed use development.

4.16 The full consultation results are set out in a detailed Report of Consultation (Appendix 2 to this report). It is recommended that Members note the outcomes of the consultation and approve the publication of the Report of Consultation.

5. UPDATE ON EVIDENCE BASE FOR THE LDF

5.1 A wide range of evidence base studies have been completed for the LDF, covering (amongst other topics): land availability for housing; housing needs; land requirements for future economic development; town centres and shopping; and flood risk. Work is also currently progressing on a new audit and needs assessment for urban green spaces and playing pitches, and a study into the viability of development in Knowsley.

5.2 The “**Liverpool City Region Housing and Economic Development Evidence Base: Overview Study**” (the “Overview Study”) has also been completed. This was commissioned by Sefton Council on behalf of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, West Lancashire, Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester Councils. The Study reviewed existing housing and employment land supply, and the extent to which this can meet needs/demands in the 8 local authority and immediately adjacent areas up to 2031.

5.3 The key findings of the study (see Appendix 3 to this report) are summarised below:

Housing

- The supply of land for housing development within the current urban areas (across the 8 “core authorities” of the study area) is broadly balanced with needs up to 2031.
- This conclusion is however heavily reliant on the delivery of large developments at Liverpool and Wirral Waters at the rate currently envisaged. If these are not brought forward as quickly as proposed consideration would need to be given to the identification of an alternative supply of housing to meet the resultant shortfall.
- At a local authority level Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and West Lancashire have an undersupply of land when measured against targets set by the Regional Spatial Strategy and the latest DCLG household projections.
- The scale of the shortfalls in these authorities is such that, although development in Liverpool and Wirral Waters may capture a small proportion of the demand affecting these authorities, further supply will

need to be identified to meet long term unmet needs in these authority areas.

Employment development

- There is an undersupply of land for employment development across the core study area as a whole to meet needs up to 2031.
- The undersupply is only marginal if key sites (e.g. Omega in Warrington and Parkside in St Helens) are delivered, and aspirations for remodelling existing employment areas in several authorities (e.g. Knowsley Industrial Park) are met.
- The potential undersupply of employment land is primarily a long term issue rather than a short term or immediate imbalance issue. However, this is based on the assumption that current employment sites are kept for this purpose.

5.4 These key findings support the approach taken by Knowsley in its LDF Preferred Options Report i.e. that there is likely to be a shortfall of development land within the Borough up to 2027 which cannot be substantially met by development opportunities in adjacent districts. This supports the need to review Green Belt boundaries in Knowsley.

5.5 A more complete list of evidence base studies can be viewed at www.knowsley.gov.uk/ldf.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CHANGES

6.1 The Localism Act (November 2011) contains several proposals which directly affect the LDF. Further detail on these is set out in the draft National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG July 2011) which is expected to be finalised early in 2012.

6.2 The draft National Planning Policy Framework has been the subject of considerable interest in the national media, and introduces a broadly “pro-growth” agenda, including a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In relation to Green Belts, however, it re-iterates previous guidance which is that the boundaries of Green Belts can only be changed in exceptional circumstances.

6.3 As previously reported to Cabinet, the changes also include abolition of the current Regional Strategies and introduction of a new “duty to co-operate” between public bodies (including neighbouring local authorities). The draft National Planning Policy Framework states that “*local authorities will be expected to demonstrate evidence of having successfully cooperated to plan for issues with cross boundary impacts when their plans are submitted for examination*”. This can be by way of setting up a joint committee, memorandum of understanding or jointly prepared strategy.

- 6.4 In accordance with the emerging “duty to cooperate”, a need has been identified to prepare and agree a “spatial priorities plan” for the Liverpool City Region. This is considered important given the strong links which exist between neighbouring authority areas in terms of housing markets and travel to work areas. Work on the Spatial Priorities Plan is expected to build on the evidence provided by the “Overview Study” (see section 5 above) and be completed in time to inform the next steps of Knowsley’s LDF (see below).
- 6.5 The Government’s proposed changes also encourage Councils to prepare their LDF as a single “local plan”. This contrasts with the current approach, under which the Council is preparing three “development plan documents” (the Core Strategy; Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Development Plan Document; and a future Site Allocations document). To address this issue, the Council is likely to need to consider changes to the future structure of its LDF, although it is currently too early to say what form these would take.
- 6.6 As also previously reported, the current changes also include discretionary powers for Town and Parish Councils and other designated community forums to prepare “neighbourhood plans”. These must in general terms comply with the approach in the Borough-wide “local plan”.
- 6.7 Further details will be provided to Cabinet on these emerging policy issues as the LDF progresses.

7. NEXT STEPS IN THE LDF CORE STRATEGY

- 7.1 The next steps in the preparation of the LDF Core Strategy were reported to Cabinet on 8 June 2011. As a result of the changing national legislative context and further work needed to address issues raised in the consultation responses, it is necessary to make some changes to the timetable. This is necessary to minimise the risks associated with the LDF examination in public stage (see section 9 of this report).
- 7.2 The next steps are now anticipated to be as follows:
- Completion of evidence including dealing with issues raised by consultation responses (May 2012)
 - Cabinet and Council approval of final “Publication” version of the Core Strategy (July 2012)
 - Publication of Core Strategy for a 6 week period (August/September 2012)
 - Submission to the Secretary of State (October 2012)
 - Examination in public by a DCLG Inspector (January 2013)
 - Receipt of Inspectors report (April 2013)
 - Adoption (June 2013).
- 7.3 Under the legislation, the Council must maintain a separate document (the “Local Development Scheme”) which sets out the structure and key milestones within the LDF. Section 111 of the Localism Act (November 2011) requires any revisions to the Local Development Scheme to be agreed by a formal resolution of the local planning authority. It is proposed to bring a

further report to Cabinet early in 2012 to formally agree the necessary revisions to the Scheme.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 **Financial** - The LDF is likely to have significant long term financial benefits for the Council, for example by promoting population retention and therefore benefitting the Council tax base. The LDF, due to its role in identifying sites for housing development, is also likely to increase future awards of New Homes Bonus scheme (introduced in 2010/11) under which the Government proposes to match Council tax receipts on new housing units for a six year period. It is still too early to quantify these long term demographic and financial effects and further work will be carried out as the LDF progresses to assess these.

As reported to Cabinet on 8 June 2011, there are cost implications for the Council of progressing the Core Strategy through its remaining stages, for example to cover the examination in public, document preparation and consultation. At its meeting on 3 March 2010, the Council agreed an allocation of £0.170m to progress the LDF during 2010/11 and 2011/12. This provision will cover the costs for these years but there are pressures arising from the future programme of LDF documents from 2012/13 onwards. This is being considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and annual budget process.

- 8.2 **Human** – This report has no implications for the Council’s human resources.
- 8.3 **Information Technology** – This report has no implications for the Council’s Information Technology resources.
- 8.4 **Physical Assets** - The LDF will guide the future use and development of land in Knowsley, including the Council's own land and buildings.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The Council has a statutory duty to prepare the LDF Core Strategy. However, the process continues to carry significant risks including the need to ensure that the Core Strategy is found to be "sound" at its examination in public. Several LDFs for other authorities have been found "unsound" at this late stage, resulting in significant delays and additional costs. Further risks arise from potential legal challenge from third parties.
- 9.2 The risks are also affected by the changing national and regional policy context (see section 6 of this report). The proposed abolition of the Regional Strategies and the review of national planning policy in the draft National Planning Policy Framework mean that there are uncertainties about the Government’s approach to key policy issues e.g. the degree to which Green Belt areas can be reviewed to meet development needs. These uncertainties

remain likely to impact on the content and timing of the final LDF Core Strategy.

- 9.3 Despite these risks, it is recommended that the LDF Core Strategy is progressed expediently in order to: support the delivery of new housing and other development; support key regeneration initiatives; and bring in new policies e.g. concerning affordable housing. The steps set out in this report (including the revised timetable) will help minimise the risks of failing to achieve a “sound” Core Strategy.

10. IMPACT ON POPULATION GROUPS

- 10.1 As previously reported, the LDF is likely to impact upon a wide range of population groups.

11. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES

- 11.1 To feed back the results of the consultation on the Preferred Options Report to the public and other stakeholders, it is proposed to publish the “Report of Consultation” on the Council website. It is also proposed to publicise the availability of the Report through items in the local media and by e-mail/letter to LDF consultees.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 Cabinet is recommended to note and approve the publication of the LDF Core Strategy Preferred Options: Report of Consultation. This provides feedback on the major consultation exercise which took place in summer 2011.
- 12.2 Cabinet is also recommended to note the findings of the Liverpool City Region Housing and Economic Development Evidence Base: Overview Study and agree the other recommendations listed in section 2 above.

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Background Documents:

1. Previous reports to Cabinet concerning the LDF Core Strategy (14 Oct 2009, 21 April 2010 and 8 June 2011)
2. Responses to consultation – Knowsley LDF Core Strategy, summer 2011
3. Evidence base studies – see www.knowsley.gov.uk/ldf for full list
4. Draft National Planning Policy Framework – Department of Communities and Local Government, July 2011

Appendices

1. Responses to Preferred Options Report – main document – numerical analysis
2. Knowsley Local Development Framework: Core Strategy - Preferred Options: Report of Consultation; December 2011
3. Liverpool City Region Housing and Economic Development Evidence Base: Overview Study – full report

(NB Hard copies of Appendices 2 and 3 have been circulated to Cabinet Members and placed in the Members' Rooms. The documents are also stored within the library on the Council website. Copies are available to all other Members electronically and on request).

APPENDIX 1) RESPONSES TO PREFERRED OPTIONS REPORT – MAIN DOCUMENT – NUMERICAL ANALYSIS

Preferred Policy Option	Supportive Comments	Non Supportive Comments	Other Comments	Total Comments
CS1: Spatial Strategy for Knowsley	10	4	17	31
CS2: Development Principles	3	0	4	7
CS3: Housing Supply, Delivery and Distribution	5	7	26	38
CS4: Economy and Employment	6	6	8	20
CS5: Green Belts	7	22	28	57
CS6: Town Centres and Retail Strategy	4	9	9	22
CS7: Transport Networks	4	1	6	11
CS8: Green Infrastructure	4	2	7	13
CS9: Principal Regeneration Area – North Huyton and Stockbridge Village	1	0	2	3
CS10: Principal Regeneration Area – Kirkby Town Centre	5	5	5	15
CS11: Principal Regeneration Area – Knowsley Industrial and Business Parks	1	1	1	3
CS12: Principal Regeneration Area – Tower Hill	0	0	0	0
CS13: Principal Regeneration Area – South Prescott	2	1	3	6
Preferred Policy Option CS14: Principal Regeneration Area – Prescott Town Centre	1	2	3	6
CS15: Delivering Affordable Housing	4	0	0	4
CS16: Specialist and Supported	2	0	0	2

Accommodation				
CS17: Housing Sizes and Design Standards	3	0	0	3
CS18: Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show People	1	0	1	2
CS19: Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development	5	3	1	9
CS20: Managing the Borough's Heritage	3	0	1	4
CS21: Urban Greenspaces	3	1	7	11
CS22: Sustainable and Low Carbon Development	3	0	7	10
CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure	5	0	0	5
CS24: Managing Flood Risk	1	0	1	2
CS25: Management of Mineral Resources	2	1	1	4
CS26: Waste Management	2	0	1	3
CS27: Planning for and Paying for New Infrastructure	4	0	4	8
Other elements of Preferred Options Report	0	0	412	412
Total	91	65	555	711