

# METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF KNOWSLEY

To: The Chairman and Members of Cabinet

Meeting: 14th October 2009

Wards Affected: Borough-wide

Portfolio area: Regeneration, Economy and Skills

Key Decision

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, ECONOMY AND SKILLS

### LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: CORE STRATEGY - ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report updates Members on the Council's Local Development Framework (or "LDF"). It focuses in particular on the LDF Core Strategy, for which an Issues and Options paper has been prepared (appendix 1 to this report).

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the current progress on the LDF Core Strategy.
- 2.2 Approve the Local Development Framework Core Strategy: Issues and Options paper for consultation purposes; and
- 2.3 Agree to the holding of an all Member seminar as part of a wider consultation/engagement exercise on the LDF.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council's Sustainable Community Strategy sets a vision for Knowsley to become the "Borough of Choice". This will mean ensuring that Knowsley has a sustainable and diverse population, and tackling the causes of deprivation and disadvantage. Key drivers include: raising attainment and skills; unlocking potential and raising aspirations; a well connected Knowsley; a diverse and prosperous economy; safer and more cohesive communities; improving the offer and quality of place; and increasing economic activity.
- 3.2 The Local Development Framework will build on this and enable more effective implementation of the SCS by providing a framework for the

future "place shaping" of Knowsley up to 2026. The LDF comprises a portfolio of documents by far the most important of which is the Core Strategy.

- 3.3 The LDF Core Strategy will make key decisions e.g. about the "quality of place", locations of future development, the future size and shape of our townships and their role in the Liverpool City Region, how our town centres should develop and future regeneration priorities.
- 3.4 Government targets require the LDF to identify land for nearly 10,000 dwellings up to 2026 (about a 15% increase on Knowsley's current housing). Further key issues will include the need to identify sites for future jobs and to secure the future vitality of the Borough's town centres. Meeting these aims will be a major challenge - where should new development be located? What type of housing should be provided? Do our townships need to expand and if so where?

#### **4. THE LDF PROCESS**

4.1 The preparation of the LDF involves potentially significant levels of public consultation and debate on the issues and takes a number of years. The process is designed to build as much consensus as possible before the strategy is finalised.

4.2 The key stages (current stage in bold) are as follows:

- Township workshops – summer/autumn 2008
- Evidence base
- **Issues and Options – public consultation (autumn 2009)**
- Preferred options – consultation summer 2010
- Publication of submission document – early 2011
- Submission to Secretary of State – mid 2011
- Examination in public – late 2011
- Adoption- early 2012

4.3 The process started with a series of stakeholder workshops in 2008. These were arranged under the auspices of the Area Partnership Boards and included one workshop in each township i.e. one workshop for each of:

- Huyton (North and South combined),
- Kirkby (North and South combined)
- Halewood, and
- Prescot/Whiston/Knowsley Village/Cronton.

A fifth workshop considered the Borough-wide issues. The workshops provided a wealth of information about what stakeholders felt about their locality and priorities for future development.

4.4. A number of evidence base studies have been completed (some in draft at this stage) covering diverse issues such as: land availability for

housing; land requirements for future economic development; the health of Knowsley's town centres; shopping patterns; flood risk areas; and housing needs.

- 4.5 The Issues and options paper (the current stage) is still not anything like the final LDF plan. Its purpose is to set out a range of options about how the Borough could develop and to generate public debate about these. Further details on what is in the paper are in section 5 below.
- 4.6 The preferred options stage (public consultation on this expected late next summer) will be when the Council will need to have decided about the key policy direction of the LDF. The strategy will then be refined further before being submitted to the Secretary of State.
- 4.7 After submission to the Secretary of State the LDF will be subject to an examination in public, held by a Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Planning Inspector. The Inspector will assess the plan against a number of rigorous "tests of soundness". These relate to:
- Does the strategy have a strong evidence base?
  - Is it the most appropriate strategy when compared against the reasonable alternatives?
  - Is the strategy deliverable and flexible?
  - Is it consistent with national and regional policy?
- 4.8 Provided the Inspector considers the LDF Core Strategy to be "sound", the Council will then be allowed to adopt it. At that point the strategy will replace the Council's current Unitary Development Plan.

## **5. THE ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER**

- 5.1 The key sections of the Issues and Options paper are set out below.
- 5.2 **Chapter 2 "Policy Context"** sets out how the LDF will deliver key policies such as the Knowsley Sustainable Community Strategy, the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West and the Liverpool City Region policy agenda.
- 5.3 **Chapter 3 "Knowsley - the place"** sets out key facts about Knowsley, the current role of our townships in the Liverpool City Region and key challenges and opportunities.
- 5.4 **Chapter 4 "What vision do we want for the future?"** sets out a draft vision for what type of place we would like Knowsley to be, building on what is in the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) but with more detail. For example, whereas the SCS identifies a need to narrow the gap in deprivation levels the proposed LDF vision identifies the most deprived areas where this particularly applies (Kirkby, North Huyton and Stockbridge Village).

5.5 **Chapter 5 "Knowsley in 2026 - Scale of future growth and development"** identifies the quantum of development that will be needed up to 2026, focussing on:

- **Requirements for future housing growth** - targets in the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West require our LDF to accommodate nearly a further 10,000 dwellings in Knowsley between 2008-2026. This represents about a 15% increase on Knowsley's current housing stock. This agenda supports the Council's own population stabilisation priorities. Chapter 5 states that currently identified sites within Knowsley's urban areas are only sufficient to provide just over 5,000 new dwellings if developed at average site densities i.e. only just over half the target. The LDF needs to identify locations for new housing development which are sufficient to make up the shortfall of over 4,000 dwellings.
- **Delivering future economic development and growth** - Knowsley has been very successful in attracting inward investment in recent years (for example through the growth of Kings Business Park and Knowsley Business Park). However the supply of land for development is now more constrained. Chapter 5 indicates that the current supply of sites is likely to be inadequate to meet needs through to 2026 and further sites are needed. These include for example the need for a replacement of Kings Business Park which is now nearly completed.
- **Town Centres and Retailing** - chapter 5 assesses the strengths and weaknesses of Huyton, Prescot and Kirkby town centres. Whilst the LDF will need to reflect the role of larger centres (particularly Liverpool) as a shopping location for Knowsley residents, the LDF needs to explore how the role of Knowsley's town centres can be enhanced. The chapter explores how the centres can be made more vibrant, for example through more shopping and/or other uses such as leisure and housing. The chapter acknowledges that the decision on the Kirkby development (expected by end November 2009) will have a key influence on the options to be followed.

5.6 **Chapter 6 "Strategic Options"** sets out options for how the development requirements identified in the previous chapter can be met. The options are put forward for the purpose of testing and consulting on different scenarios and it is highly likely that the final strategy will include a mixture of different elements of the options. Three broad strategic options are put forward:

- **Option A "Urban Concentration"** This option would focus new development (e.g. housing and employment) into the existing urban areas. The Council's existing policy commitments would continue. This would mean for example that the programme at

North Huyton would continue at its current scale (1,450 new dwellings planned); the Tower Hill regeneration project would be progressed once the housing market picks up; and the Kirkby town centre project would proceed provided the Secretary of State grants planning permission. New development requirements (e.g. for new housing) would otherwise be spread around the current urban area according to the availability of sites. There would be no major new area based regeneration initiatives under this option and no change in Green Belt boundaries.

- **Option B "Focussed Urban Regeneration"** This option would also focus new development into the existing urban areas. Compared to option A, however, there would be a more ambitious regeneration focus to address areas with opportunities and/or deprivation issues. This could include (subject to feasibility and any necessary future funding being identified):
  - increasing the scale of development in North Huyton and extending this comprehensive regeneration area into Stockbridge Village
  - extending the recent focus on Tower Hill to provide a more comprehensive approach to regeneration of other residential areas in Kirkby.
  - a major "mixed use" development (incorporating housing and employment uses) on the former Pirelli land in South Prescott.
  - Remodelling of parts of Knowsley Industrial Park to create more opportunities for employment development.
  - Developing a more comprehensive strategy for each town centre (Prescot, Huyton and Kirkby) which would explore the scope for further uses such as retailing, leisure and housing in each centre.
  
- **Option C "Sustainable Urban extensions"** Due to the limited supply of sites in the current urban area (see chapter 5 above) options A and B are only likely to meet Knowsley's land requirements for development for about the next ten years. There is likely to be insufficient land to meet needs all the way through to 2026.

To meet development requirements (for housing and employment) primarily over the latter part of the period until 2026 a third option is presented called "Sustainable Urban Extensions". Option C does not identify at this stage which areas of Green Belt would need to be developed. This is because further work is needed to identify the best locations. Chapter 6 of the Issues and Options paper identifies a set of broad principles that could be applied in identifying locations.

In the event of the Council pursuing option C the intention would be to carry out a full review of the Green Belt areas early in 2010

to identify broad locations. This would take account of government guidance on Green Belts and ideally include involvement from regional partners such as Government Office, 4NW and neighbouring districts, and infrastructure providers. The results of this review (including specific preferred locations) would then feed into the Council's LDF "preferred options" paper. This would be subject to consultation in summer 2010.

5.7 **Chapter 7 "Township Priorities"** sets out in greater detail the draft priorities for each township. These have been derived from what stakeholders told us in the initial township workshops and also our understanding of the evidence base.

5.8 **Chapters 8-11) "Supporting a Diverse and Prosperous Economy"; "Balancing the Housing Market"; "Promoting Attractive, Safe and Healthy Communities" and "Caring for Knowsley"**. These chapters set out a range of more detailed issues for specific topics. Examples of the issues addressed here are:

- **District and local shopping centres** - The paper identifies the health of the smaller shopping centres and parades (the town centres are dealt with earlier) and considers options for the way forward in securing a sustainable pattern of local shopping to meet day to day needs.
- **Affordable housing** - Average house prices in Knowsley are about 5.8 times the average income level. This means that affordability of housing is an issue and the paper sets out ways to tackle this.
- **Sites for gypsies and travellers** - the LDF is required by DCLG Circular 1/2006 to address this issue. The Issues and options paper (without identifying sites at this stage) identifies options for how we might approach this.
- **Design Quality and accessibility of new development** - the paper considers ways in which we might drive up the quality, sustainability and accessibility of development.
- **Urban greenspace** - This issue explores the approach to the Council's standards for greenspace provision (in particular how much is required) and whether changes are needed to place greater emphasis on quality rather than quantity.
- **Carbon reduction and climate change** - this issue has shot up the agenda in recent years and the paper explores our approach to identifying locations for new renewable energy installations and also carbon reduction in new development.

5.9 **Chapter 12 "Infrastructure Delivery"** - A key requirement for the LDF is to be deliverable. This means making sure that there is a clear link

between the LDF and strategies for the delivery of infrastructure (e.g. transport, health, schools, green spaces, utilities etc.). This chapter explores this issue with a particular focus on the Council's policy on developer funding (e.g. through the use of Section 106 agreements or the Government's proposed new Community Infrastructure Levy).

- 5.10 This report therefore summarises some of the factors contained within the issues and options paper. It should be noted that there are no recommendations at this stage on preferred options. These issues now need to be consulted upon and a report will be submitted to Cabinet outlining the results of the consultation early in 2010.

## **6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 **Financial** - The policy decisions to be made within the LDF e.g. about the future scale and type of development are likely to have significant long term financial implications. For example, they could affect future population levels and therefore have an effect on the Council tax base. They could also affect the required geographical pattern of Council services (e.g. schooling, green spaces, transport, leisure and sports) and thereby affect future investment priorities of the Council.

Policy decisions will also be required about developer funding (including section 106 agreements and the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy). It is too early at this stage to quantify these long term effects and further work will be carried out as the LDF progresses to assess these.

The production of the LDF itself has cost implications for the Council e.g. to cover the cost of preparing the evidence base, public consultation, production of documents and the examination in public. It is estimated that the total cost of the issues and options consultation stage of the process will be about £30-35,000 and there will be further costs as the LDF progresses. Contributions towards these costs have been made from previous years' awards of Planning Delivery Grant and Council reserves. There is a risk that the costs of managing the whole process up to adoption in 2012 could exceed available resources, this will depend on the detailed requirements and outcome of the consultation process and public examination, the implications of which will be kept under close review throughout the process.

Progress on the Local Development Framework (e.g. through its impact on housing delivery) also affects how much Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG) the Council receives each year from the Government. However it is not possible at this stage to quantify how much HPDG the Council will receive for 2009/10 and the future of HPDG beyond then is currently uncertain.

- 6.2 **Human** - This report has no implications for the Council's human resources.

6.3 **Information Technology** - This report has no implications for the Council's Information Technology resources.

6.4 **Physical Assets** - The LDF will guide the future use and development of land in Knowsley, including the Council's own land and buildings.

## 7. **RISK ASSESSMENT**

7.1 The primary risk associated with the LDF is the need to ensure that the Core Strategy is found to be "sound" by the Inspector when it gets to its examination in public stage (expected in 2011). A number of local authorities across the country have completed their LDFs, only for them to be found "unsound" at this late stage of the process. They have as a result faced significant delays and additional costs.

7.2 To minimise the risk of the LDF being found to be "unsound" it is essential that the Council ensures that the plan meets the "tests of soundness". These are set out in paragraph 4.7 of this report. One of the tests is for the strategy to be the most appropriate when compared against reasonable alternatives. Consultation on the Issues and options paper will help to minimise this risk.

## 8. **IMPACT ON POPULATION GROUPS**

8.1 The LDF is likely to impact upon a wide range of population groups in Knowsley. As an example, the decisions about housing provision will need to include provision for all needs including those of the elderly and young people. To inform the plan as it develops an Equalities Impact Assessment (along with a Sustainability Appraisal and Health Impact Assessment) will be carried out. The findings of these at each stage will feed into subsequent stages to ensure that the final plan promotes equal opportunities and diversity issues as effectively as possible.

## 9. **COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES**

9.1 It is proposed that the Issues and Options paper should be made subject to a major consultation and engagement exercise for a 6 week period following approval by Cabinet. This will include a wide range of events and activities designed to engage the public and other stakeholders, such as local community organisations, Council partners, regional agencies, developers, landowners, infrastructure providers and neighbouring authorities. All documents (including the issues and options paper itself) will be checked for ease of understanding and engagement by all population groups before the consultation starts.

9.2 Specific methods are likely to include:

- Leafleting to all residential properties in Knowsley
- Press releases and potentially items on local radio
- Events with manned display stands in each township

- Workshops with the Area Partnership Boards
- Use of the Council website and Limehouse on line consultation system
- a seminar on the LDF for all Members of the Council.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The Local Development Framework ("Plan Knowsley") will make key decisions about the future growth and development of Knowsley. This report seeks approval for an Issues and Options paper which, building on Knowsley's Sustainable Communities Strategy, sets out a draft vision for the Borough and priorities for each township. It also sets out how much development Knowsley is required to accommodate in the period to 2026 and broad alternatives for how these needs can be met.
- 10.2 Cabinet is recommended to approve the Issues and Options paper for consultation purposes.

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Background Documents:

1. "Knowsley: The Borough of Choice - Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2023"
2. "North West of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021" Government Office for the North West, 2008
3. "Knowsley Local Development Framework: Town Centres and Shopping Study" Volume 1 Roger Tym and Partners 2009
4. "Knowsley Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment - consultation draft" - White Young Green, June 2009
5. "Halton/Knowsley/Sefton/West Lancashire Joint Employment Land Study - Consultation Draft", BE Group, May 2009
6. "Plan Knowsley Stakeholder Engagement Workshops: an overview of the findings", Vision 21, November 2009

Appendix:

1. "Knowsley Local Development Framework: Core Strategy - Issues and Options Paper October 2009"

***(The Appendix has been circulated in hard copy format to Cabinet Members and is available to all other Members on sharepoint and on request)***