

# **Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy**

## **Examination Hearings**

### **Council's Opening Statement (5 November 2013)**

#### **Lisa Harris, Director of Regeneration and Housing**

Knowsley Council is pleased to have submitted the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy for examination. The vision of the Plan is to create successful suburban townships and communities that have sustainable, diverse, prosperous and healthy populations. In order to achieve this the Plan aims to strengthen the major assets of Knowsley by providing a wide choice of future housing and job opportunities, vibrant and welcoming town and local centres, excellent transport connections and well used open spaces and leisure opportunities.

To prepare the Plan the Council has undertaken three major consultation exercises over several years. These have fully explored the key planning issues facing the Borough and how to address them. We have received a large amount of feedback which has been extremely valuable as we have refined our proposals. We would like to thank those involved for their contributions.

The Borough of Knowsley presents a unique set of opportunities and challenges. The townships of Huyton, Kirkby, Prescot, Whiston and Halewood and villages of Knowsley, Cronton and Tarbock each have their own special characteristics. The Borough benefits from extensive areas of open space, excellent transport links with other parts of the Liverpool City Region and beyond, and good quality infrastructure such as schools, health facilities and utilities. However significant parts of Knowsley experience levels of socio-economic deprivation which are amongst the highest in the country and there is an established problem of out-migration. We aim to address these issues by promoting development in the right places whilst ensuring a high quality environment for future generations.

The Borough of Knowsley is inextricably linked to the rest of the Liverpool City Region in terms of housing markets, jobs and commuting, shopping patterns, sporting, cultural and leisure opportunities. We have therefore for many years worked closely with neighbouring districts and other strategic partners to tackle the issues that we face. We welcome the cooperation received from our neighbours and the support that they have offered for the emerging Knowsley Local Plan.

A major influence on the Plan has been the difficult economic circumstances affecting not only the UK but the wider world. These continue to affect the viability of new development and therefore make it even more challenging to achieve the regeneration of the Borough. We have therefore taken particular care to ensure that the Plan proposals are viable and deliverable.

The Council considers that the Plan fully meets the tests of soundness set out in paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as it is:

- Positively prepared, being based on a robust assessment of the future development and infrastructure needs of Knowsley;
- Justified having been based on a thorough analysis of the issues that the Borough faces and the realistic alternative strategies to address these;
- Based on a comprehensive, up-to-date and relevant evidence base;
- Effective because it is deliverable and informed by joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- Consistent with national policy in that it will enable delivery of sustainable development in line with the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Plan also fully meets the legal requirements. For all these reasons, the Council considers that the Plan will successfully meet the development needs of Knowsley up to 2028. However, if the Inspector after considering the debate at these hearings concludes that modifications are required to any part of the Plan to meet the soundness or legal compliance tests, the Council would be pleased to consider how to comply with these.