

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION

INSPECTOR'S SECOND INTERIM FINDINGS FOLLOWING JULY 2014 HEARING SESSIONS

In January 2014 I issued interim findings on key soundness issues for the submitted Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy (KLPCS) following the examination hearings held in November 2013 (document EX26). In response, the Council has made further changes to the KLPCS which were discussed at reconvened hearings in July 2014.

At the reconvened hearings the Council undertook to prepare a schedule of further modifications to the KLPCS in light of the evidence given. This was published on 11 August 2014, together with a letter to me (documents CS08b and EX32). I indicated that I would set out my interim findings on the modifications made since November 2013 so that the Council could, if necessary, make further adjustments to the Plan before undertaking a consultation on all the modifications made to the Submission KLPCS.

I have considered carefully the statements submitted by the parties prior to the July 2014 hearings, the evidence given at the hearing sessions and the Council's schedule of further modifications. My interim findings on the main areas of change since November 2013 are that the following matters are sound:

1. The identification of Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) and the removal of the phasing mechanism for the release of these sites for development.
2. The amendment to the treatment of safeguarded land.
3. The revision to the calculation of a 5 year housing land supply.
4. The approach to the employment land supply and delivery.
5. For affordable housing provision, the differentiation between urban sites and SUEs and the flexibility introduced into the assessment of tenure mix.
6. The revised approach to sustainable construction.
7. The approach to infrastructure delivery and developer contributions.

I have also reflected on the further representations relating to Green Belt sites proposed by landowners which are not included in the Plan, but I do not propose any additions to the sites selected by the Council.

There is one detailed matter in policy SUE 2 on which I am asking the Council to reflect further, and one small point where I think an error has been made; these are set out overleaf. These aside, I consider that none of the other changes to the plan that were proposed by representors at the reconvened hearings are necessary to ensure the soundness of the KLPCS.

Policy SUE 2

I question whether the revised approach to master planning of the three main allocations is wholly appropriate. I agree that the master plan process is a separate exercise from the SPD, and one which is likely to be carried out by the site developers, as was stated at the hearings. But I think it is still necessary for the Council to approve the single detailed master plan (as previously stated in SUE 2 clause 3), which will then serve (along with the SPD) as the overall, site-wide framework against which all detailed applications will be assessed. Unless the master plan is approved there could be uncertainty about its status and the potential for disputes.

As to the timing of the master plan, new SUE 2 clause 4 seeks a single detailed master plan to be "submitted with the application". This doesn't seem to allow for the master plan to exist before an application is submitted, which is likely to happen with subsequent applications that are made as development progresses. It may be that the master plan accompanies the first application for a particular SUE, in which case it can be approved at the same time as planning permission is granted, but the KLPCS should also allow for the situation where the approved master plan is in place prior to an application being lodged.

I have suggested below minor revisions to policy SUE 2 clause 4 which would address these matters, but other solutions are possible.

Proposals for development within each of these locations will only be granted planning permission where they are consistent with a single detailed master plan for the whole of the Sustainable Urban Extension which is approved by the Council. The master plan should submitted with the application and accords with development plan policy and any associated Supplementary Planning Document and may be submitted prior to or with the application. Planning permissions must be linked to any necessary legal agreements for the improvement, provision, management and maintenance of infrastructure, services and facilities, open spaces and other matters necessary to make the development acceptable and which facilitate comprehensive delivery of all phases of development within the Sustainable Urban Extension in accordance with the single detailed master plan.

Knowsley Lane, Huyton

Modifications M060 and M071 refer to a reduced capacity for employment uses at Knowsley Lane from 17.5ha to 16ha. However, the August 2014 Further Modifications (CS08b) at Appendix 1- Delivery Mechanisms proposes for policy SUE 2a a change in employment land from 16ha to 17.5ha. It is assumed that this is an error, and that the change should be the other way round - from 17.5ha to 16ha.

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Finally, it is necessary to repeat the point I made in the January 2014 document, which is that these interim findings are based on the evidence submitted thus far. I can only reach my final conclusions on the soundness of the Plan after considering the representations received in response to the forthcoming consultation on the proposed modifications to the Submission KLPCS.

Martin Pike

Inspector
14 August 2014