

Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy Local Plan

**Response to Inspectors Matters, Issues and Questions
Submitted by Smiths Gore on behalf of the Hesketh Estate (ID 85)**

October 2013

Knowsley Local Plan: Hearing Statement
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Smiths Gore have been instructed by the Hesketh Estate ('our client') to prepare further written submissions to the Examination of the Knowsley Local Plan and respond directly to the Inspectors Questions relevant to our client in respect of Matters 3 and 5.
- 1.2 In preparing this statement we have fully considered the minutes of the pre hearing meeting ('PHM') held on the 26th September 2013 and all of the relevant national and local guidance and the regulations listed therein. Smiths Gore have also considered the evidence base produced by Knowsley Council ('the Council'). Our response to the Inspectors Questions, Matters and Issues reflects the previous comments made by our client to the Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document in December 2012.
- 1.3 The statement will respond direct to the relevant matters to our client within the schedule of matters and issues for examination, as follows:
 - Matter 3: Housing Provision
 - Matter 5: Green Belt

2. Background

- 2.1 Our client owns the southernmost parcel of land East of Halewood, which forms part of the land identified as a 'reserve' location for new housing in the Core Strategy. The land sits within the current Green Belt Boundary.
- 2.2 Our client's objective is to seek the land be removed from the Green Belt and designated as a housing site for delivery within the Plan Period either as part of the wider allocation at East Halewood or independent of the wider housing allocation given the site's containment with clearly defined and fixed boundaries (the transport networks) and relationship with the existing settlement to the west. The site does not fulfil any of the purposes of being within the Green Belt and would be suitable for release for housing either as part of the wider allocation at East Halewood or in isolation of it.

Response to Inspector's Questions in relation to Matter 3: Housing Provision

Issue 2: Whether the broad distribution of housing development across the borough is consistent with the spatial strategy and the evidence base.

Response to 3.6

It is essential to ensure a broad distribution of new development around the borough and, in particular, in areas of high housing demand. This approach will support the continued sustainability of all settlements across the county but, principally, will establish a balanced approach to the four main townships. As identified in the Core Strategy, a well balanced housing market will help boost community sustainability and vitality, helping to create a prosperous economy and sustainable, inclusive and mixed new communities.

The Plan makes provision for 8,100 new dwellings to be delivered in Knowsley over the next plan period, based on an average of 450 dwellings per annum and establishes a broad distribution of housing across the four main townships.

Inadequate provision is made for housing in Halewood to ensure its relative role among the four main townships.

Using evidence from the SHLAA, it is possible to establish, in broad terms, the shortfall in land requirements for different areas arising from the implementation of different housing growth targets. If housing was to be equally distributed between all areas (to correspond with the percentage split of each of the settlement's population) Halewood would have a pro rata target over the plan period of 1117 dwellings. However, the SHLAA indicates Halewood to have an urban capacity to accommodate 389 dwellings over the plan period. This results in a shortfall of 728 dwellings.

The Core Strategy (paragraph 6.46) identifies Halewood as having concentrations of deprivation, particularly in the south, and a specific need for a more mixed and balanced housing offer to reflect local needs.

In order to ensure the long term economic vitality and support sustainable growth in Halewood and to meet the level of housing need and demand, land will need to be released from the Green Belt. Only two sites, KGBS19 and KBGS20, have been identified as suitable for release with an indicative capacity to accommodate 1,124 dwellings between them. With reference to the requirement within the NPPF to ensure that longer term needs are also met as part of a Green Belt review, it is likely that both sites will need to be released for development. Our client owns the southernmost parcel of site KBGS20 (land bounded by Higher Road, Aldersgate Drive and the West Coast Mainline). The site can be delivered as part of site KBGS20 or in isolation. The site is well contained by existing infrastructure and deliverable and available for immediate development.

The site is within close proximity to the Jaguar Landrover plant, the Ravenscourt redevelopment and the local shopping centre on Bailey's Lane, in to addition to other services and facilities in the town. It's delivery for housing in the short term, alongside the delivery of the rest of KBGS20 over time, will help to maintain the role of Halewood among the four main townships.

Response to 3.7

Policy CS3 states that Green Belt land for new residential development will only be released in line with the criteria in Policy CS5 (Green Belt). Therefore, in the

case of locations proposed for housing, permission will only be granted when it is necessary to maintain the council's five year housing land supply.

We do not agree with the approach at CS5. The specific housing needs across the four townships and - to ensure consistency with the spatial strategy to deliver a wider choice of housing - should drive the scale and location of housing land release.

A broader assessment of housing need and delivery is required, with a very clear mechanism for land release, based around the 5 year housing land supply but giving additional weight to the type and location of homes, based on an updated and comprehensive SHMA.

As identified in the Housing Technical Paper, Halewood has the fewest opportunities for urban housing delivery of the four identified districts (Huyton, Kirkby, Prescot Whiston Cronton & Knowsley Village and Halewood). Therefore, if a five year housing land supply is consistently achieved on none Green Belt land and other Green Belt sites around the other townships are delivered, development opportunities in Halewood will not come forward. This is not consistent with the Spatial Strategy and the general thrust to deliver sustainable settlements contained within the NPPF.

Restricting development in Halewood to when the council does not have a five year housing land supply, will clearly undermine the purpose of the settlement as a key service centre and is likely to have a negative impact on the long term sustainability and the viability of Halewood. It is essential for the Core Strategy to specifically bring forward a considerable scale of development in Halewood over the plan period in order to continue to support services and facilities and economic prosperity of the settlement and not just in the wider district as a whole.