

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY FURTHER PROPOSED MODIFICATION

Sustainability Appraisal Report

August 2015

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KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY FURTHER PROPOSED MODIFICATION

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In September 2004, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act came into effect and introduced the requirement for Knowsley Council to replace its existing land use development plan – the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan (UDP)¹ – with a Local Development Framework (LDF). Whilst the Localism Act and the recent publication of the National Planning Policy Framework have resulted in a number of significant changes to the planning system, there is a continued requirement for Knowsley Council to produce a local spatial plan to replace its existing UDP. However, due to the aforementioned changes to the planning system, this replacement plan will now be referred to as a Local Plan rather than a LDF.
- 1.2 Knowsley's Local Plan will comprise a series of individual documents that collectively deal with the spatial issues that will affect the people who will live, learn, work and relax in the Borough. The overarching document of the Knowsley Local Plan will be the "Local Plan: Core Strategy".
- 1.3 The Core Strategy will outline the Council's vision for Knowsley up to the year 2028, and will set out the strategic framework to promote, guide and manage future growth and development in the Borough. Accordingly, it will make important choices about how and where new development will take place and establish an appropriate balance between growth, regeneration and environmental protection / improvement.
- 1.4 Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning the planning system and, as a consequence, sustainability will be at the heart of the Local Plan: Core Strategy. In order to ensure that new plans and strategies contribute towards sustainable development, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to be carried out on all new or revised Core Strategies. SA seeks to promote sustainable development through the integration of sustainability considerations into the preparation, adoption and implementation of plans and strategies. It involves the identification and evaluation of the social, environmental and economic impacts of a plan, offers an opportunity to consider ways in which a plan can

¹ Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan (Knowsley Council, 2006)

make an effective contribution to sustainable development and provides a means of avoiding or reducing any adverse effects that the plan might have.

- 1.5 The Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy was submitted for examination on the 19th July 2013. A number of Examination Hearing Sessions in relation to the Local Plan took place in November 2013 and the Inspector appointed to undertake the examination of the Local Plan issued his interim findings in January 2014. These interim findings concluded that the Plan was sound in key respects. However, the interim findings also advised that changes were likely to be required to aspects of the Plan so that it could be progressed towards adoption. In response, the Council proposed a number of modifications to the Plan.
- 1.6 These proposed modifications were subject to SA and considered in detail at the reconvened hearings which took place in July 2014. In light of the evidence given at the reconvened hearings, a number of further modifications to the Local Plan were proposed by the Council, which were also subject to SA and considered at reconvened hearings in June 2015.
- 1.7 In July 2015 the Inspector wrote to the Council to highlight a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) published by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government entitled 'Local Planning' on 18 June 2015². The WMS dealt with new considerations to be applied to proposed wind energy development so that local people would have the final say on wind farm applications. The Inspector invited the Council to consider potential options to account for the WMS as follows:

“a. Add to the criteria-based policy CS 23 on Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure the additional WMS tests (ie a wind turbine proposal must be in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development and must fully address the planning impacts identified by local communities). In this way the KLPCS would include the up-to-date policy, albeit without identifying suitable areas. The rationale would be provided in the supporting text, which would say that the identification of any areas suitable for wind energy development would be carried out as part of the Site Allocations and Development Management stage of the Local Plan.

b. Delete policy CS 23 or specifically exclude wind turbines from its provisions, stating in the policy that future wind energy planning decisions would rely on the WMS.

² Local Planning (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2015)

- c. Amend paragraph 9.17 of the KLPCS to make it clear that policy CS 23 does not relate to wind turbines, that the wind turbine issue will be dealt with at Site Allocations and Development Management stage, and that in the meantime wind turbine proposals will be considered against the WMS.”
- 1.8 The Council decided that the Local Plan would need to be subject to a Main Modification to be brought fully into line with the approach which is now expected by central Government. The proposed Main Modification is to amend paragraph 9.17 of the Local Plan to make it clear that policy CS 23 does not relate to wind turbines, that the wind turbine issue will be dealt with at Site Allocations and Development Management stage, and that in the meantime wind turbine proposals will be considered against the WMS (i.e. option (c) of the Inspector’s suggested choices).
- 1.11 This report considers the implications of the proposed modification to the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy in relation to the SA of the Plan.
- 1.12 This report provides an addendum to the Final Sustainability Appraisal Report submitted alongside the Local Plan: Core Strategy in July 2013 and should be read in conjunction with this report. In assessing the proposed modification to the Local Plan, this report seeks only to assess whether the proposed modification changes the effect the Local Plan has on the SA Objectives, and, as a result, on the sustainability of the Plan as a whole.
- 1.13 For a description of the Methodology used in the Sustainability Appraisal, please refer to the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy Proposed Modifications Sustainability Appraisal Report³.

³ Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy Proposed Modifications Sustainability Appraisal Report (September 2014)

2. APPRAISAL OF THE PROPOSED MODIFICATION TO THE LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure

- 2.1 It is envisaged that the proposed modification to the policy would have no significant impact on its performance in the sustainability appraisal process. The policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy. Nevertheless, the revised policy still sets out a presumption in favour of permitting proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy provided that the proposals would not have an unacceptable impact on communities or the natural and built environment that could not be mitigated. As a result, the policy could support the shift to more low carbon sources of energy generation and thereby have a major positive effect on the objective of mitigating climate change and its sub-objective of decreasing carbon dioxide emissions.
- 2.2 The support provided for proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy could help reduce the need to obtain energy from coal, oil and natural gas which are all listed as minerals of local and national importance in the National Planning Policy Framework. As such, the amended policy would still help reduce the need to consume minerals and would thereby make a positive contribution to the objective of ensuring that minerals are used prudently and efficiently.
- 2.3 The amended policy still seeks to ensure that proposals to produce and distribute decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy do not cause significant harm to public amenity, communities or the natural and built environment. It is therefore considered that the amended policy should still also have a positive effect on the objectives relating to health; built heritage; the character and accessibility of the landscape; biodiversity and geodiversity; water quality; and air quality.
- 2.4 There are no negative or uncertain effects on the sustainability objectives.

Sustainability Appraisal Scoring Matrix for Policy CS23:

CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure								
SA Objective	Timescale			Nature of Effect				Mitigation
	0 – 5 years	5 – 10 years	10+ years	Certainty	Scale	Permanence	Secondary, cumulative, synergistic	
Social								
S1. To reduce poverty and social deprivation and secure economic inclusion.	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		
	<u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.							
S2. To improve local accessibility of goods, services and amenities and reduce community severance.	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		
	<u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.							
S3. To improve safety and reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime.	+	+	+	Medium	Borough wide	Long term		
	<u>Comments:</u> The amended policy still states that proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy will only be permitted where they would not have a detrimental impact on transport safety. The policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy. This change restricts the development of wind turbines to sites identified as suitable in a Local or Neighbourhood plan, which shall include separate criteria for wind turbine developments. The amended policy would therefore still have the potential to have a positive effect on the sub-objective relating to road safety.							

CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure								
SA Objective	Timescale			Nature of Effect				Mitigation
	0 – 5 years	5 – 10 years	10+ years	Certainty	Scale	Permanence	Secondary, cumulative, synergistic	
S4. To support voluntary and community networks, assist social inclusion and ensure community involvement in decision-making.	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		
<u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.								
S5. To improve health and reduce health inequalities.	+	+	+	Medium	Borough wide	Long term		
<u>Comments:</u> The amended policy still states that proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy will only be permitted where they would not cause significant harm to public amenity and living conditions. The policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy. This change restricts the development of wind turbines to sites identified as suitable in a Local or Neighbourhood plan, which shall include separate criteria for wind turbine developments. The amended policy should still therefore ensure that such proposals do not have a detrimental impact on the health of local communities. As a result, it is envisaged that the policy should have a positive effect on the objective.								
S6. To provide good quality, affordable and resource efficient housing.	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		
<u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.								
S7. To improve educational	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		

CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure								
SA Objective	Timescale			Nature of Effect				Mitigation
	0 – 5 years	5 – 10 years	10+ years	Certainty	Scale	Permanence	Secondary, cumulative, synergistic	
attainment, training and opportunities for lifelong learning and employability.	<u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.							
S8. To preserve, enhance and manage Knowsley's rich diversity of cultural, historic and archaeological buildings, areas, sites and features.	+	+	+	Medium	Borough wide	Long term	Secondary effects on perceptions of the Borough and sense of place.	Consider amending the wording to clarify that the policy will seek to protect the setting of historical assets.
	<u>Comments:</u> The amended policy still states that proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy will only be permitted where they would not cause significant harm to historical and cultural assets. . The policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy. This change restricts the development of wind turbines to sites identified as suitable in a Local or Neighbourhood plan, which shall include separate criteria for wind turbine developments. The amended policy should still therefore have a positive effect on the element of the objective that relates to the preservation of Knowsley's rich diversity of cultural, historic and archaeological buildings, areas, sites and features.							
Environment								
E1. To protect, enhance and manage the local character and	+	+	+	High	Borough wide	Long term	Secondary effects on perceptions of the Borough.	

CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure								
SA Objective	Timescale			Nature of Effect				Mitigation
	0 – 5 years	5 – 10 years	10+ years	Certainty	Scale	Permanence	Secondary, cumulative, synergistic	
accessibility of the landscape and countryside across Knowsley.	<p><u>Comments:</u> The amended policy would still prevent proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy where they would cause significant harm to landscape character. It is also stated that such proposals should not cause significant harm to the character and openness of the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances. In addition, the policy requires sites to be restored when energy production ceases. The policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy. This change restricts the development of wind turbines to sites identified as suitable in a Local or Neighbourhood plan, which shall include separate criteria for wind turbine developments. Accordingly, it is concluded that the amended policy should still help protect the local character of the landscape and thereby have a positive effect on the objective.</p>							
E2. To protect, enhance and manage biodiversity, the viability of protected and endangered species, habitats, geodiversity and sites of geological importance.	+	+	+	High	Borough wide	Long term	Secondary effects on perceptions of the Borough.	
	<p><u>Comments:</u> The amended policy still states that proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy will only be permitted where they would not cause significant harm to natural resources, biodiversity and geodiversity. The policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy. This change restricts the development of wind turbines to sites identified as suitable in a Local or Neighbourhood plan, which shall include separate criteria for wind turbine developments. The amended policy should still therefore have a positive effect on the element of the objective that relates to the protection of biodiversity, species, habitats and geodiversity.</p>							
E3. To adapt to climate change including flood risk.	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		
	<p><u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.</p>							

CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure								
SA Objective	Timescale			Nature of Effect				Mitigation
	0 – 5 years	5 – 10 years	10+ years	Certainty	Scale	Permanence	Secondary, cumulative, synergistic	
E4. To mitigate climate change including using energy prudently and efficiently and increasing energy generated from renewable sources.	++	++	++	Medium	Borough wide	Long term	Increased energy security.	Acknowledge that very special circumstances may exist which could outweigh harm to the Green Belt.
	<p><u>Comments:</u> The amended policy still sets out a presumption in favour of permitting proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy provided that the proposals would not have an unacceptable impact on communities or the natural and built environment that could not be mitigated. As a result, the amended policy could still support the shift to more low carbon sources of energy generation and thereby have a major positive effect on the objective and its sub-objective of decreasing carbon dioxide emissions. However, the policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy.</p>							
E5. To provide, conserve, maintain and enhance green infrastructure.	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		
	<p><u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.</p>							
E6. To protect, manage and	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		

CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure								
SA Objective	Timescale			Nature of Effect				Mitigation
	0 – 5 years	5 – 10 years	10+ years	Certainty	Scale	Permanence	Secondary, cumulative, synergistic	
restore land and soil quality.	<u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.							
E7. To protect, improve and where necessary, restore the quality of inland and estuarine waters.	+	+	+	Medium	Borough wide	Long term	Secondary effects on biodiversity.	
	<u>Comments:</u> The amended policy still states that proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy will only be permitted where they would not cause significant harm to water quality. The policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy. This change restricts the development of wind turbines to sites identified as suitable in a Local or Neighbourhood plan, which shall include separate criteria for wind turbine developments. The amended policy should still therefore have a positive effect on the element of the objective that relates to the protection of water quality.							
E8. To protect, and where necessary, improve local air quality.	+	+	+	Medium	Borough wide	Long term	Secondary positive effects on health, particularly amongst those who suffer from respiratory illnesses.	

CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure								
SA Objective	Timescale			Nature of Effect				Mitigation
	0 – 5 years	5 – 10 years	10+ years	Certainty	Scale	Permanence	Secondary, cumulative, synergistic	
	<p><u>Comments:</u> The amended policy still states that proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy will only be permitted where they would not cause significant harm to air quality. The policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy. This change restricts the development of wind turbines to sites identified as suitable in a Local or Neighbourhood plan, which shall include separate criteria for wind turbine developments. The amended policy should still therefore have a positive effect on the element of the objective that relates to the protection of air quality.</p>							
E9. To use water and mineral resources prudently and efficiently.	++	++	++	Medium	Borough wide	Long term	Improved energy security. Reduced impacts associated with mineral extraction and transportation.	
	<p><u>Comments:</u> The amended policy would still support proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy. The policy could thereby reduce the need to obtain energy from coal, oil and natural gas which are all listed as minerals of local and national importance in the National Planning Policy Framework. As such, the amended policy would still help reduce the need to consume minerals and would thereby contribute to the aim of ensuring that minerals are used prudently and efficiently. However, the policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy.</p>							
E10. To reduce the need to travel	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		

CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure								
SA Objective	Timescale			Nature of Effect				Mitigation
	0 – 5 years	5 – 10 years	10+ years	Certainty	Scale	Permanence	Secondary, cumulative, synergistic	
and improve choice and use of more sustainable transport mode.	<u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.							
E11. To minimise the production of waste and increase reuse, recycling and recovery rates.	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		
	<u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.							
Economic								
EC1. To improve the competitiveness and productivity of business, exploit the growth potential of business sectors and increase the number of new businesses.	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		
	<u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.							
EC2. To enhance the vitality and viability of town and local centres.	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		
	<u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.							
EC3. Maintain high and stable	0	0	0	Medium	N/A	N/A		

CS23: Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure								
SA Objective	Timescale			Nature of Effect				Mitigation
	0 – 5 years	5 – 10 years	10+ years	Certainty	Scale	Permanence	Secondary, cumulative, synergistic	
levels of employment and reduce long-term unemployment.	<p><u>Comments:</u> Unlikely to have any significant effects.</p>							
Sustainability Summary								
<p>It is envisaged that the amended policy for Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure would still have a positive effect on a number of sustainability objectives. The amended policy sets out a presumption in favour of proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy provided that they would not have an unacceptable impact on communities or the natural and built environment that could not be mitigated. As a result, the amended policy could still support the shift to more low carbon sources of energy generation and thereby have a major positive effect on the objective of mitigating climate change and its sub-objective of decreasing carbon dioxide emissions. The amended policy does however specify that such proposals must not cause significant harm to the character of the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances.</p> <p>The support provided for proposals for decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy could help reduce the need to obtain energy from coal, oil and natural gas which are all listed as minerals of local and national importance in the National Planning Policy Framework. As such, the amended policy would help reduce the need to consume minerals and would thereby make a positive contribution to the objective of ensuring that minerals are used prudently and efficiently.</p> <p>The amended policy still seeks to ensure that proposals to produce and distribute decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy do not cause significant harm to public amenity, communities or the natural and built environment. It is therefore considered that the policy should also have a positive effect on the objectives relating to health; built heritage; the character and accessibility of the landscape; biodiversity and geodiversity; water quality; and air quality.</p> <p>The policy has been amended so that it no longer includes wind turbines and that policies relating to the development of wind turbines will be included within the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Policies document. Before adoption of that document, wind turbine proposals will be considered against relevant national policy. This change restricts the development of wind turbines to sites identified as suitable in a Local or Neighbourhood plan, which shall include separate criteria for wind turbine developments. It is not considered that the proposed modification causes any changes to the scoring in the Sustainability Appraisal.</p> <p>There are no negative or uncertain effects on the sustainability objectives.</p>								

Key for effects					
++ major positive;	+ minor positive;	0 neutral;	- minor negative;	-- major negative;	? uncertain

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Urban Vision Partnership Ltd was commissioned by Knowsley MBC to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal of a proposed modification to the Local Plan: Core Strategy.
- 3.2 The SA involved assessing the proposed modification to Policy CS23, which excluded wind turbines from reference to renewable and low carbon technology. It was envisaged that the proposed modification to the policy would have no significant impact on its performance in the sustainability appraisal process.