Topic Paper 9: Employment Summary

Introduction

Planning policies should support a strong, competitive economy and enable businesses to invest, expand and adapt.

Context

The borough contains Knowsley Industrial and Business Park, one of the largest employment areas in Europe, and median pay for full-time jobs based in Knowsley is the highest of the six city region authorities. Manufacturing and logistics are the borough's traditional strengths and remain so. Halewood is home to advanced manufacturing of national importance: Jaguar Land Rover is transforming its Halwood plant to build electric vehicles, and Ford's Halewood plant makes electric drive units for its European electric vehicles.

While Knowsley benefits from a strong economic base, there is scope to strengthen the link between economic growth and local prosperity. Increasing access to well-paid employment opportunities for residents and maintaining an adequate supply of employment land to support future investment are key priorities. The current employment land supply is below the level identified in the adopted Local Plan, reinforcing the need for a proactive approach to growth. Addressing these issues will be fundamental to delivering the Council's inclusive growth ambitions, set out in the Knowsley Council Plan 2025-2030 and Knowsley's Economic Growth Plan 2025-2030.

Key policies, plans and strategies

The National Planning Policy Framework expects development plans to set out a clear economic vision and strategy which takes a positive, proactive and realistic approach to encouraging sustainable economic growth, having regard to the Industrial Strategy and to local economic and regeneration strategies. Plans should seek to address barriers to investment such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment. They should allocate sites to meet identified needs, paying particular regard to the needs of a modern economy, including sites and premises which are flexible and adaptable, provision for knowledge and data driven industries, and provision for freight and logistics at

a variety of scales. Given changing commercial property requirements, plans should not be overly prescriptive about the types of use or unit size acceptable on particular sites.

The National Planning Practice Guidance on housing and economic needs assessment sets out how the need for employment land should be assessed and expects authorities to work with neighbouring areas where economic markets extend across boundaries

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Spatial Development Strategy is being prepared, and it is likely to have policy on employment provision and give first priority for that land to locations connected to rail or water.

The Liverpool City Region Growth Plan 2025-2035 makes productivity its central mission, and the Combined Authority's economic evidence identifies Knowsley Business Park as a key employment hub for the city region, Halsnead as a strategic mixed development site, Earlsfield Park as an advanced manufacturing and research location, and Huyton as a possible emerging digital and creative cluster. The Plan also identifies Speke/Halewood Corridor, focused on premium national and internationally important Biomanufacturing and Automotive as a key economic driver in the City Region.

The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy sets the national priority sectors and the locations of Industrial Strategy Zones, to which the Framework requires local plans to have regard.

The Knowsley Council Plan 2025-2030 commits the Council to inclusive growth, so that everyone benefits and no one is left behind, and to targeted support for residents facing the biggest challenges.

Knowsley's Economic Growth Plan 2025-2030, sets out a shared roadmap for the Council and its partners toward a more inclusive economy with opportunities for both people and businesses.

The Council's Adding Social Value to Development: Employment and Skills Supplementary Planning Document supports Core Strategy Policy CS4 by asking developers of larger schemes to prepare and deliver Social Value Strategy, securing local jobs, apprenticeships and training. The draft Spatial Development Strategy also supports securing social value through new development.

The adopted Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy requires 164 hectares of employment land. That figure is the total employment land taken up in the borough over the eighteen

years to 2012/13, carried forward. It is a projection of past trends rather than an assessment of future need, and the policy containing it runs to 2028.

Key issues to be addressed by the Local Plan

- There is currently no up-to-date assessment of Knowsley's employment land needs. Preparing this evidence base is necessary before the Local Plan can identify and allocate land for future employment growth.
- The supply of employment land is falling. 138.77 hectares were available at 31 March 2026 against an adopted requirement of 164 hectares.
- Most of what is built is storage and distribution, which accounts for 54.4 per cent of new employment floorspace since 2010. Offices and light industry account for 3.1 per cent over the last five years.
- The borough has an operational rail freight terminal at Kirkby. National policy asks plans to make provision for freight and logistics, the draft Spatial Development Strategy gives first priority to rail connected locations, and the Local Transport Plan identifies the terminal as one of the city region's multi-modal freight interchanges.
- Most of the available employment land is at Knowsley Industrial and Business Park, and four of the six Principal Regeneration Areas now hold no supply. Making it easier for residents to reach these jobs by pubic transport, walking and cycling matters as much as where new land is found, as very little of the borough's designated employment land is within walking distance of a well connected railway station.
- Professional, information and financial services provide 7.5 per cent of Knowsley's jobs against 17.8 per cent nationally.
- Employment land continues to be lost. Around 25 hectares have been lost since 2010, through development for other uses or lapsed planning permissions, and a further 2.46 hectares has permission for other uses but is not yet built.
- Parts of the older employment estate, mainly as Knowsley Industrial Park, Knowsley Business Park and Huyton Business Park are being remodelled. Land identified as having potential for remodelling now accounts for almost a third of the land available within the next five years.
- Knowsley's employment areas are difficult to reach without a car. The adopted Local Transport Plan identifies limited sustainable travel choices to Knowsley

Industrial Park, and 51.0 per cent of employed residents drive to work against 44.5 per cent nationally.

- More than three quarters of the borough's designated employment land lies in its most deprived neighbourhoods. New jobs on this land are close to the residents who most need them, provided these residents can reach them and have the skills employers are looking for..
- Around two thirds of the job at Knowsley workplaces are filled by people who live elsewhere, and full-time jobs based in the borough pay more on average than full-time workers who live here earn. Policies can influence the location, type and accessibility of employment provision, but not recruitment.
- The Council's social value approach is already securing local jobs, apprenticeships and training from major development. The new Local Plan offers the opportunity to build this into planning policy and extend it, helping more residents benefit from the jobs created in the borough.
- Economic inactivity is high and is driven by long term ill health, which accounts for 45.4per cent of the borough's economically inactive residents against 29.0 per cent nationally.
- Unemployment among young people is much higher than nationally, while among residents aged 25 and over it is at or below the North West average.
- Qualification levels remain below national levels, with fewer residents qualified to degree level and more with no qualifications, although the fall in the share of residents with no qualifications between 2011 and 2021 was the largest of any Liverpool City Region authority.
- Policies should provide for a range of unit sizes and types so that premises are available for different types and sizes of business