Topic Paper 8: Housing Summary

Introduction

Planning policies should aim to support housing development that supports growth to meet the development needs of the area.

Context

Housing is a fundamental component of sustainable development and plays a key role in supporting population growth, economic prosperity, health and wellbeing, and the creation of balanced communities. The Local Plan helps facilitate this through housing delivery performance, land availability, affordable housing provision, housing for specific groups, brownfield redevelopment, density, housing mix and future housing requirements.

Evidence demonstrates that Knowsley has maintained strong housing delivery over recent years. Between 2010/11 and 2024/25 the borough delivered a net gain of approximately 8,039 dwellings, averaging 536 dwellings per year, exceeding the Core Strategy target of 450 dwellings per annum. Since adoption of the Core Strategy, completions have exceeded the annual target every year. In December 2024, the National Planning Policy Framework was updated, introducing a new method for calculating yearly local housing requirements. Knowsley's current figure is a minimum of 631 dwellings per annum.

The borough experiences varying housing market conditions. Average house prices are broadly in line with the Liverpool City Region average, although affordability pressures vary geographically, with Halewood generally experiencing the highest prices and Kirkby the lowest. There remains significant demand for affordable housing, with over 2,600 households registered on the housing waiting list.

Demographic change is also an important consideration. An ageing population will increase demand for specialist accommodation, extra care housing and supported housing, while requirements for affordable housing, self-build opportunities and accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers must also be addressed.

Current evidence indicates a housing land supply of approximately 6,356 dwellings including a supply of specific deliverable sites capable of delivering 3,103 dwellings within the next 5 years, as of 31 March 2026, comprising:

- Existing planning permissions.
- Local Plan housing allocations.
- SHLAA sites.
- Small site allowances.

Key policies, plans and strategies

The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that a sufficient supply and range of homes is delivered to meet the needs of present and future generations. It requires plan-making authorities to positively plan for housing growth and to establish an appropriate strategy for meeting identified housing needs, supported by the identification of suitable locations and an adequate supply of land for housing. The Framework also seeks to ensure that housing provision responds to the needs of different groups within the community and supports the delivery of affordable and specialist housing; this includes a requirement to assess accommodation needs for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and identify appropriate sites through Local Plans where a need exists.

The Framework promotes the effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other development, including through the appropriate use of previously developed land, while seeking to achieve sustainable patterns of development. It also establishes the national approach to planning for and monitoring housing supply and delivery, with development plans expected to play an active role in directing housing growth towards sustainable locations and responding to local needs and opportunities.

The National Planning Practice Guidance supports the implementation of national planning policy by providing more detailed guidance on matters including the assessment of housing need, housing and economic land availability, housing supply and delivery, and the provision of different forms of housing. It also provides guidance relevant to affordable housing, self-build and custom housebuilding, build-to-rent and housing for specific groups, supporting local planning authorities in translating national housing policy into plan-making and decision-making. The NPPF confirms that Planning Practice Guidance has an important but supporting role in the implementation of national planning policy.

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Spatial Development Strategy is being prepared, and it is likely to establish a strategic framework for housing growth across the city region. Local authorities within the LCR are expected to identify sufficient deliverable and developable sites and/or broad locations for respective plan period timelines

The Knowsley Council Plan 2025-2030 aims to support Knowsley residents to thrive by delivering effective, high-quality services and support that positively impact the lives of Knowsley residents; encouraging growth that benefits everyone – ensuring communities and town centres can flourish; delivering targeted support to encourage fairness and opportunity for those residents facing the biggest challenges. The new Local Plan will aim to support the Knowsley Council Plan priorities through the establishment of housing targets and providing access to good quality housing, encouraging growth in the borough that also encourages fairness and opportunity.

Key issues to be addressed by the Local Plan

- Housing Requirement – The Local Plan will need to provide for an appropriate level of housing growth, taking account of national policy, local evidence of need and the emerging strategic planning framework for the Liverpool City Region.
- Housing Land Supply – A sufficient supply of deliverable and developable housing land will be required throughout the plan period to support the borough's housing requirement and maintain flexibility in housing delivery.
- Affordable Housing Provision – There is a need to ensure that new housing development contributes towards meeting identified affordable housing needs, including the provision of homes that are affordable to local households.
- Brownfield Development and Urban Regeneration – Opportunities to prioritise the development of brownfield and previously developed land should be maximised, while ensuring that sufficient land is available to meet future housing needs.
- Housing Choice and Mix – The borough's housing stock should provide a broad range of homes that meet the needs of different households, including an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.
- Specialist and Supported Housing – Future housing provision should respond to the needs of an ageing population and others requiring specialist accommodation, including accessible and adaptable homes, retirement housing, extra-care accommodation and supported housing.
- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation – The Local Plan should make appropriate provision for the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, informed by up-to-date evidence of need.
- Distribution of Housing Growth – The spatial distribution of housing development should reflect the borough's settlement pattern, infrastructure capacity, accessibility and place-making objectives, ensuring that growth is directed to the most sustainable locations.
- Efficient Use of Land – Housing development should make efficient use of land through density and design approaches that reflect the character, accessibility and constraints of different parts of the borough.
- Creating Sustainable Communities – New housing development should be integrated with supporting infrastructure, services, employment opportunities, green infrastructure and public transport to create sustainable and well-connected communities.