Topic Paper 9: Health and Wellbeing Summary

Introduction

Planning policies should aim to achieve healthy places and enable and support healthy lives.

Context

Knowsley faces many health challenges; health indicators show that the health and wellbeing of many residents is worse than the national average. Stubborn problems persist, the root causes being the high levels of deprivation, inequalities and poverty experienced by many residents. For this reason, the focus on health improvement has been on early intervention, the wider determinants of health, health inequalities and health equity.

Addressing health inequalities is essential for building a fairer and more resilient Knowsley for the future, that offers opportunities to everyone. Economic regeneration has been central to the Council's inclusive growth agenda in recent years, with a vision to establish Knowsley as a place where people choose to live, visit, invest and do business.

Key policies, plans and strategies

The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring a sufficient number and range of homes, a range of inclusive employment opportunities and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs. Strategic level policies should make provision for health infrastructure, such as community facilities and a consistent approach is taken to planning the delivery of major infrastructure. Planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible; and enable and support healthy lives.

The National Planning Practice Guidance on healthy and safe communities also promotes healthy and inclusive communities and support appropriate health infrastructure. The Guidance acknowledges the design and use of the built and natural environments are major determinants of health and wellbeing. Planning and health need to be considered together in two ways: in terms of creating environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles, and in terms of identifying and securing the facilities needed for the health and care system, considering the changing needs of the population.

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Spatial Development Strategy is being prepared, and it is likely to aspire for the City Region to be a place where deprivation and health inequalities in all communities are significantly reduced; with health and wellbeing being fundamental in deciding how the places we live, work and meet are shaped.

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. Two guiding principles for the Plan are understanding Knowsley's people and communities better and helping them find their own solutions; and inclusive growth to ensure everyone benefits, and no one is 'left behind'.

The Knowsley Healthier Weight Strategy 2025-2030 sets out a vision where residents and their future generations can live longer, healthier lives by achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. There is an emphasis on promoting healthier choices by influencing settings, services and places to ensure making a healthier choice is the simple option.

Knowsley's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2025) imparts Knowsley's ambition to enable more residents to be able to walk, wheel and cycle for everyday journeys, capitalising on the 44.4% of Knowsley's residents who have a commute of less than 10km. Notwithstanding this cycling only currently accounts for 1.7% of all journeys to work in the borough whilst and walking accounts for 7%.

Key issues to be addressed by the Local Plan

- Health and Place-Making – The design, location and quality of development can influence health and wellbeing outcomes. The Local Plan should promote the creation of healthy, attractive and sustainable places that support good quality of life for existing and future residents.
- Health Inequalities and Access to Services – There are significant variations in health outcomes across the borough. The spatial strategy should seek to improve access to employment, education, community facilities, healthcare, green spaces and other services that contribute to healthier communities.
- Active Travel and Physical Activity – Opportunities for walking, cycling and other forms of active travel should be enhanced through the location and design of development, helping to create connected neighbourhoods and support healthier lifestyles.
- Green Infrastructure and Health – Parks, open spaces, green infrastructure and recreational facilities play an important role in supporting physical and mental wellbeing. The Local Plan should protect, enhance and improve access to these assets.

- Healthy and Inclusive Communities – Development should create inclusive, safe and accessible environments that encourage social interaction, community cohesion and opportunities for recreation and physical activity.
- Health Infrastructure – Future growth should be supported by appropriate health, community and social infrastructure to ensure that the needs of existing and future populations can be met.
- Environmental Quality – New development should be appropriately located and designed to minimise exposure to air pollution, noise, overheating and other environmental factors that can affect health and quality of life.
- Climate Resilience and Health – The Local Plan should support development that is resilient to the impacts of climate change, including extreme heat, flooding and other environmental risks that may affect human health and wellbeing.
- Food Environment – The Local Plan should consider the location and concentration of certain uses, including hot food takeaways, where there is evidence that they could have adverse impacts on the health and wellbeing of local communities.
- Design Quality – High-quality design can support healthier lifestyles by creating safe, walkable, accessible and attractive places. The Local Plan and any associated design codes should embed health and wellbeing considerations within the design of new development and regeneration schemes.