

## **KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY**

### **KNOWSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

#### **HEARING STATEMENT 4B**

#### **Matter 4 EMPLOYMENT PROVISION**

*Issue 2: Whether the broad distribution of employment development across the borough is consistent with the spatial strategy.*

#### **Questions**

**4.4 The location/distribution of employment land provision appears to be driven primarily by the availability of land and does not match the distribution of housing across the borough. Given the poor transport links between townships, does the distribution of new employment land accord with the overall spatial strategy?**

4.4.1 Knowsley is strategically located within the Liverpool and Manchester corridor. The borough's excellent rail and motorway networks also place it within easy reach of Liverpool John Lennon Airport, Manchester Airport and the Port of Liverpool. This makes international business a viable and attractive option. In addition Knowsley's connectivity means the borough is well placed for both business and commuting within the City Region and further afield. The distribution of employment land has been guided by these opportunities and the aim of maximising sustainable economic growth. This includes incorporation of opportunities for additional provision of land and jobs in previously successful employment locations, whilst also seeking to address appropriate needs in emerging areas which align with KLPCS priorities.

4.4.2 Policy CS4 of the KLPCS identifies the primary employment locations of Knowsley Industrial Park (including Knowsley Business Park), Huyton Business Park, Kings Business Park, South Prescott and Kings Business Park, which are well established in providing differing roles and diverse opportunities to meet current and future demand for employment provision, with a proven record of successful developments. The Council therefore considers it reasonable to prioritise and maximise the sustainability and accessibility benefits associated with these employment areas, given they offer high quality existing business space and a range of development opportunities, are mostly well served by existing infrastructure and are accessibly located in close proximity to existing settlements.

4.4.3 The Council and its partners, including the Local Enterprise Partnership, have prepared evidence to identify priorities to enhance growth in target sectors within the economy. This encompasses qualitative considerations, beyond the baseline requirements established in quantitative forecasts. This is critical to the success of the strategy in ensuring that the appropriate size, type, quality and location of available sites will meet demand for clusters of knowledge-

driven and high technology industries, whilst remaining sustainable and with accessible opportunities to meet the needs of Knowsley residents. The relevant evidence and key conclusions of background documents are summarised within the Technical Report - Planning for Employment Growth (section 2, pages 6-19, (TR02)).

- 4.4.4 The Joint Employment Land and Premises Study (EB07) and the Liverpool City Region Housing and Economic Development Evidence Base Overview Study (LC03) identify a need for additional employment land to meet requirements for knowledge based industries, high quality offices and storage and distribution uses (including supporting the Liverpool SuperPort). This necessitates consideration of available opportunities in the most sustainable and accessible locations in Knowsley to ensure the Borough will be attractive to investors. The Council considers that new opportunities in close proximity to the M62 and M57 provide the most accessible and sustainable locations to complement the current employment provision in Huyton, Prescott, Whiston, Cronton and Halewood, whilst offering a broader distribution of employment supply in Knowsley to meet future quantitative and qualitative requirements. New opportunities to broaden available employment locations are necessarily considered as established concentrations in Knowsley Industrial and Business Parks are unlikely to be able to cater for all types of employment demand during the plan period and beyond. There are also limited opportunities for growth in and around Kings Business Park, Huyton Business Park and Whiston Enterprise Park, and potential loss of existing supply at South Prescott to alternative uses.
- 4.4.5 In the context of the above, there is an identified need for a successor site to Kings Business Park at Knowsley Lane as recommended by the Joint Employment Land and Premises Study (page 146, (EB07)), to complement the existing provision and supply, whilst accommodating continuing sectoral shifts towards office development. Land to the south of the M62 is also included as a Green Belt reserved location in the KLPCS (paragraph 5.50, page 56), to reflect its suitability to meet needs for knowledge based industries and / or storage and distribution uses. This reflects the potential loss of employment land supply in other parts of the Borough, such as in South Prescott, together with the need to provide sufficient flexibility of supply including a range, choice and quality of sites to ensure delivery of sustainable economic growth during the plan period and beyond. In this respect, the proposed distribution of employment provision is justified and consistent with the spatial strategy by placing necessary emphasis upon the sub-regional importance of employment and regeneration opportunities. This includes supporting Knowsley Industrial and Business Parks, with capacity for complementary growth to support regeneration on land to the east of these existing employment areas, whilst seeking to address broader employment needs and requirements in other areas of Knowsley.
- 4.4.6 With regard to the distribution of employment provision relative to housing, it is the Council's view that Knowsley is part of a densely populated sub region in which its employment sites are conveniently accessible from parts of the neighbouring authorities of Halton, Sefton, St. Helens, Liverpool and West

Lancashire as well as from other parts of Knowsley. This close relationship between neighbouring districts in the City Region was previously acknowledged by the Inspector into Halton's Core Strategy (LC22)<sup>1</sup>. Short distance commuting out of and into Knowsley is therefore to be expected given the proximity of Kirkby, Huyton, Prescott / Whiston and Halewood to urban areas in neighbouring districts, and would be no less sustainable than commuting within Knowsley. The existing daily commuting flow data in the KLPCS (page 13) demonstrates the interlinked nature of Knowsley's travel to work areas and housing markets with those of neighbouring authorities and between Knowsley's community areas. On this basis, it cannot be assumed that residents who live in Knowsley will only work in Knowsley, or that the distribution of employment land provision within Knowsley would be most appropriately located to match the distribution of new housing across the Borough. The KLPCS is informed by the presence of established employment areas in neighbouring districts and therefore seeks to bring forward economic development opportunities which fully address Knowsley's needs, but in locations which are accessible and complementary to those in the wider travel to work areas.

- 4.4.7 Ongoing engagement as summarised within the Duty to Cooperate Statement (SD14) has identified no requirement and / or appropriate opportunities for any neighbouring district to accommodate any of Knowsley's identified employment land needs. When compared to development opportunities within Knowsley, alternative locations nearby are considered to be unsuitable, as they are less accessible and sustainable options to address Knowsley's identified regeneration objectives and evidenced requirements in terms of size, location, type and suitability for different employment uses.
- 4.4.8 The Council agrees that there is potential to enhance transport links and connectivity between Knowsley's township areas and settlements. However, due to the connectivity of the road network, and presence of sustainable transport links and regular bus services during the day between Knowsley's township areas, the Council does not consider Knowsley's transport links to be universally poor. The existing transport links are also supplemented for example by the Council's recently adopted Community Transport Framework (PG46) which sets out the Council's policy position and objectives in relation to the introduction of additional Community Transport services. Community Transport is just one of a number of solutions available to the Council that offer an appropriate and effective mechanism through which any gaps between transport need and existing employment and service provision can be addressed.
- 4.4.9 In preparing the KLPCS, alternative approaches to employment land provision were considered and discounted, including a pro rata distribution consistent with the distribution of housing growth. This approach was assessed in the Technical Report - Planning for Employment Growth (TR02) as unachievable due to its failure to utilise the locational, accessibility and sustainability

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<sup>1</sup> See paras. 12 – 14 of 'Report to Halton Borough Council on the examination into Halton Core Strategy Local Plan' Robert Yuille PINS/D0650/429/4 (12th October 2012)

advantages associated with the sub-regionally important Knowsley Industrial and Business Parks. Discounted alternatives of this nature also would introduce the need to identify further sites in Huyton and new locations in Halewood, which due to constraints on land availability in these settlements would necessitate release of additional land within the Green Belt. This would be inappropriate in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (PG01), noting the evidence and conclusions regarding the suitable locations for potential Green Belt release within the Knowsley and Sefton Green Belt Study (EB08) and Technical Report: Green Belt (TR03).

4.4.10 In response to the issue of an absence of additional supply being proposed in Halewood specifically, the Council has concluded that the strategy in the KLPCS is the most appropriate in addressing Knowsley's needs. The approach is informed by the cumulative distribution of existing employment provision and supply in Halewood, including the sub regionally significant Jaguar Land Rover plant (including capacity for expansion as required). This is complemented by Halewood's proximity and transport links to existing employment areas in Knowsley and those proposed through the KLPCS, including land to the south of the M62 (included as a Green Belt reserved location in policy CS5). Further support is provided by the close proximity to and accessibility from Halewood of the South Liverpool International Gateway site in Liverpool and the strategic employment site at 3MG in Halton. This concentration of provision in the local area ensures a functional relationship for employment opportunities which justifies not addressing specific needs arising from housing growth in Halewood in isolation. In this regard, the evidence within Table 1 in the response to matter 3 issue 2 (Council Statement 3B) suggesting that the housing growth distributed to Halewood would not elevate its proportionate share of Knowsley's overall provision by 2028 is noted.