



# CABINET

## 23 September 2020

Report Title	<b>Local Plan</b>
Cabinet Portfolio	Economic Regeneration & Housing
Cabinet Member	Councillor Richard McCauley
Exempt Report?	No
Reason for Exemption	Open
Key Decision	Yes
Public Notice issued	General Exception issued
Wards Affected	All Wards
Report of	Lisa Harris Executive Director – Place <a href="mailto:lisaharris@sthelens.gov.uk">lisaharris@sthelens.gov.uk</a> 01744 676183
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<b>Borough priorities</b>  Please mark <b>X</b> for any priority supported by this report  <b>NB</b> Use Section 4 - Background Information to explain how each selected priority is supported	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	
	Promote good health, independence and care across our communities	x
	Create safe and strong communities for our residents	x
	Support a strong, diverse and well-connected local economy	x
	Create a green, thriving and vibrant place to be proud of	x
	Be a modern, efficient and effective Council	

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 At the meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020, Cabinet resolved to delay submission of the St Helens Local Plan Submission Draft (2019) to consider the land use planning implications of entering into a strategic partnership with English Cities Fund (ECF). Whilst ECF have ambitious plans, there is not enough evidence at this point that submission of the Local Plan be delayed.
- 1.2 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is required to set out the development plan documents that the Council intends to produce and a timescale for their preparation. If Cabinet resolves to submit the Local Plan, it is recommended that the LDS be updated and brought into effect to reflect the timescale.

## 2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) Submit the St Helens Borough Local Plan Submission Draft (2019) as per the resolution of Council at the meeting held on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018; and
- ii) Bring the Local Development Scheme July 2020 (at appendix two) into immediate effect.

## 3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 To consider the outcome of discussions with the ECF within the context of the Local Plan, as per the resolution of Cabinet at the meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- 3.2 To set out changes to the local development scheme to reflect the submission timescale for the St Helens Local Plan Submission Draft (2019).

## 4. Background/Reasons for the recommendations

### Actions to Date

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states that the planning system should be plan led. The local plan is a positive vision of the future that addresses housing need and other

economic, social and environmental priorities. It sets out future development needs and aspirations and how we will protect and enhance important assets such as parks and open spaces.

4.2 At the meeting held on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018, the Council resolved:

- That the 'submission draft' version of the St Helens Borough Local Plan: 2020-2035 be approved;
- That the Plan be published with its supporting documents in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended);
- That the Plan and all relevant supporting documents be submitted, after the end of the publication period, to the Government in accordance with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended);
- That the Strategic Director, Place Services be authorised to make any necessary minor editorial changes to the Plan and supporting documents before they are published and/or submitted in accordance with recommendations above, with any substantive changes to the Plan to be agreed in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Balanced Development, Housing and Economic Opportunity; and
- That the St Helens Local Development Scheme 2018 be brought into effect from 1 January 2019.

4.3 The Council published the plan and supporting documents in January 2019. Officers have been analysing the responses as well as preparing background documents to support the submission of the plan.

4.4 At the meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020, Cabinet resolved to delay submission of the Local Plan in order to determine the land use planning implications of entering into a strategic partnership with ECF. Following this, officers were asked to report to Cabinet with recommendations as to how to go forward.

4.5 Unfortunately, the coronavirus crisis delayed a report coming back to Cabinet in the summer, but this report now sets out the outcome of the discussion and recommends how to proceed.

#### Discussions with ECF

4.6 Following the Cabinet resolution, officers facilitated a discussion with ECF. ECF is in the process of developing plans for St Helens town centre, they are confident that a mix of uses will be brought forward over the local plan period. In terms of housing development, recognising we are still in the very early stages of the partnership, it is anticipated that in the region of 400 dwellings could be delivered in the town centre. The majority of these would be built from 2030 onwards, with almost 50% of the units being in 2034 and 2035.

4.7 In addition, whilst ECF have ambitions to develop across the Borough, they were explicit that it is too early to come forward with any other meaningful plans at this stage.

4.8 The housing requirement for St Helens is 486 net additional dwellings per year. The number of units proposed in St Helens Town Centre, at 400, is relatively small and less than a years' worth of housing against the plan requirements. Over the plan period, it is anticipated that Town centre development would contribute an average of approximately 25 units per year. The Local Plan identifies a windfall allowance of 93 dwellings per year, therefore the development of St Helens Town Centre has in general terms already been accommodated and in fact will help to ensure that the windfall allowance is delivered.

- 4.9 ECF has not provided any evidence as to the deliverability of the scheme, simply because they are in the early stages of the project. There has not been time to work up the required level of detail to inform the plan that a scheme is both viable and deliverable. This would be looked at very closely by an Inspector at examination particularly if a site currently located in the Green Belt were dropped in favour of allocating land in the town centre. The Council would also face significant challenge by a dropped Green Belt site promoter.
- 4.10 As stated, approximately half of the residential units are anticipated to be delivered in the final phase, during the last two years of the plan period. Even a small amount of slippage in delivery rates would push delivery of the site beyond the plan period.
- 4.11 If the Council were to review the plan considering the above, it would need to be informed by all evidence. This would inevitably cause further delay. The risks associated with this delay could include; the potential for developers to submit planning applications and challenge our five year housing land supply; the plan strategy being undermined as the evidence becomes outdated; the potential for Government intervention, or fundamental change of national planning policy.
- 4.12 On the basis of the risks highlighted in the paragraph above, it is recommended that the Council submit the plan in its current form. It is, of course, appropriate to reference the partnership in the document, this could be achieved through modifications and agreed via delegated authority granted to the Executive Director Place and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Housing as per the decision by Council on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018. The suggested, draft modifications to the relevant policies and reasoned justification is attached at appendix three. Changes are also recommended to reference the Town Deal and coronavirus pandemic.

#### Local Development Scheme

- 4.13 Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) (as amended) requires local planning authorities to prepare and maintain a document known as a Local Development Scheme (LDS). Amongst other matters, an LDS must specify the development plan documents to be produced and the timetable for their preparation. Legislation requires the Council to make information available showing the state of the authority's compliance (or non-compliance) with the timetable in the LDS.
- 4.14 The most up-to-date LDS must be provided when the Local Plan is submitted for examination, and the appointed Inspector will consider whether the Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with the timetable set out within it. The current LDS (December 2018) anticipated submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State in July 2019, so is now out of date. Therefore, an updated LDS has been prepared to supersede the current 2018 version, and in summary, it anticipates submission of the new Local Plan in October 2020, followed by Examination and then adoption by the end of 2021.
- 4.15 Should Members agree to submit the Plan, it is also recommended that the updated LDS (Appendix Two) be agreed to reflect this, to ensure that the submission date of the Plan aligns with the latest agreed LDS.

## **5. Community Impact Assessment**

- 5.1 A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) was prepared when the Local Plan was considered at the Cabinet/Council meetings in December 2018. The CIA has been updated within the context of the most up to date template for this report.
- 5.2 The CIA identifies that the the Local Plan contains a comprehensive range of policies which aim to improve quality of life in St Helens. For example, policy LPA11 states that the Council will work with its health and wellbeing partners to promote public health principles, maximise opportunities for people to lead healthy and active lifestyles, and reduce health inequalities for residents within the Borough. The Council will use its planning powers to:
- Encourage improved access to a choice of homes and jobs that meet the needs of the area;
  - Ensure the provision of easy-to-maintain, safe and attractive public areas and green spaces to serve new development which minimise the opportunity for and fear of crime and which promote social cohesion and mental wellbeing;
  - Encourage people to be physically active by providing opportunities for walking, cycling, outdoor recreation and sport, including, where appropriate, the provision of opportunities for physical activity within the design of new development;
  - guide the location of food and drink uses such as hot food takeaways,
  - drinking establishments, restaurants, cafes and other uses which may have negative health impacts having regard to their impact on other land uses in the local area;
  - maximise the levels of accessibility between homes, educational establishments, jobs, public transport services, health and other services, recreational opportunities and community, cultural and leisure facilities;
  - Encourage measures to achieve affordable warmth;
  - Promote active design principles as established by Sport England; and
  - Manage air quality and pollution.

## **6. Consideration of Alternatives**

- 6.1 There is a legal requirement for an up to date local plan to be in place. In developing the St Helens Borough Local Plan Submission Draft, officers have refined a range of options set out in the St Helens Local Plan Preferred Options 2016. This process has taken account of up-to-date evidence, the outcomes of the consultation on the Preferred Options and the requirements of national planning policy .A sustainability appraisal has been undertaken which has robustly assessed the emerging Plan (including alternative policy approaches and sites) against a range of economic, social and environmental objectives. Having regard to all these factors, a number of adjustments have been made to the Plan. These are summarised in section 2 of the report to Cabinet/Council considered at the meetings in December 2018. The report is attached at appendix one.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 Cabinet resolved to delay submission of the Local Plan in order to consider the land use implications of entering into a strategic partnership with ECF. Whilst ECF has ambitious plans for St Helens Borough, there is not enough evidence that submission of the Local Plan should be delayed to take account of the proposals at this time. In order to progress and minimize risk, it is recommended that the Local Plan Submission Draft be submitted and that an updated LDS be brought into effect to reflect the change in timescale.

## 8. Implications

- 8.1 Legal Implications - It is a legal requirement to have an up to date Local Plan in place and to keep it under review. The plan must meet 'soundness' tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, including the need to accommodate objectively assessed need for development. The Government has the right to intervene where there is not an up to date Local Plan and there is a lack of progress to put one in place. The Plan must also satisfy other legal requirements such as the 'duty to cooperate' with neighbouring authorities and other public bodies.
- 8.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications
- 8.2.1 Social Value – The Local Plan will provide opportunities for new employment and housing for all areas of the community. Protection, enhancement and provision of green spaces is a key priority and goes to the heart of the physical and mental health and well-being of residents.
- 8.2.2 Sustainability and Environment - The Local Plan will determine the future need and pattern of development for St Helens Borough. This will include identifying land for housing and employment. It will also help to deliver much needed affordable and specialist housing. The Local Plan will ensure that important assets such as parks and open spaces, biodiversity and the historic environment are protected and enhanced. It will also assist in the delivery of the new plans for the town centres and encouraging green growth in the Borough.
- 8.2.3 Health and Wellbeing – The nature of the physical environment is known to have an impact on the health and well being of residents. Adoption of the Local Plan will drive a sustained and effective programme of regeneration across St Helens Borough. There is therefore significant potential to contribute to the health and well-being outcomes. Policy LPA11 'Health and Wellbeing' sets out criteria to ensure that new development protects or enhances health and wellbeing. For example, this includes the provision of safe and attractive green spaces; designing out crime; providing opportunities for physical activity within new development; and controlling the location of hot food takeaways.
- 8.2.4 Equality and Human Rights - The CIA identifies that the Plan would bring a range of benefits to the community, for example by balancing the needs for new development with the need to preserve and enhance the environment. No adverse impacts on specific population groups, identified by reference to the protected characteristics set by the Equalities Act 2010 (for example race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion) have been identified. The Plan will also have specific benefits for some groups. For example, by allocating sites for use by gypsies and travellers the Plan will help to meet their specific needs. In addition, the policies concerning housing mix will ensure that some housing is designed or can be readily adapted to meet the needs of the less mobile and older age groups.
- 8.3 Customer and Residents – The plan will provide certainty as to how St Helens Borough will develop over the next 25 years. The plan will assist in the Council's aims for economic growth by making land available for new development to provide a wider range of job opportunities and housing, including affordable housing and a wider housing mix.
- 8.4 Asset and Property – The Council has an ownership interest in all or part of 4 of the sites proposed for housing allocation in the 'submission draft' version of the Plan. The Plan will also, through its role as part of the statutory 'development plan', guide the future development and use of all Council-owned buildings and sites in the Borough.

- 8.5 Staffing and Human Resource - Appropriate human resources are required to take the local plan forward and to participate in the Examination in Public Hearings
- 8.6 Risks – The risks associated with the decision are as follows:
- 8.6.1 *Risk of Government intervention* - The Government requires that local plans must be reviewed as quickly as possible and that it will use statutory powers to intervene where Councils fail to make sufficient progress in this regard. This means that the Government could take over the process of preparing the Plan if it is not progressed sufficiently quickly. The Council would lose control of the process in such circumstances. It is important to progress the plan expediently to minimise any risk of intervention.
- 8.6.2 *The need to provide certainty for local communities* - Significant elements of the adopted development plan in St Helens are over 5 years old and/or are out of date. Progressing the local plan within an appropriate timescale is necessary to provide clarity to local communities and developers about where new homes and employment buildings should be located. This is so that development is planned rather than the result of speculative planning applications.
- 8.6.3 *Reputational risk and volume of responses to public consultation* – Consultation for the preferred options and submission versions of the plan has given rise to a considerable public response. The issue of Green Belt release, in particular, continues to be controversial. It is important that there is effective communication with the public and other stakeholders. This should ensure that people understand how they may engage with the remainder of the process leading up to adoption of the plan.
- 8.6.4 *Changes to planning legislation and policy* - The national planning policy situation (for example in relation to the method by which housing needs are calculated) remains changeable. It will be necessary to address any changes to national policy or legislation as the Plan moves through its remaining stages.
- 8.6.5 *Changes to evidence base* - Any further changes which take place to the evidence that underpins the Plan (for example in relation to housing or employment needs or land supply) will need to be taken into account as the Plan progresses. If the plan does not move forward, the evidence base will also become out of date and will need to be reviewed and updated. This may cause even further delay.
- 8.6.6 *Infrastructure*: The level of development proposed would generate extra demands on existing infrastructure (e.g. transport, schools, health services, utilities, green infrastructure and recreational facilities). There are also likely to be circumstances in which new infrastructure is required. Whilst substantial work has been undertaken to ensure that the delivery of the Plan proposals would be supported by suitable infrastructure, there will be a need for on-going engagement with infrastructure providers as the Plan is implemented to monitor progress in relation to this issue
- 8.7 Finance - The forthcoming stages of the Local Plan, particularly the examination in public, will require appropriate funding. Delegated Executive Decision 0034 2019/20 approved the necessary budgetary provision.
- 8.8 Policy Framework – Once adopted, the Local Plan will be the development plan for St Helens and will be a key element of the Council's policy framework. The Plan will replace some elements of the current 'development plan', namely the St Helens Core Strategy 2012 and the 'saved' policies of the St Helens Unitary Development Plan 1998.

## **9. Background Papers**

9.1 The following documents are relevant:

- St Helens Borough Local Plan 2020-2035 Submission Draft (2019)
- St Helens Borough Local Plan Policies Map (2019)
- St Helens Borough Local Plan 2020-2035 Submission Draft Sustainability Appraisal (2019)
- St Helens Borough Local Plan 2020-2035 Preferred Options Report of Consultation (2018)
- St Helens Borough Local Plan 2020-2035 Submission Draft Habitats Regulations Assessment (2018)
- St Helens Borough Local Plan 2020-2035 Green Belt Review (2018)

## **10. Appendices**

10.1	Appendix One	Report to Cabinet 12 <sup>th</sup> December/Council 19 <sup>th</sup> December 2018
	Appendix Two	Proposed Development Scheme
	Appendix Three	Suggested modifications

# **Appendix 1**

St. Helens Cabinet Report 23.09.2020

<u>KEY DECISION</u> Yes
<u>DATE FIRST PUBLISHED</u> 13 November 2018

**ST HELENS LOCAL PLAN**

WARDS AFFECTED

All

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

NO

1. PROPOSED DECISION

1.1 It is recommended that Cabinet make the following recommendations to Council:

- (1) approve the 'submission draft' version of the St Helens Borough Local Plan: 2020-2035 (the 'Plan' - see appendices 1 to 3 of this report);
- (2) agree that the Plan be published with its supporting documents (referred to in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12 of this report) in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended);
- (3) agree that the Plan and all relevant supporting documents be submitted, after the end of the publication period, to the Government in accordance with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended);
- (4) authorise the Strategic Director (Place Services) to make any necessary minor editorial changes to the Plan and supporting documents before they are published and/or submitted in accordance with recommendations (2) and (3) above, with any substantive changes to the Plan to be agreed in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Balanced Development, Housing and Economic Opportunity; and
- (5) resolve to bring the St Helens Local Development Scheme 2018 (see paragraphs 3.11 and 3.12 of this report) into effect from 1 January 2019.

2. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

Context

- 2.1 National planning policy stresses the role of Local Plans in delivering a vision for the sustainable development and growth of local areas. Local Plans, due to their role as the statutory 'development plan' also play a crucial role in the determination of planning applications and in shaping the wider corporate priorities of the Council.
- 2.2 The existing 'development plan' for the Borough of St Helens consists of:
- the 'saved' policies of the St Helens Unitary Development Plan ('UDP') (1998);
  - the St Helens Core Strategy (2012);
  - the Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan (2017); and
  - the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan (2013).
- 2.3 The Council's Cabinet resolved (at its meeting on 18 November 2015) to start the process of preparing a new Local Plan which would entirely replace the 'saved' UDP policies and the Core Strategy. The rationale for this decision included that these documents no longer fully reflected the changing requirements of national policy or the up-to-date evidence of needs for housing or employment development, for example the needs of the growing logistics sector.

The process of preparing the new St Helens Borough Local Plan

- 2.4 The steps which must be undertaken when preparing a new Local Plan are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 2.5 The Council carried out an initial consultation on the scope of the emerging new Local Plan in early 2016. It then, between November 2016 and January 2017, consulted on the St Helens Local Plan Preferred Options document (see paragraphs 2.14 to 2.22 below for further details).
- 2.6 The anticipated next steps (subject to the necessary approvals being obtained for this report and with indicative future timescales) are set out below:
1. publication of the Plan and all relevant supporting documents (Regulation 19) (January 2019);
  2. period of 8 weeks within which individuals and organisations may submit any representations on the Plan and its supporting documents (January 2019 until early March 2019) (*NB whilst the minimum statutory length of this period is 6 weeks it is recommended that an extended period of 8 weeks is given to ensure all parties have a good opportunity to input into the process*);
  3. submission of the Plan and its supporting documents to the Secretary of State (Regulation 22) (summer 2019);

4. independent examination by a Government Inspector (this is expected to start in summer 2019 when the Plan is submitted under step 3 and is likely to include extensive public hearings);
  5. publication of the Inspectors Report (2020); and
  6. adoption of the Plan by the Council (2020).
- 2.7 The steps and timescales set out above are on the basis that the process will run as currently expected. The detail of the steps to be undertaken may also vary. For example, if modifications are proposed to the Plan after it has been published, such modifications would themselves need to be subject to public consultation. This would normally occur during the examination process i.e. during step 4 above.

#### National legal and policy requirements

- 2.8 The new Local Plan must, before being adopted by the Council, be found to be legally compliant and 'sound' by the Government Inspector following its independent examination.
- 2.9 The Inspector will assess the Plan against the 'soundness' tests and related requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF was first introduced in 2012 and substantially revised in July 2018. It requires the Plan to be:
- positively prepared (with regard to evidenced development needs);
  - justified;
  - effective; and
  - consistent with national policy.
- 2.10 National policy (for example in the Housing White Paper 2017) also urges that local plans are prepared promptly. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 require the Council to review its adopted local plans no more than 5 years following their adoption.

#### The 'duty to cooperate' with other public bodies

- 2.11 Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Council to co-operate with other public bodies in relation to strategic matters addressed in the Local Plan, such as housing, employment and infrastructure needs. 'Other public bodies' in this context include: the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority; neighbouring local authorities; and various other statutory bodies. Council officers have undertaken extensive work in relation to this duty building upon existing well-established joint working arrangements. This work has included for example the commissioning of joint evidence concerning housing and employment needs and land supply across the Liverpool City Region (see paragraphs 2.30 to 2.39 of this report).

- 2.12 The revisions to the NPPF introduced in July 2018, indicate that the Council should publish at least one Statement of Common Ground (SOCG), agreed with relevant neighbouring authorities and/or other public bodies before publishing its Local Plan. The role of SOCGs is to document evidence of cross-boundary matters being addressed in the Plan and current progress in considering these. Officers are currently working to finalise an SOCG between St Helens and Warrington, reflecting for example the strong housing market inter-action between the two authorities and site specific matters (e.g. Parkside and Omega extension). An SOCG is also being prepared for the Liverpool City Region (including West Lancashire).
- 2.13 Whilst these SOCG documents have yet to be finalised and formally approved by the relevant neighbouring authorities and other bodies, it is considered reasonable (given the strong evidence of joint working that can be demonstrated and that the specific requirements concerning SOCGs are still fairly new) to maintain progress on the Plan pending their finalisation.

#### Consultation on the Preferred Options (November 2016/January 2017)

- 2.14 The St Helens Local Plan Preferred Options document 2016 set out a draft strategy including a vision, 7 strategic aims (supported by 14 strategic objectives) and 40 draft policies. Its approach included (amongst other things):
- delivery of 10,830 dwellings from 1 April 2014 until 31 March 2033 at an average of 570 dwelling completions per year;
  - delivery of 306.9 hectares of employment land up to 2038;
  - support for the regeneration of St Helens and Earlestown town centres and other smaller centres in the Borough; and
  - a wide range of other policies covering (for example): the spatial strategy; transport; infrastructure funding; green infrastructure; housing mix (including affordable housing); biodiversity; and various other matters.
- 2.15 The Preferred Options document aimed to continue the Council's longstanding commitment to securing regeneration of sites (including 'brownfield' sites) in existing urban areas. However, to fully meet housing and employment development needs it also proposed to remove 25 sites from the Green Belt to meet development needs before 2033 (16 of which were for housing; 9 for employment) and a further 26 sites to be removed from the Green Belt but 'safeguarded' to meet potential longer term needs (mostly for housing) after 2033.
- 2.16 Notwithstanding these proposals, most of the Borough's land area (about 56%) was proposed to remain as Green Belt. About 65% of the Borough currently has this designation (the highest proportion of any district on Merseyside).
- 2.17 An extensive consultation exercise took place on the Preferred Options document (together with supporting evidence documents) over 8 weeks between 5 December 2016 and 30 January 2017. A total of 5,695 responses were received, of which:

- 5,565 responses were predominantly from the general public; and.
  - 130 responses were received from: statutory bodies; neighbouring authorities; parish councils; landowners and planning agents/site promoters; and from issue-specific stakeholder groups.
- 2.18 In considering the consultation responses it is important to stress that the Council must consider the issues raised in the context of relevant evidence and the legal and national policy tests referred to earlier.
- 2.19 The responses to the Preferred Options consultation raised a large variety of points. The St Helens Local Plan Preferred Options: Report of Consultation (attached as appendix 4 to this report) sets out:
- which bodies and persons were invited to make representations;
  - how those bodies and persons were invited to make such representations;
  - a summary of the main issues raised by those representations; and
  - how those main issues have been addressed in the Plan.
- 2.20 The Report of Consultation addresses the points raised by respondents according to which part of the Preferred Options document they refer to. The points raised fall under the following broad categories:
- broad strategic issues including: the general principle of releasing Green Belt to meet development needs; housing; the economy and employment; physical infrastructure; social infrastructure; the built and natural environment; and social and health issues;
  - Area specific issues relating to: Rainford and Crank; Newton-le-Willows; Eccleston; Billinge and Seneley Green (including Garswood); Haydock; Rainhill; Windle; Bold (including Sutton Manor and Clock Face); Moss Bank; Thatto Heath; West Park; Blackbrook; Sutton; Parr; St. Helens Town Centre; and Earlestown;
  - Issues concerning individual Plan policies; and
  - the quality of the Local Plan consultation process.
- 2.21 Members are advised to view the Report of Consultation for details of the consultation responses. Of the 5,565 responses from the general public, 4,910 respondents gave an address in St Helens Borough. A substantial proportion of the responses related to the issue of Green Belt release. The number of respondents from each part of the Borough (according to the addresses given on the responses, which do not necessarily correspond with ward boundaries) is set out in Appendix 5 to this report.
- 2.22 To complete the 'submission draft' version of the Plan (see paragraphs 2.23 to 2.78 below), officers have carefully weighed the issues raised in response to the consultation (summarised in the Report of Consultation) alongside updated evidence and the changing requirements of Government policy, including the new NPPF published in July 2018.

### The 'submission draft' version of the Plan

- 2.23 Approval is now sought for the 'submission draft' version of the Local Plan to be published under the Regulations. The Plan (see appendices 1 to 3 of this report) comprises a written statement and Policies Map (showing proposed site allocations for development and other land use designations). A wide range of supporting documents have also been produced which provide evidence (see section 3 of this report). The following paragraphs summarise key elements of the Plan and how these respond to key issues, including those raised in the Preferred Options consultation.

### Plan period

- 2.24 The revised NPPF (July 2018) requires the Plan to look ahead for at least 15 years from its adoption. For this reason, and as the Plan is now expected to be adopted in 2020, the Plan period extends to 2035 (and not 2033 as previously proposed).

### Vision and objectives

- 2.25 Chapters 1 and 2 set out the role and structure of the Local Plan and key issues, opportunities and challenges facing the Borough. Chapter 3 sets out a vision which describes the type of place that St Helens and its settlements should be at the end of the Plan period (in 2035). Compared to the version consulted upon at Preferred Options stage the vision has been revised to stress the need for a balanced and inclusive approach to regeneration and growth. It also places further emphasis on protecting and enhancing the built heritage and environment of the Borough.

- 2.26 Chapter 3 also sets out 7 strategic aims and 17 objectives. The aims are as follows:

- Supporting Regeneration and Balanced Growth
- Ensuring Quality Development
- Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Meeting Housing Needs
- Ensuring a Strong and Sustainable Economy
- Safeguarding and Enhancing Quality of Life
- Meeting Resource and Infrastructure Needs.

### Spatial strategy and core development principles

- 2.27 Policy LPA01 of the draft Plan (in line with advice in the NPPF) sets out how the Council will work proactively to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the Borough.

- 2.28 Policy LPA02 sets out the spatial strategy. This includes (in summary):

- New development to be delivered in sufficient quantities to meet needs and to be distributed in a range of locations across the Borough (appropriate to

its scale and nature) and which will provide good levels of accessibility between homes, jobs and key services via sustainable modes of transport;

- Urban regeneration and the re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land in Key Settlements will remain priorities;
- The proportion of housing and employment development needs up to 2035 which cannot be met by developing land in urban areas is to be met by removing selected sites from the Green Belt;
- To comply with national Green Belt policy when the Green Belt is being reviewed, some other sites are to be removed from the Green Belt and 'safeguarded' to meet potential development needs after 2035; and
- Various other provisions linking to other aspects of the Plan.

2.29 Policy LPA03 'Core Principles' requires new development to (in summary): meet the challenges of population growth; improve economic wellbeing; contribute to inclusive communities; contribute to a high quality environment; minimise the need to travel and maximise use of sustainable transport; and minimise St Helens carbon footprint.

#### Employment development needs and land supply

2.30 Policy LPA04 'A strong and sustainable economy' identifies that at least 215.4 hectares of land should be developed for employment uses in St Helens between 2018 and 2035. This is based on evidence including the St Helens Employment Land Needs Assessment update 2018 and development completions data. The proposed approach will also help meet employment land needs across the City Region and West Lancashire as a whole, as identified in the draft Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Assessment (SHELMA) 2017.

2.31 The Plan will address an identified shortage of large sites, suitable for the needs of the growing logistics sector and the clear evidence of market demand in the Borough e.g. related to the opportunity at Parkside and recent planning permissions at Florida Farm North and Penny Lane (Haydock). It also takes into account the need for flexibility and choice in site supply and the strategic location of St Helens in relation to the motorway and rail networks.

2.32 To meet the needs identified above the draft Plan (Policy LPA04) proposes to allocate 11 sites for employment development before 2035. These are listed below:

- Site 1EA - Omega South Western Extension;
- Sites 2EA, 5EA and 6EA - 3 sites to the west of Haydock Industrial estate (the largest of which is Florida Farm North);
- Sites 3EA and 4EA - 2 sites to the north and south of Penny Lane (east of Haydock Industrial Estate);
- Sites 7EA and 8EA - 2 sites at Parkside (East and West of the M6);
- Site 9EA - Sandwash Close (Rainford);
- Site 10EA - Land at Lea Green Farm West, Thatto Heath; and
- Site 11EA - Gerards Park (College Street, St Helens).

- 2.33 The largest of the proposed site allocations for employment development are at Parkside West and Parkside East. These sites are capable of providing transformational employment opportunities that will make a major contribution to the economic development of St. Helens, the Liverpool City Region and beyond. Parkside West is identified as being suitable for 'general industrial' or 'warehousing and distribution' uses. Parkside East would be subject to its own policy (LPA10). This establishes firstly that the site is suitable for use as a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange or for other rail enabled employment uses. It also indicates that (to ensure a suitably flexible approach to the delivery of the site) part of it could be developed for non-rail enabled employment uses, provided that at least 60 hectares of the site is reserved for the provision of infrastructure to link to the rail system. This approach is justified by the unique combination of locational advantages of this site, including its ready accessibility to both the West Coast and east-west ('Chat Moss') rail lines and to the motorway system.
- 2.34 Of the sites allocated for employment (see paragraph 2.32), all but the last 3 would be released from current designation as Green Belt. This is justified because of the limited land supply (particularly for large employment sites with good access to transport routes) which exists in urban areas in St Helens and in nearby districts and the opportunity provided at Parkside.
- 2.35 The land at Omega South Western Extension (site 1EA) has been identified, following discussions with Warrington Council officers carried out under the 'duty to cooperate', as being allocated to help meet the employment land needs of Warrington (rather than St Helens). This is due to its location immediately next to, and with its access to be provided through, the existing Omega employment area in Warrington.
- 2.36 A key change compared to the previous Preferred Options consultation proposals relates to land north east of junction 23 of the M6. Whereas the Preferred Options document proposed that this site be allocated for employment development before 2033, it is now proposed that it be removed from the Green Belt but safeguarded to meet potential employment needs after 2035. This change of approach will have the benefit of avoiding narrowing down the options for the development of a scheme to improve junction 23 of the M6. The significant improvement of this junction is identified as a key infrastructure priority within the Plan, which would bring substantial benefits to the Borough and the wider transport network.
- 2.37 The need for this new approach is also evidenced by the St Helens Council Transport Impact Assessment 2018. This confirms that junction 23 currently experiences queues and delays during peak periods and that this situation is likely to substantially worsen as the Plan period progresses without effective mitigation being undertaken. It is also not considered essential for the land north east of junction 23 to be developed before 2035 to meet evidenced needs for employment development within that period.
- 2.38 Several of the sites are (due to their size) designated as 'Strategic Employment Sites' by Policy LPA04.1, the development of which will need to meet specified requirements and be informed by a single master plan for each site. The

development of all the sites would also be subject to consideration of infrastructure impacts at the time of any planning application.

2.39 Policy LPA04 sets out other measures to promote employment including (in summary):

- protecting existing sites and premises from proposals for other uses except where (for example) they are no longer suitable for employment uses;
- supporting the re-use and reconfiguration of employment areas and the recycling of land within them for employment use;
- supporting diversification of the rural economy; and
- supporting (subject to specified criteria) the enhancement and expansion of tourism resources and facilities; and encouraging use of local suppliers and training opportunities.

#### The Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for new housing

2.40 A central aim of national planning policy is to boost significantly the supply of housing. Local Plans must:

- identify the scale and mix of housing which is likely to be needed over the Plan period;
- identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites to meet needs, taking account of their availability, suitability and likely economic viability for development; and
- ensure that a 5 year 'deliverable' supply (taking account of factors such as viability, landowner intentions and potential slippage whilst necessary infrastructure is provided) can be provided at all times.

2.41 The revised NPPF (July 2018) requires the Plan to be informed by a nationally set standard method for calculating the Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN) for housing. The figure obtained using the method is to be treated as a minimum unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. The method uses (as its starting point) the projected average household growth (as set out in projections published every 2 years by the Office of National Statistics), to which it applies an 'uplift' to account for affordability issues to derive an annual housing need figure for the local authority. This can then be extended to cover the period covered by the Plan

2.42 The 2016 based sub-national household projections published in September 2018 showed a rate of household growth across the country (including in St Helens) which was substantially lower than the rate shown in the previous (2014 based) projections. In response, the Government has issued a consultation document confirming that the 2014 based (and not the 2016 based) projections should be used for the purposes of applying the standard method. Applying the standard method in this way would result in a minimum annual housing need figure for St Helens of 468 new dwellings per annum.

- 2.43 However, a key disadvantage of relying on the figure of 468 new dwellings per annum for the Local Plan is that it makes no allowance for increased housing need that is likely to result from accelerated employment growth associated with the development of employment sites allocated in the Plan. In addition the figure does not make any allowance for the risk that affordability data to be published in spring 2019 would, if it continues the long term trend, see a decline in affordability and therefore an increase in the amount of housing required under the standard method.
- 2.44 For these reasons, the figure of 468 new dwellings per annum is considered to under-estimate housing need.
- 2.45 The St Helens Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update 2018 assessed different scenarios to identify the realistic level of housing which is likely to be required, taking account of the impact that development of the employment sites proposed to be allocated within the Plan would have on the housing market. Having regard to this evidence, Policy LPA05 'Meeting St Helens Housing Needs' identifies a minimum average housing need figure of 486 net dwelling completions per year (between 2016 and 2035). This equates to a total of 9,234 dwellings within this period.
- 2.46 The figure of 486 dwellings per annum is substantially less than the figure of 570 dwellings per annum in the Preferred Options consultation document. This reduction is justified by the change of circumstances which has occurred since 2016, including the introduction of the national standard method, the new NPPF and related planning guidance, and the SHMA Update 2018. Whilst (for reasons stated above) it is not appropriate to rely on the standard method output of 468 dwellings per annum, there is now no robust evidential basis to continue with a figure as high as 570 dwellings per annum.

#### Housing land supply

- 2.47 In identifying sites, substantial priority has been given to sites within the existing urban areas. However, there remains insufficient capacity within the existing urban areas to meet needs, particularly when the challenging viability of developing some urban sites is taken into account due to factors such as ground conditions. In accordance with the NPPF, the supply also allows for the fact that slippage in delivery of development is likely to occur on some sites. For these reasons several sites – albeit a reduced number compared to those proposed at Preferred Options stage - are proposed to be removed from the Green Belt to meet housing needs.
- 2.48 The sites to be removed from the Green Belt would, it is estimated, be capable of providing 2,056 dwelling completions before 2035. This would represent 22% of the total of 9,234 dwellings needed between 2016 and 2035 (see paragraph 2.46 above). The remainder of the needs during this period would be met from various sources within the existing urban areas (such as completions from 1 April 2016 until 31 March 2018, extant planning permissions as at 1 April 2018 and other sites identified in the St Helens Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment).

- 2.49 The largest site proposed for removal from the Green Belt to accommodate new housing is at Bold urban extension. This site represents a major growth opportunity, able to accommodate over 2,900 dwellings (with most of these being delivered after 2035). It has the potential to become an attractive new suburb complementing the 'town in the forest' principles of the Bold Forest Park Action Plan. Due to the size of the site and number of different land owners involved it is proposed that the Council should lead the preparation of a formal master plan, to be ultimately adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, to guide its development.
- 2.50 The full list of sites to be allocated for housing development before 2035 is set out below with estimated capacities. In addition to the sites listed, smaller urban sites will continue to form an important part of the supply. It should also be noted that (since the Preferred Options stage) the assumed density of development on some sites has been increased, to provide for a more efficient use of land in line with the revised NPPF (July 2018).

<b>Site name</b>	<b>Potential dwelling completions – before 31.3.2035</b>	<b>Potential dwelling completions – after 31.3.2035</b>
<b><u>Site allocations from within the current urban area</u></b>		
Former Penlake Industrial Estate	337	-
Land north of Elton Head Road, Sutton Heath	350	-
Moss Nook Urban Village, Watery Lane, Moss Nook	800	-
Land east of City Road, Cowley Hill	540	276
<b><u>Site allocations on land removed from the Green Belt</u></b>		
Land South of Billinge Road, Garswood	216	-
Bold Forest Garden Suburb	480	2,508
Land South of Gartons Lane, Bold	520	49
Land at Florida Farm (south of A580), Slag Lane, Blackbrook	400	122
Former Red Bank Community Home, Winwick Road, Newton-le-Willows	181	-
Land South of Higher Lane and east of Rookery Lane, Rainford	259	-

Sites proposed to be removed from the Green Belt and 'safeguarded' to meet development needs after 2035

- 2.51 The NPPF requires that, when local authorities are undertaking a Green Belt Review, they must ensure that areas of safeguarded land are identified between the urban area and the new Green Belt boundary, to meet longer term development needs stretching ‘...well beyond the Plan period’. Safeguarded land is not allocated for development and planning permission for its permanent development should only be granted following a future Local Plan review.
- 2.52 To address these requirements, the Plan safeguards the following sites for potential future employment development after 2035:
- Omega North Western Extension, Bold (29.98 hectares); and
  - Land north east of junction 23 M6, south of Haydock racecourse, Haydock (55.9 hectares).
- 2.53 The following sites would be safeguarded for potential housing development after 2035 (the site capacities are indicative only):
- Land North of Billinge Road, Garswood (ca 283 dwellings)
  - Land between Vista Road and Belvedere Road, Earlestown (ca 178 dwellings)
  - Eccleston Park Golf Club, Rainhill Road, Eccleston (ca 956 dwellings)
  - Land east of Newlands Grange, Newton-le-Willows (ca 256 dwellings)
  - Land west of Winwick Road, Newton-le-Willows (ca 191 dwellings)
  - Land East of Chapel Lane, Sutton Manor (ca 113 dwellings)
  - Land south of Elton Head Road, Thatto Heath (ca 84 dwellings)
  - Land south of A580 between Houghtons Lane and Crantock Grove, Windle (ca 1,027 dwellings).

Summary of changes made to the proposed development requirements and site allocations since the ‘Preferred Options’ stage

- 2.54 Key changes made to the proposed development requirements and site allocations since the Preferred Options consultation can be summarised as follows:
- the annual minimum housing requirement has reduced from 570 to 486 dwellings per annum;
  - the employment site to the north east of the M6 junction 23 has been moved back from being an allocated site (for development before 2035) to be safeguarded for potential development after 2035;
  - there is now a clearer focus on specific growth locations (e.g. the Bold urban extension);
  - the assumed density of development on some housing sites has been increased;
  - the overall amount of Green Belt to be lost has been substantially reduced;
  - the number of sites to be removed from the Green Belt has been substantially reduced (see appendix 6 of this report for site specific details);

- some housing sites have been moved from being allocated for development before 2035 to being safeguarded for potential development after 2035; and
- the Plan proposals have been refined to take account of updated evidence of infrastructure issues.

### Transport

- 2.55 Policy LPA07 'Transport and Travel' promotes the use of sustainable forms of transport (such as walking, cycling and public transport) and requires new development to include suitable provision for vehicle charging points. It also identifies the need to improve linkages between areas of high deprivation and areas of employment growth, the need to secure improved motorway capacity and infrastructure (particularly at the M6 Junction 23 and M62 Junction 7) and new rail infrastructure such as a new station at Carr Mill.

### Developer contributions and infrastructure

- 2.56 Policy LPA08 'Developer Contributions' confirms that (subject to compliance with relevant legislation) development proposals will be expected to contribute to the provision, enhancement or replacement of infrastructure to meet needs arising from the proposal. In this context, infrastructure can include:
- Physical infrastructure such as roads, railways, sewers and water supplies;
  - Social infrastructure, such as education and health establishments, neighbourhood retail or leisure uses, built sports and recreation facilities, cultural, emergency service and community facilities and institutions;
  - 'Green Infrastructure', such as parks and playing fields; and
  - 'Digital infrastructure', such as telephone and internet facilities.
- 2.57 Policy LPA08 also recognises the need to be realistic when asking developers to fund infrastructure particularly given the challenging levels of viability on some sites. To address this it sets out the following hierarchy to be used in such circumstances:
1. top priority will be given to contributions which are essential for public safety (for example essential highway works or flood risk mitigation);
  2. second priority will be given to contributions to provide affordable housing or to address local infrastructure deficiencies (e.g. in schools or open spaces); and
  3. third priority will be given to other contributions which do not fall into these categories.
- 2.58 The requirements on developers set by Policy LPA08 would (depending on the nature of specific cases) be primarily delivered via agreements entered into under Section 106 of the Planning Act or planning conditions. Both of these mechanisms are subject to limitations. For example, Section 106 obligations must meet the statutory tests of being: necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and

reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. Nevertheless, it is likely that in some cases infrastructure provided within the scope of the policy and of the legal limitations would also deliver wider benefits, for example where a new development triggers a need for a new or improved item of infrastructure which would be available for use by the wider community.

### Green Infrastructure

- 2.59 Policy LPA09: 'Green Infrastructure' aims to strengthen and enhance the Borough's network of urban and rural green spaces, to encourage their use for sport, recreation, and as 'green lungs', walking and cycling routes.
- 2.60 Policy LPC06 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' sets out protection for: supporting habitats for European nature conservation sites in the wider City Region; Sites of Special Scientific Interest; Local Wildlife Sites and Priority Habitats. Reference is made to current work to address cumulative effects of development within the Liverpool City Region (due to recreational pressure) on the European-designated wildlife sites in the Mersey Estuary and coast.
- 2.61 Policy LPC07 'Greenways' requires that greenways will be protected and where possible enhanced. Policy LPC08 'Ecological Network' establishes that the Council will, working where necessary with other organisations, seek to strengthen the role of wildlife corridors and 'stepping stone' habitats. It also supports the role of the Liverpool City Region Nature Improvement Area which includes parts of St Helens such as the Sankey Valley and in the Bold area.
- 2.62 Policy LPC09 'Landscape Protection and Enhancement' requires development as appropriate to conserve, maintain, enhance and/or restore landscape features. Policy LPC10 'Trees and Woodland' sets out measures to increase the tree cover across the Borough and to protect and enhance trees, woodlands and hedgerows. It establishes that where any tree is justifiably lost as a result of new development its replacement will normally be required on at least a 2 for 1 ratio.

### Health and wellbeing

- 2.63 Policy LPA11 'Health and Wellbeing' sets out criteria to ensure that new development protects or enhances health and wellbeing. These include for example the provision of safe and attractive green spaces; designing out crime; providing opportunities for physical activity within new development; and controlling the location of hot food takeaways.

### Housing mix and affordable housing

- 2.64 Policy LPC01 'Housing Mix' requires new housing to include a range of types, tenures and sizes of homes to meet the needs of different population groups. It requires that at least 20% of new dwellings on greenfield sites (of more than 25 dwellings) should (subject to viability) be designed to the 'accessible and adaptable' standard set out in Building Regulations, and that at least 5% should be 'wheelchair accessible'. These requirements (together with a requirement for 5% of new dwellings on such sites to be bungalows) respond to the needs of the Borough's expanding population of elderly people.

- 2.65 Policy LPC01 also sets out controls over proposals for homes in multiple occupation including the need to maintain an adequate mix of different types of housing in the area, provide adequate car parking and protect the amenity of nearby occupiers.
- 2.66 Policy LPC02 'Affordable Housing Provision' sets targets for the provision of affordable housing within proposals for new open market housing of 11 units or more. In summary:
- at least 30% of new dwellings on greenfield sites in all parts of the Borough apart from those with the lowest viability (the town centre and Parr) must be 'affordable'; and
  - at least 10% of new dwellings on brownfield sites in the areas with highest development viability (Eccleston, Rainford and Rainhill) must be 'affordable' (these areas are therefore the areas where the highest overall proportion of affordable housing will be sought).
- 2.67 These targets are subject to consideration of viability in individual cases. In response to the revised NPPF (July 2018) the policy requires that where affordable housing is required at least 10% of the overall number of homes to be provided on the site should be available for affordable home ownership (as opposed to social or affordable rented units).

#### Retail and town centres

- 2.68 Policy LPC04 'Retail and Town Centres' identifies a hierarchy of town, district and local centres in the Borough. It also guides proposals for retail, leisure and other main town centre uses towards these centres with a particular focus on St Helens (as the principal town centre) and Earlestown (serving the town of Newton-le-Willows and surrounding areas). In accordance with national policy, proposals for 'town centre' uses outside existing centres must demonstrate that any need cannot be more suitably met within or on the edge of an existing centre and that they would not cause substantial harm to any existing centre.
- 2.69 Policy LPB01 'St Helens Town Centre and Central Spatial Area' encourages new development which will help deliver the Council's town centre strategy. It also identifies the primary shopping area and scope for future retail, leisure and cultural development in the 'area of opportunity' on the southern side of the town centre. In line with national planning guidance, the Policy aims to enable a diverse range of suitable uses within the town centre and immediately surrounding area and also encourages the provision of improved linkages with Ravenhead Retail Park, the Saints Stadium and other key facilities.
- 2.70 Policy LPB02 'Earlestown town centre' promotes Earlestown (within the town of Newton-le-Willows) as the second town centre in the Borough and supports the delivery of a Council-led strategy to guide its future regeneration and development.

#### Gypsies and Travellers

- 2.71 National planning policy requires the Plan to effectively address the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers. Policy LPC03 'Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People' therefore allocates 2 sites off Sherdley Road. One of these (with an indicative capacity of 8 pitches) would provide permanent pitches and the other (with an indicative capacity of 3 pitches) would provide for transit (limited length of stay) needs. These sites have been identified for these uses for a substantial period of time and were included in the Preferred Options document.
- 2.72 This Policy also sets out criteria against which to assess any applications for development of gypsy and traveller facilities.

#### Historic Environment

- 2.73 The Local Plan vision recognises and values the Borough's unique heritage, focused on the glass, rail, and coal mining industries. Policy LPC11 Historic Environment confirms that the Council will promote the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets (such as Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) and their settings.

#### Flood risk

- 2.74 Policy LPC12: 'Flood Risk and Water Management' confirms that new development that may cause unacceptable flood risk on the site or elsewhere will not be allowed. The Policy also sets out measures for example to address water quality issues and to help deliver 'slow the flow' initiatives set out in the Sankey Valley Catchment Plan (approved by Cabinet on 20 June 2018).

#### Renewable and low carbon development

- 2.75 Policy LPC13 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development' sets out criteria against which to assess proposals for low carbon or renewable energy (such as wind farms or solar farms). It encourages new development to use energy efficiently and where feasible incorporate renewable and low carbon energy generation.

#### Minerals and waste

- 2.76 Policy LPC14 'Minerals' establishes (in accordance with national policy) that the Borough will contribute where practicable to meeting sub-regional needs for mineral production and processing. It also sets out environmental and other criteria against which to assess proposals for the exploration, extraction, storage, processing and/or distribution of minerals. Proposals for the development of oil and gas resources (including coal bed methane, coal mine methane, shale gas and oil) will be required to demonstrate the highest levels of environmental, health and social protection and benefit consistent with prevailing national policy and regulation.
- 2.77 Policy LPC15 'Waste' promotes the sustainable management of waste and links to the more detailed requirements set out in the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan 2013 (or any document which may supersede this).

### Other development management policies

- 2.78 Policies LPD01 to LPD10 (inclusive) set out further criteria covering (for example): design quality; open space requirements; householder developments; barn conversions; digital communications (e.g. mobile telephone antennae); advertisements; air quality; and hot food takeaways. The provisions of the Plan also address other forms of pollution such as noise.

### 3. FACTS SUPPORTING THE PROPOSED DECISION

- 3.1 The Local Plan is based upon a comprehensive evidence base, including many documents which were made available at 'Preferred Options' stage in 2016 and others which have been progressed subsequently. Subject to approval of this report, all the documents listed below must be made available for the public to view and comment on, along with any other relevant documents, when the Plan itself is published under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

#### St Helens Green Belt Review 2018

- 3.2 This document replaces an earlier draft Green Belt review published with the Preferred Options. It provides a robust justification for the selection of sites to be removed from the Green Belt to meet needs for housing and employment development.

#### Sustainability Appraisal

- 3.3 The sustainability appraisal considers the effects of the emerging Plan against a range of economic, social and environmental issues. It also incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment, which is a legal requirement and which assesses the impacts of the Plan on the environment, the alternative options which have been assessed in finalising the Plan, and the measures which have been taken to mitigate the impacts.

#### Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

- 3.4 The Habitats Regulation Assessment process is also a legal requirement and assesses the impacts of the Plan on biodiversity interests including designated European conservation sites in nearby districts and their supporting habitat. The Plan has been revised in response to the HRA process for example to address cumulative visitor pressure on the coastal European conservation sites, and to control air quality impacts on Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

#### St Helens Employment Land Needs Assessment

- 3.5 The St. Helens Employment Land Needs Study 2015 is available to view on the Council's website. An update to this evidence provides an up-to-date assessment of employment land needs in St Helens and an estimate of potential job generation within the sites allocated for employment development.

St Helens Strategic Housing Market Assessment

- 3.6 The Mid Mersey Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 is available to view on the Council website. An update to this evidence revises the assessment of housing needs in the Borough and examines different scenarios concerning the overall number of new dwellings required, the levels of affordable housing required and the mix of different types and tenures which are required.

St Helens Retail and Leisure Study 2018

- 3.7 This document assesses the needs for new retail development and other forms of town centre development. It also provides a health check of each of the Borough's town, district and local centres.

St Helens Local Plan Transport Impact Assessment 2018

- 3.8 The Transport Impact Assessment assesses the impacts of the site allocations which were proposed at Preferred Options stage on the road network, and in relation to sustainable transport modes (walking, cycling and public transport). Its findings have been used to inform the site allocations and policies of the Plan.

St Helens Local Plan Economic Viability Assessment

- 3.9 The Economic Viability Assessment considers the impacts of the Plan policies on development viability and the viability of the proposed site allocations. Its findings have been used to ensure that the Plan is effective having regard to these issues.

St Helens Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) 2018

- 3.10 The IDP identifies key infrastructure implications arising from the Plan proposals and sets out a delivery schedule which identifies (as far as possible at this stage) when key infrastructure items may be delivered. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan is attached as appendix 7 to this report.

Revised St Helens Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2018

- 3.11 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Council to prepare and maintain a 'Local Development Scheme' (LDS). The LDS must set out: which development plan documents the Council intends to prepare; their subject matter; their geographical coverage; and the timetable for their preparation and revision. The Council's existing LDS was agreed by Cabinet on 18 November 2015 and covers a period of 3 years. A revised LDS has been prepared (see appendix 8 of this report). This formally sets out the revised timetable for preparation of the new Local Plan summarised in paragraph 2.6 of this report. Whilst there has been some delay in timescales this has enabled the

Plan to respond to the new NPPF (published in July 2018) and the changing requirements concerning housing need (see paragraphs 2.40 to 2.46 of this report).

- 3.12 In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, recommendation 5 of this report seeks approval to bring the revised LDS into effect and states a date from which the new LDS is to be effective (1 January 2019).

#### 4. IMPLICATIONS/RELEVANCE TO MEETING SAVINGS TARGETS/ PLANNING FOR 2020

- 4.1 The Local Plan has the potential, once adopted, to have significant positive impacts on a number of corporate priorities including planning for 2020. These specific benefits include the potential to:

- support the continued balanced growth of the Borough, both in the short-term and long-term;
- enable the delivery of higher levels of economic growth than currently supported under the existing Core Strategy;
- create more job opportunities to bring more people of working age back into employment or offer greater choice to the existing workforce, thus reducing the need to travel out of the Borough for work and reduce dependency on benefits;
- improve physical and mental health and wellbeing, for example by enabling greater levels of access to suitable housing and job opportunities and improvements in the quality of greenspace;
- increase access to affordable housing and specialist housing;
- encourage inward investment by providing increased certainty to developers and occupiers of sites;
- enable investment in suitable infrastructure linked to the delivery of new development; and
- accelerate income to the community and the Council, due to an increase in the supply of sites available for development, which in turn can generate increased New Homes Bonus, Council Tax, and Business Rates.

#### 5. RISKS

##### 5.1 Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

The following risks have been identified as being associated with the Proposed Decision:

- 5.2 Risk of Government intervention: The Government has confirmed (for example in a Written Statement made by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to the House of Commons on 16 November 2017) that local plans must be reviewed as quickly as possible and that it will use statutory powers to intervene where Councils fail to make sufficient progress in this regard. This means that the Government could take over the process of preparing the Plan if it

is not progressed sufficiently quickly. The Council would lose control of the process in such circumstances. It is therefore important to progress the Plan expediently to minimise any risk of intervention.

- 5.3 Statements of Common Ground with other public bodies: As stated in paragraph 2.12 of this report, the Council has worked extensively on an on-going basis with neighbouring local authorities and other public bodies in compliance with the 'duty to cooperate'. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018) introduces a new requirement that plan-making authorities should prepare and maintain one or more Statements of Common Ground documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these. Progress has been made to prepare two Statements of Common Ground affecting St Helens, one covering the Liverpool City Region and one covering cross boundary issues with Warrington. However, these documents remain in draft form at present and it is important (to comply with the NPPF) that progress is maintained to finalise at least one Statement of Common Ground early in 2019.
- 5.4 The need to provide certainty for local communities - Significant elements of the adopted 'development plan' in St Helens are over 5 years old and/or are out of date. The preparation of the Local Plan within an appropriate timescale is therefore necessary to provide clarity to local communities and developers about where new homes and employment buildings should be located, so that development is planned rather than the result of speculative planning applications.
- 5.5 Reputational Risk and volume of responses to public consultation: The Preferred Options consultation gave rise to a considerable public response and it is anticipated that the next stages could also be contentious. The issue of Green Belt release in particular continues to be controversial and the proposed approach, whilst reducing the level of Green Belt release compared to the proposals in the Preferred Options document, is likely to be met by continued opposition and lobbying against the Plan. It is therefore important that there is effective communication with the public and other stakeholders. This should: set out how the Council has considered the consultation feedback received from earlier stages; ensure that people effectively understand the Plan (including the reasons for the revisions that have been made); and ensure that people understand how they may engage with the remainder of the process leading up to adoption of the Plan.
- 5.6 Changes to planning legislation and policy: The national planning policy situation (for example in relation to the method by which housing needs are calculated) remains changeable. It will be necessary to address any changes to national policy or legislation as the Plan moves through its remaining stages.
- 5.7 Changes to evidence base: Any further changes which take place to the evidence which underpins the Plan (for example in relation to housing or employment needs or land supply) will need to be taken into account as the Plan progresses.
- 5.8 Infrastructure: The level of development proposed would generate extra demands on existing infrastructure (e.g. transport, schools, health services,

utilities, green infrastructure and recreational facilities). There are also likely to be circumstances in which new infrastructure is required. Whilst substantial work has been undertaken to ensure that the delivery of the Plan proposals would be supported by suitable infrastructure, there will be a need for on-going engagement with infrastructure providers as the Plan is implemented to monitor progress in relation to this issue.

5.9 Should this Risk be added to the Corporate Risk Register?

No

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Legal – It is a legal requirement to have a Local Plan in place and to keep it under review. The Plan must meet ‘soundness’ tests set out in the NPPF, including the need to accommodate objectively assessed needs for development. The Plan must also satisfy other legal requirements such as the ‘duty to cooperate’ with neighbouring authorities and other public bodies. Failure to meet these requirements would lead to a high risk that the Council could not adopt the Plan or that any decision to do so would be subject to legal challenge.

6.2 Financial – The forthcoming stages in the preparation of the Local Plan (particularly the examination in public scheduled to take place in 2019) will require suitable funding to cover the cost of staffing, consultancy work, the Inspectors fees etc. A separate delegated executive decision is being prepared to address this matter.

6.3 Human Resources – This report has no implications for human resources. The staffing support for the Development Plans team will be kept under review as the Local Plan progresses through its next stages including the examination in public in 2019 (see paragraph 6.2 above).

6.4 Land and Property (Asset) – The Council has an ownership interest in all or part of 4 of the sites proposed for housing allocation in the ‘submission draft’ version of the Plan. The Plan will also, through its role as part of the statutory ‘development plan’, guide the future development and use of all Council-owned buildings and sites in the Borough.

6.5 Anti-Poverty – The Plan is likely to assist the Council’s aims to address poverty by making available land for new development to provide a wider range of job opportunities and through its requirements concerning affordable housing and housing mix.

6.6 Effects on existing Council Policy – As it would (once adopted) form a new ‘development plan’ document the Local Plan will form a key element of the Council’s policy framework. The Plan will replace some elements of the current ‘development plan’, namely the St Helens Core Strategy 2012 and the ‘saved’ policies of the St Helens Unitary Development Plan 1998.

- 6.7 Effects on other Council Activities – The Local Plan will, through its role as the statutory ‘development plan’ guide all Council activities which impact on the use and development of land.
- 6.8 Human Rights – None.
- 6.9 Equalities – A Community Impact Assessment of the Plan is attached as appendix 9 to this report. This identifies that the Plan would bring a range of benefits to the community as a whole, for example by balancing the needs for new development with the need to preserve and enhance the environment. No adverse impacts on specific population groups, identified by reference to the protected characteristics set by the Equalities Act 2010 (for example race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion) have been identified. The Plan will also have specific benefits for some groups. For example, by allocating sites for use by gypsies and travellers the Plan will help meet their specific needs. The policies concerning housing mix will ensure that some housing is designed or can be readily adapted to meet the needs of the less mobile and older age groups (see paragraph 2.64 of this report).
- 6.10 Asset Management – No implications except those related to land and property (detailed in paragraph 6.4 above).
- 6.11 Health – The Plan contains a range of policies which will promote better levels of health and well-being, for example by: ensuring that new development is served by a sufficient range and quality of greenspaces; promoting the use of walking and cycling; and ensuring that new development does not cause substantial harm to air quality (particularly in Air Quality Management Areas) or in respect of other forms of pollution. It is also considered likely that the Plan policies which promote the delivery of higher levels of employment development and a better choice of housing will indirectly have a beneficial effect on health.

## 7. PREVIOUS APPROVAL/CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The ‘submission draft’ version of the Local Plan has been developed having regard to the feedback from extensive previous public consultation. This feedback is referred to, along with the previous decisions by the Council’s Cabinet in relation to the emerging Plan, in section 2 of this report and summarised in the Report of Consultation (appendix 4 to this report).

## 8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS THEREOF

- 8.1 As the preparation of a revised Local Plan is a statutory duty, it is not a realistic option to substantially delay the preparation of the Plan.
- 8.2 In preparing the ‘proposed submission’ version of the Local Plan, officers have refined a range of options which were set out in the Preferred Options document 2016. This process has taken account of up-to-date evidence, the outcomes of the consultation on the Preferred Options and the requirements of national policy including the revised NPPF (July 2018). A sustainability appraisal has been undertaken which has robustly assessed the emerging Plan (including alternative policy approaches and sites) against a range of economic, social and

environmental objectives. Having regard to all these factors, a number of adjustments have been made to the Plan (summarised in section 2 of this report)

- 8.3 The strategy set out in the 'proposed submission' version of the Plan (see appendices 1 to 3 of this report) will meet the substantial development needs of the Borough whilst addressing the resultant pressures on infrastructure and the environment.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1	St Helens Local Plan 2020-2035: submission draft version (written statement)
Appendix 2	St Helens Local Plan 2020-2035: submission draft version - Policies Map (north)
Appendix 3	St Helens Local Plan 2020-2035: submission draft version - Policies Map (south)
Appendix 4	St Helens Local Plan: Preferred Options – Report of Consultation - TO FOLLOW
Appendix 5	Number of responses to Preferred Options consultation by geographical area
Appendix 6	Changes to housing and employment site allocations compared to those in the 'Preferred Options' proposals
Appendix 7	St Helens Local Plan: Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2018
Appendix 8	St Helens Local Development Scheme 2018
Appendix 9	Communities Impact Assessment

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following list of documents was used to complete this report and they are available for public inspection for four years from the date of the meeting, from the Contact Officer named above:

1. St Helens Green Belt Review 2018
2. St Helens Council Transport Impact Assessment 2018
3. St Helens Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update 2018
4. St Helens Employment Land Needs Study Addendum Report 2018

# **Appendix 2**

St. Helens Cabinet Report 23.09.2020



St. Helens  
Council

# LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

**September 2020**



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## 1. **INTRODUCTION**

### **Role of the Local Development Scheme (LDS)**

- 1.1 Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Council to prepare and maintain a document known as the Local Development Scheme (LDS).
- 1.2 The LDS must identify which existing and proposed documents (referred to as development plan documents) are intended to comprise the statutory 'development plan' for the Borough. It must also identify:
  - the subject matter, geographical coverage and timetable for the preparation of each development plan document; and
  - any development plan documents which are to be prepared jointly with one or more other planning authorities.
- 1.3 The legislation requires all local authorities to make their LDS available to the public and to keep it up to date. The previous LDS for St.Helens was prepared and approved in December 2018 and is now considered to be out of date.



## 2. THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR ST.HELENS

### Currently adopted development plan documents

1.1 The following documents make up the current 'development plan' for St.Helens and can be viewed at <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy/adopted-local-plans>.

- St.Helens Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted in 2012);
- 'Saved Policies' of the St.Helens Unitary Development Plan (adopted in 1998);
- Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan (adopted in 2017); and
- Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan (adopted in 2013).

1.2 As each of these documents form part of the adopted 'development plan' they each play a key role in guiding decisions on planning applications for new development.

#### St.Helens Local Plan Core Strategy

1.3 The St.Helens Local Plan Core Strategy sets out the overall strategy guiding new development in St.Helens. It identifies how much development is required, broadly where development should be located and how it should be delivered in the period up to 2027. It contains strategic policies for housing, economy and employment, community facilities, quality of life and accessibility.

#### 'Saved policies' of the St.Helens Unitary Development Plan

1.4 The St.Helens Unitary Development Plan (UDP) replaced all previous adopted development plans for the Borough when it was adopted on 2 July 1998.

1.5 Several of the policies in the UDP lapsed as a result of a direction issued by the Secretary of State issued in 2007. Some other UDP policies lapsed when the St.Helens Core Strategy was adopted in 2012. Appendix 4 of the Core Strategy identifies which UDP policies continued to be saved beyond 2012 and which were replaced at that point. Two 'saved policies' covering waste issues were replaced by the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan in 2013.

#### Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan

1.6 Area Action Plans (AAPs) are a type of development plan document that provide a planning framework for a specific area of opportunity, change or conservation. They set out specific policies to shape development within that area.

1.7 The Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan was prepared in consultation with local stakeholders including the Mersey Forest and Bold Parish Council and adopted in July 2017. It aims to encourage inward investment via rural entrepreneurship in the visitor economy and provide leisure opportunities for the community.



- 1.8 The Plan covers the entire Bold Forest Park area, which covers an area of about 1,808 hectares in size and is strategically situated in the south of the Borough.

#### Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan

- 1.9 The Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan 2013 covers the period from 2013 to 2027. It was prepared jointly by Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St.Helens and Wirral Councils and covers all 6 of these Council areas.
- 1.10 The Plan was prepared by the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) and contains 16 policies and 18 site allocations dealing with all aspects of waste management from waste prevention to energy from waste facilities. Further details can be found via the MEAS website at:  
<http://www.meas.org.uk/1090>.

#### The adopted Policies Map for St.Helens

- 1.11 The Policies Map is maintained as a separate document and is updated each time a new development plan document which allocates or designates land is adopted. The existing Policies Map for St.Helens is substantially based on the Proposals Map which formed part of the St.Helens UDP. It includes adjustments made as a result of the adoption of policies in the other development plan documents referred to above.

#### The emerging St.Helens Borough Local Plan

- 1.12 The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan which will provide a new spatial strategy for the whole of the Borough. The new Plan will include:
- A vision and objectives setting out what type of place St Helens should be in 2035 and beyond;
  - strategic policies guiding the future development and use of land (for housing, employment, retail and other uses);
  - allocations of sites for particular types of development;
  - areas where development is to be constrained; and
  - more detailed policies to help guide the determination of planning applications.
- 1.13 The preparation of local plans must include a number of stages as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). These include:
- Regulation 18 – initial consultation and preparation;
  - Regulation 19 – publication of the local plan;
  - Regulation 20 – representations relating to the local plan;
  - Regulation 22 – submission of documents and information to the Secretary of State;
  - Regulation 24 – independent examination by an appointed person



- Regulation 25 – publication of the recommendations of the appointed person; and
- Regulation 26 – adoption of the local plan.

1.14 The emerging St.Helens Borough Local Plan will replace the St.Helens Core Strategy and the currently remaining ‘saved policies’ of the UDP.

1.15 The preparation of the new St.Helens Borough Local Plan is a key priority for the Council. The key public consultation stages in the preparation of the Local Plan to date have been:

- Local Plan Scoping consultation (Regulation 18) – January to March 2016
- Local Plan Preferred Options consultation – December 2016 – January 2017
- Local Plan Submission Draft consultation (Regulation 19) – January to May 2019

1.16 The following table sets out the remaining expected steps and timescales leading up to adoption of the Plan. Further details are set out in the programme in Appendix 1 to this document.

Stage (Regulation)	Stage (Description)	Stage / Milestone (Date)
Regulation 22	Submission of documents and information to the Secretary of State	October 2020
Regulation 24	Examination in Public Hearing Sessions	March-April 2021
Regulation 25	Publication of the Inspector’s Report	Autumn 2021
Regulation 26	Adoption of the Local Plan	Winter 2021-22

1.17 A revised version of the adopted Policies Map will be prepared as part the Local Plan and will illustrate the proposed site allocations and land designations.

**Supporting documents**

1.18 The Council has prepared or commissioned a number of other documents which support its existing and emerging development plan documents. These include:



- **The St.Helens Statement of Community Involvement** – this sets out how the Council will consult the community and stakeholders during the production of the Local Plan.
- **Evidence base documents** – these cover a wide range of topics and provide evidence to underpin the policies of the emerging Local Plan.
- **Sustainability and other appraisal documents** – these must be prepared to inform any new Local Plan document which is being prepared.

### **Joint working**

- 1.19 The Council has a legal duty (under the Localism Act 2011) to cooperate with a wide range of statutory bodies when preparing the Local Plan. The Council works closely with a wide range of bodies in compliance with this duty.
- 1.20 The Council is not currently preparing any development plan document jointly with any other local planning authority. It has also not agreed to establish any joint committee under section 29 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to formulate such a joint plan. It should be noted however that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority proposes to prepare a Spatial Development Strategy including strategic policies covering the whole City Region (including St.Helens). This work is currently at an early stage.
- 1.21 MEAS is starting to undertake a very high-level review of the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan. Any decision to update or replace the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan (in whole or in part) will be reflected in a future review of this LDS.



## **2 MONITORING AND REVIEW**

### **Monitoring and Review**

- 3.1 The Council has a legal duty, under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to provide up-to-date information to the public showing the state of the authority's compliance with its timetable for the preparation of development plan documents. In accordance with this duty the Council will publish regular updates concerning the progress in preparing its new Local Plan on its website. Further details will also be set out in its Authority Monitoring Reports, which must be published each year.

### **Availability of Published Documents**

- 3.2 Further details concerning the emerging St.Helens Borough Local Plan, and the other matters set out in this document, are available on the Council website at [www.sthelens.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/localplan). You may also request to see hard copies at Planning Reception, Town Hall, Victoria Square, St. Helens (when the Council Offices are open).



# **Appendix 3**

**St. Helens Cabinet Report 23.09.2020**

## Draft Proposed Modifications

Chapter 2, p10:

### 2.8 Town Centres

2.8.1 St.Helens Town Centre plays an important sub-regional role as the Borough's principal town centre providing a range of retail and other services for the Borough. This is complemented by the roles played by Earlestown Town Centre (within the town of Newton-le-Willows) and a range of smaller district and local centres. A key challenge is for the town and other centres to diversify their role in response to changing economic circumstances, including competition from retail parks and internet shopping. **The Council has successfully secured an initial £173,029 capacity funding grant to support the development of a Town Deal Board and Investment Plan from the Governments Town Deal fund to help with projects around land use and regeneration, connectivity, skills and employment for St Helens Town Centre.**

**2.8.2 In addition, the Council is entering into a strategic partnership agreement with the English Cities Fund (ECF) to ensure the delivery of a Borough wide regeneration strategy initially starting with St Helens Town Centre.**

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LPA02 - Policy Amendments, p17-78:

### Policy LPA02

#### Policy LPA02: Spatial Strategy

1. The sustainable regeneration and growth of St.Helens Borough through to 2035 and beyond will be focussed (as far as practicable, having regard to the availability of suitable sites) on the Key Settlements, namely St.Helens Core Area, Blackbrook and Haydock, Newton-le-Willows and Earlestown, Rainford, Billinge, Garswood and Rainhill.
2. New development will be directed to sustainable locations that are appropriate to its scale and nature and that will enable movements between homes, jobs and key services and facilities to be made by sustainable non-car modes of transport.
3. The re-use of previously developed land in Key Settlements will remain a key priority. A substantial proportion of new housing throughout the Plan period will be on such sites. This will be encouraged by setting lower thresholds for developer contributions on previously developed sites to reflect the higher costs and lower sales values typically associated with redeveloping such sites.

**4. Comprehensive regeneration of the wider Borough will be delivered by the English Cities Fund Regeneration Partnership, through the provision of quality housing, new commercial activity, upgraded infrastructure and the overall improvement of the social and economic viability of the Borough on a phased basis.**

**54.** This Plan releases land from the Green Belt to enable the needs for housing and employment development to be met in full over the Plan period from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2035, in the most sustainable locations. Other land is removed from the Green Belt and safeguarded to allow for longer term housing and / or employment needs to be met after 31 March 2035. Such Safeguarded Land is not allocated for development in the Plan period and planning permission for permanent development should only be granted following a full review of this Plan. Within the remaining areas of Green Belt (shown on the Policies Map) new development shall be regarded as inappropriate unless it falls within one of the exceptions set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (or any successor document). Inappropriate development in the Green Belt shall not be approved except in very special circumstances.

**65.** Substantial new employment development (set out in Policy LPA04 and excluding town centre uses) will take place on large sites that are capable of accommodating large employment buildings (over 9,000m<sup>2</sup>) and are close to the M6 and M62. High quality road, public transport and active travel links will be required between existing and proposed residential areas, particularly those with high deprivation levels, and areas of employment growth. Existing employment areas will be retained where they are suitable and viable for this use in order to maintain a diverse portfolio of accessible employment opportunities across the Borough. Suitable development that would diversify the rural economy will also be supported.

**76.** Parkside West and Parkside East form transformational employment opportunity sites that will make a major contribution to the economic development of St.Helens Borough, the Liverpool City Region and beyond. Development that prejudices their development in accordance with Policies LPA04 and LPA10 will not be allowed.

**87.** The preferred locations for new town centre development shall be within St.Helens Town Centre (as the Borough's principal town centre), Earlestown Town Centre, and the Borough's network of district and local centres, in line with Policies LPB01, LPB02 and LPC04.

**98.** The quality of life, health and wellbeing of St.Helens Borough's residents,

workers and visitors and the quality of the natural environment will be supported by:

- a) taking steps to maintain, enhance, connect and / or expand the Borough's network of ecological, open space and recreational sites and greenways in accordance with Policy LPA09;
- b) seeking improvements to the quality of open space within and around new development;
- c) requiring new development proposals to mitigate their contribution to climate change and to adapt to its impacts;
- d) supporting the delivery of landscape reclamation and improvement projects in locations such as the Bold Forest Park and Sankey Valley Park; and
- e) requiring development to support healthy lifestyles in accordance with Policy LPD11.

**109.** The provision of a convenient, safe and sustainable transport network, and the delivery of improvements to the network, will be required in line with Policy LPA07.

**1110.** New development that would deliver regeneration within the key settlements and accord with other Plan policies will be supported. Regeneration in these settlements will also be promoted by (in addition to the measures set out above) focussing available resources on its effective delivery and preventing development that would adversely impact upon or jeopardise the delivery of regeneration proposals.

LPA02 – Reasoned Justification Amendments, p24:

### Supporting regeneration

4.6.19 As a priority, the Council will continue to work to support the redevelopment of brownfield sites in the urban area. ~~It is also pursuing opportunities to enhance town centres in the Borough, for example through the creation of the St. Helens Town Centre Strategy. In addition, the Council intends to work pro-actively with partner organisations where necessary to secure the suitable regeneration of other town, district and local centres and of existing housing and employment areas, particularly in less affluent areas. The Council will prepare Supplementary Planning Documents covering specific areas~~

where this is considered necessary to help implement their regeneration.

**4.6.20 The Council is entering into a formal partnership agreement with the English Cities Fund as the Council's preferred strategic partner to ensure the delivery of a Borough wide regeneration strategy, including economic regeneration and housing. The Council has recognised that a new approach to growing the economy of the Borough is required that seeks to work pro-actively with the private sector and establish a strategic partnership maximising the opportunities presented to deliver significant future growth in St. Helens and deliver key priorities including Town Centre regeneration, social wellbeing and providing appropriate infrastructure to support future development.**

**4.6.21 Furthermore, as part of the 'Town Deal' initiative established by the Government in 2019, the Council are seeking to secure significant investment of up to £25 million. This funding will be used to help increase economic growth with a focus on land use and regeneration, improved connectivity (both transport and better broadband connectivity), skills and employment, and heritage, arts and culture for St. Helens Town Centre.**

**4.6.22 The Council will prepare Supplementary Planning Documents covering specific areas to help implement regeneration where this is considered necessary.**

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LPA04 – Policy Amendments: p29

#### **Policy LPA04: A Strong and Sustainable Economy**

1. The Council will work with partner organisations to:
  - a) help meet the Liverpool City Region's needs for economic growth, job creation and skills development;
  - b) maximise the economic opportunities presented by St.Helens Borough's location in relation to strategic road and rail routes;
  - c) ensure the necessary infrastructure is provided to support business needs (see [Policy LPA\\_08](#)); and
  - d) support the creation of and expansion of small businesses; **and**
  - e) support businesses and organisations in the economic recovery and renewal from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

LPA04 – Reasoned Justification Amendments, p32:

#### **4.12 Reasoned Justification**

4.12.1 The Council's City Growth Strategy (2008-18) and Council Plan 2017-2020 recognise the need to work in partnership with local communities and businesses to deliver economic growth, to strengthen the local business base, and to increase aspiration, skills and employment in the Borough.

**4.12.2 The Local Plan’s vision, still stands true as we plan for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic: By 2035, St. Helens Borough will provide through the balanced regeneration and sustainable growth of its built-up areas, a range of attractive, healthy, safe, inclusive and accessible places in which to live, work, visit and invest. Key to this is a continued focus on the economy, so that St. Helens residents can access good quality jobs that raise their living standards, whilst also improving physical and mental health.**

**4.12.3 It is anticipated that the English Cities Fund Regeneration Partnership and the Council’s successful Town Deal funding bid will also assist in the post COVID-19 economic recovery.**

4.12.24 The provision of new well-located employment land and floorspace is essential to the Borough's future economic prosperity. Policy LPA04 therefore allocates sufficient land to meet anticipated development needs within the B1 (business), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution) use classes during the Plan period. The NPPF requires the Council to plan for and accommodate all foreseeable types of economic growth. Policy LPA04 therefore identifies a range of locations, types and sizes of employment sites to meet the needs of specific sectors of the business community and to protect existing areas where employment continues to be the most appropriate use.

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LPB01 – Policy Amendments, p73:

### **Policy LPB01: St.Helens Town Centre and Central Spatial Area**

1. The Council will promote the Central Spatial Area as an accessible and welcoming destination for new development that accords with paragraphs 2 to 9 of this Policy and that would help create a high-quality built environment. Development that would support the delivery and implementation of the Council-led strategy for the future regeneration and development of St.Helens Town Centre will be supported.

**2. The English Cities Fund Regeneration Partnership will help deliver a comprehensive redevelopment of the Town Centre and Central Spatial Area, including new commercial activity, upgraded infrastructure, the provision of quality housing, and the overall improvement of the social and economic viability of the area.**

32. Proposals for retail and leisure development will be directed to suitable locations within the Town Centre and then other sequentially preferable sites in line with Policy LPC04 and national policy. A town centre ‘area of opportunity’ for future retail, leisure and cultural development is shown indicatively on the Policies Map. Development that would result in significant harm to the Town Centre’s vitality and viability or prejudice planned investment within it will be resisted.

43. Proposals for change of use of units in the Primary Retail Frontages in

St.Helens Town Centre will be refused unless they would be to Class A1<sup>45</sup> retail use or another main town centre use or uses that would contribute positively to the overall vitality and viability of the centre. Development proposals within the Primary and Secondary Frontages that would not result in an active ground floor use with a window display frontage will be refused.

**54.** New development proposals will be required, where appropriate having regard to their location, nature and scale, to facilitate linked trips between the Primary Shopping Area and other existing and proposed developments within the St.Helens Central Spatial Area, including Asda on Kirkland Street; The Range on Chalon Way; St.Helens and Ravenhead Retail Parks; Linkway West; Tesco Extra on Linkway; and St.Helens RLFC Stadium.

**65.** Regular health checks will be undertaken to monitor the vitality and viability of St.Helens Town Centre.

**76.** Proposals for housing or a mix of housing and other suitable use(s) within or on the edge of the Town Centre will be supported where they would avoid prejudicing the retail and service role of the Town Centre.

**87.** New development in the vicinity of St.Helens Canal will be required to, as appropriate, improve the public realm by retaining and enhancing the existing waterway, positively integrating with the canal and securing improvements to Green Infrastructure in line with Policy LPA09.

**98.** Pedestrian and vehicular accessibility within and around the Town Centre will be managed in line with the road-user hierarchy set out in the Liverpool City Region: Transport Plan for Growth in order to:

- a) maintain pedestrian priority within the Town Centre and extend pedestrian links to adjacent areas;
- b) make suitable provision for cyclists;
- c) support the Town Centre as the hub of the public transport network in St.Helens Borough; and
- d) make appropriate provision for cars and service vehicles.

LPB01 – Reasoned Justification Amendments, p75:

### 5.3 Reasoned Justification

5.3.6 A Town Centre Strategy<sup>46</sup> to provide a comprehensive approach to the future of St.Helens Town Centre underwent public consultation during August – October 2017. The Strategy set out a vision for the future of the town centre detailing thematic initiatives to deliver this. **In January 2020 the Council successfully received an initial £173,029 capacity fund as part of the Governments Town Deal initiative. The Council are now seeking to secure significant investment of up to £25 million. This funding will be used to help increase economic growth with a focus on land use and regeneration, improved connectivity (both transport and better broadband connectivity), skills and employment, and heritage, arts and culture. A Town Investment Plan will be developed and will sit alongside the Town Centre Strategy.**

5.3.7 The Council's future aspirations to improve the offer of St.Helens Town Centre as set out within the Strategy include the provision of new retail and leisure floorspace, subject to the appropriate policy tests. It is considered that this approach, along with steps to encourage the reuse of vacant floorspace, will address the identified quantitative and qualitative needs of residents in the Borough.

5.3.8 The Council will support initiatives and schemes that will help to implement the Strategy by revitalising and enhancing the Town Centre's retail, leisure and cultural offer. The 'Area of Opportunity', referred to in the Strategy, has been identified due to the potential to reconfigure and / or redevelop land and premises close to Church Square and Chalon Way for suitable town centre uses. **To support this initiative and to assist in the regeneration of the area, the Council is entering into a regeneration partnership with the English Cities Fund to deliver a comprehensive redevelopment of the Town Centre (and wider borough on a phased basis).**

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LPB02 – Policy Amendments, p77:

### **Policy LPB02: Earlestown Town Centre**

1. The Council will seek to safeguard and enhance the function and role of Earlestown Town Centre as the second town centre within the Borough.
2. Main town centre uses will be directed to suitable locations within the defined Town Centre first and then other sites in accordance with the sequential approach set out in Policy LPC04 and national policy. The preferred location for new retail development shall be within the defined Primary Shopping Area.
3. Development that would result in a significant adverse impact on the Town Centre's vitality and viability or planned investment within it will be resisted in accordance with Policy LPC04 and national policy.
4. The delivery and implementation of a Council-led strategy to provide a framework for the future regeneration and development of the town centre will be supported. **The English Cities Fund Regeneration Partnership will help deliver a mix of residential, leisure, business and retail development all centred around the Town Centre.**

Reasoned Justification Amendments, p78:

## **5.6 Reasoned Justification**

5.6.3 The Council will seek to safeguard **and build upon** this important role and function by applying the 'town centre first' approach to ensure that Earlestown remains the Borough's second centre providing a highly sustainable location

for retail and other services. **Through its partnership with the English Cities Fund the Council will work towards creating a mix of residential, leisure, business and retail development all centred around the Town Centre.**

- 5.6.8 To provide a focus for future development of the town centre and positively promote Earlestown as a location to live, **through the English Cities Fund Regeneration Partnership** the Council, intend to bring forward a dedicated Town Centre strategy, which may form the basis for a Supplementary Planning Document. This will include initiatives to:
- enhance the Town Centre as a shopping destination and increase the vibrancy of the town's market;
  - protect and enhance the town's-built heritage;
  - promote Earlestown as a key commuter settlement with direct rail connectivity to Liverpool, Manchester and Chester;
  - increase the number and variety of residential units by encouraging mixed use development that makes a positive contribution to the economic role of the town centre; and
  - link the town centre with the new homes to be provided through the residential redevelopment of Deacon Trading Estate and other housing developments.

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Glossary – Add

### **Covid19**

**The Coronavirus disease (COVID19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The disease became a global pandemic and led to a complete lockdown for many countries in 2020. The outbreak of COVID-19 had a significant impact on businesses, leading to the onset of a recession and affecting the economic and social lives of the entire nation.**

### **English Cities Fund (ECF)**

**The English Cities Fund (ECF) is a joint venture development company, set up by three partners – Homes England, Legal & General and Muse Developments. ECF was originally established by the Labour Government in 2001 to drive greater institutional and private investment in English towns and cities. The ECF work with councils, landowners and communities to regenerate areas, typically where there has been market failure in the past.**

### **Town Deals**

**The Town Deals initiative was established by the Government in 2019 and saw the launch of a £3.6 billion Towns Fund. It allows communities, businesses and local leaders to develop their own ambitious proposals for growth through the creation of a Town Deal Board. Boards can submit bids for funding up to £25 million. The funding is intended to help increase economic growth with a**

**focus on regeneration, improved transport, better broadband connectivity, skills and culture.**