



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Local Economy and Social Value

Supplementary Planning Document

Scoping Report

May 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is this document?

This scoping report is the first step in preparing a Local Economy and Social Value Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD will provide detailed guidance on the interpretation and implementation of policies within the St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037 (2022) (Local Plan).

The purpose of this document is to engage key stakeholders in considering the scope and content of the SPD.

The responses on this scoping report will inform the preparation of a draft SPD, which will then in turn be published for consultation before it is then adopted. Once adopted the SPD will carry full weight as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

1.2 The Local Economy within the Borough of St Helens

St Helens, with its key location in the north-west and excellent transport linkages, is well located to accommodate the growth of both new and existing businesses. In recent decades the St Helens economy has transformed from one dominated by heavy industry, namely glass and associated products, manufacturing and coal mining, to a more balanced economy, with the creation of new or improved employment floorspace (for example, alongside the A570 St Helens Linkway).

The Local Plan sets out a number of visions to be achieved within the Local Plan period, including providing a range of attractive, healthy, safe, inclusive and accessible places in which to live, work, visit and invest, providing a range of high-quality new employment development, and providing affordable accommodation for a wide range of employers in established employment areas.

Since the current Local Economy SPD was adopted (over 10 years ago), there have been changes to Local Plan policies and the Council's economic growth priorities, as well as changes to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order¹. As such, many references within the current SPD are out of date.

1.3 What is Social Value?

Social value is a consideration of how a proposed activity might also improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area. It describes the difference an organisation, project or procurement can make to the local area and communities within it. It goes beyond financial value and considers how activities can increase equality, improve well-being and develop environmental sustainability, and

¹ Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)

is about maximising the local benefit that the Council can help create in everything it does and support the Council's wider aspirations related to community wealth building and inclusive growth.

The Council has a legal duty to consider social value in service contracts, as well as goods or works contracts where there is a service element, above a prescribed financial threshold, however, the Council can implement an approach to social value as wide as is practicable in order to optimise outcomes from procurement and commissioning activities. In line with good practice, the Council will also consider engagement with local organisations and the use of other delivery models, including social enterprise and mutual models, where such activity might deliver greater social value.

Whilst there are no specific 'hooks' within the Local Plan for a separate Social Value SPD, the current Local Economy SPD contains 'social value' elements, and therefore it is considered that an updated Local Economy SPD should also include references to social value aims and objectives, thus reducing the need for a separate document and any repetition and overlap of similar information and guidance that that may create.

1.4 SPD Links with National Policy and Legislation

The Local Economy and Social Value SPD will be produced so it is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Regard will also be had to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

1.5 SPD Links with St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037 (2022)

The Local Economy and Social Value SPD will be prepared to provide further guidance in relation to the interpretation and implementation of the policies in the Local Plan, in particular, Policy LPA03: A Strong and Sustainable Economy, which states:

Policy LPA03: 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 LPA07);

- 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.
2. The Council will aim to deliver a minimum of 173.24 hectares of land for employment development between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2037 to meet the needs of St Helens Borough.
 3. The sites as shown in Table 4.1 and on the Policies Map are allocated for development for the employment uses indicated.
 4. Proposals to develop or re-develop any of the above allocated sites for uses not listed in Table 4.1 will be refused, unless it has been demonstrated that:
 - a) the site is no longer both suitable and viable for an employment use identified in Table 4.1; and
 - b) the site has been offered for employment use on the open market at a reasonable price in a manner and for a period agreed with the Council; and
 - c) the results of the marketing exercise have been transparently shared with the Council; and
 - d) no employment use can be delivered as part of a mixed-use scheme on the site.
 5. Other sites and buildings that are currently or were last used for employment use (or for sui generis use generating employment), including those in the employment areas listed in appendix 5, will be protected from changes to other uses, unless justified. Changes of use of such sites and buildings will be justified and permitted where it is demonstrated either that:
 - a) the land or building (or any part of it) is no longer suitable and economically viable for light industrial, offices and research and development, B2 or B8 uses in accordance with the Local Economy Supplementary Planning Document;
 - b) or the land use planning benefits of the proposed development would outweigh the benefits of retaining the site or building in its existing use (including vacant buildings and sites).
 6. Proposals for the re-use, re-configuration, or re-development for light industrial, offices and research and development, B2 or B8 uses of land or buildings used for light industrial, offices and research and development, B2 or B8 uses (including where such proposals would lead to a more intensive

use of the land or buildings) will be supported, subject to compliance with other policies in the Plan.

7. Proposals for Class E uses in locations outside a defined centre will be subject to a condition to prohibit town centre uses (as defined in the glossary of the NPPF) unless the requirements of Policy LPC04 are satisfied.
8. The Council will support proposals to help diversify the rural economy, including through the re-use of suitable buildings in rural areas for appropriate employment uses, subject to other policies in the Plan.
9. The Council will support the protection, creation, enhancement and expansion of tourism, cultural and visitor resources, facilities, and attractions by favourably considering proposals that are appropriate to the local character and appearance of the area and that will:
 - i) increase the range and quality of the accommodation offer in the Borough: or
 - ii) enhance an existing tourist or visitor attraction; or
 - iii) attract investment to the Borough and create or safeguard jobs; or
 - iv) enable the economic or physical regeneration of a site or area; or
 - v) improve the quality and diversity of the Borough's visitor offer; or
 - vi) help to maintain existing natural, historical, or cultural assets.
10. The Council will prevent the unjustified loss of existing tourism, cultural and visitor resources and assets.
11. The Council will support the use of local suppliers of goods and services and the creation of apprenticeships and training opportunities for local people in accordance with the requirements of the Local Economy Supplementary Planning Document.

Policy LPA03 of the Local Plan, as noted above, recognises 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. The provision of new well-located employment land and floorspace is essential to the Borough's future economic prosperity.

In addition to Policy LPA03, the Local Plan contains other policies that are relevant to this SPD which, amongst others, include:

- Policy LPA01: Spatial Strategy

- Policy LPA02: Development Principles
- Policy LPA03.1: Strategic Employment Sites
- Policy LPA05: Safeguarded Land
- Policy LPA06: Transport and Travel
- Policy LPA09: Parkside East
- Policy LPA10: Parkside West
- Policy LPB01: St Helens Town Centre and Central Spatial Area
- Policy LPB02: Earlestown Town Centre
- Policy LPC04: Retail and Town Centres

2. Scope of the Local Economy and Social Value SPD

2.1 Proposed SPD Contents

The Local Economy and Social Value SPD will aim to help businesses already located in the Borough to grow or relocate in the Borough, to attract new businesses into the Borough, and to integrate social value at the planning stage of a project, resulting in significant 'added value' benefits to the residents of St Helens.

The Local Economy and Social Value SPD will aim to:

- Make businesses applying for planning permission aware of the advice and practical support available in the Borough for economic development, and pre-application advice.
- Help applicants understand the marketing and impact assessment information required for certain applications and so enable timely processing of applications.
- Inform developers and business of possible sources of funding and grants.
- Encourage the occupiers of new or expanded premises where new jobs are being created to use recruitment methods that will increase the likelihood of recruiting local residents.
- Encourage the use of local organisations to source and help train local residents to work at new or expanded premises, especially through apprenticeships.
- Encourage applicants to seek information on where to find local construction firms, local construction goods suppliers and local general business to business goods suppliers.
- Improve the skills of local people to enable them to take advantage of the resulting employment opportunities.
- Prioritise employment and skills opportunities for young people, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities and those with a limiting long-term illness, care leavers and others deemed vulnerable.
- Enhance the reputation of the developer and create opportunities for future business growth.
- Link developers and end-use employers to economic development support services in St Helens.

The broad context and coverage of the Local Economy and Social Value SPD will be as follows:

- Introduction and Aims/Objectives
- Policy Context – national, regional and local
- Interpretation of Planning Policy

- Support and Advice Available for Local Businesses (including relevant contacts)
- Transport and Travel Planning (including advice and/or support available)
- Information Required for Planning Application Submissions
- Information for Viability Assessments
- Planning Conditions and Section 106 Agreements

3. Time Schedule of SPD Preparation and Next Steps

3.1 Timescale for SPD preparation and adoption

Below is an indicative timescale for the preparation and adoption of the SPD.



3.2 Next Steps

This consultation will run for a minimum of four weeks. Following the consultation, Council Officers will review comments received, which will inform the drafting of the SPD. A public consultation will then be carried out on the draft SPD.

Following the consultation on the draft SPD, comments received will be reviewed with appropriate amendments made to the SPD before it is adopted at a St Helens Cabinet meeting. A Consultation Statement will be produced containing details of all those consulted when preparing the SPD, a summary of the main issues raised and how those issues have been addressed within the SPD.

4. How to get involved

This document has been prepared to identify the scope of the emerging Local Economy and Social Value SPD and raise awareness of, and interest in, the document. Comments are sought on the scope that has been set out through this document and the questions in Section 5 below.

A response form has been created which allows for comments and responses on the questions contained within this document, along with any additional comments if required. This can be found at <https://sthelens.gov.uk/SDP-Scoping-Consultation>

Answering the questions in Section 5 is optional and the Council will also accept other forms of written response.

You can complete the response form and return it by email or post to:

Email: planningpolicy@sthelens.gov.uk

Post: Planning Policy Team, Development Plans, St Helens Borough Council, PO Box 512, St Helens, WA10 9JX.

All comments on this scoping report should be submitted by Thursday 13 June 2024.

5. Consultation Questions

Q1: Do you support the proposal to prepare a Local Economy and Social Value SPD for St Helens? If not, what are the reasons as to why the Council should not prepare a Local Economy and Social Value SPD?

Q2: Do you agree with the broad context and coverage of Local Economy and Social Value SPD, as set out in this document?

Q3: Are there any other matters relating to the local economy and/or social value that should be addressed through the SPD, beyond those set out in this document? If so, what?

Q4: Do you consider that further information could be included in the SPD to enable applicants submitting a planning application. If so, what?

Q5: Are there any specific reports, documents, or guidance that you think we should be considering to inform the SPD?

Q6: What level of detail should the Local Economy and Social Value SPD go into, for example general advice or specific guidance (including case studies)?

Q7: Do you think it would be helpful for the SPD to include a list of plans, documents and information which would be required to support a planning application?

Q8: If you believe a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required, please set out why (please see accompanying SEA and HRA Screening Report for further information).