



Knowsley Council

Knowsley Local Plan

Prescot Town Centre Masterplan SPD 2016-2028

Screening Assessment:

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

January 2016

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This screening assessment is to determine whether the Prescott Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004
- 1.2. A separate assessment has been Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) to determine the possible need for a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) under European Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora (the “Habitats Directive”) and associated Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (“Habitat Regulations”).
- 1.3. The SPD will provide guidance on how policies in the following plans will be applied when considering the development of Prescott Town Centre:
 - Local Plan: Core Strategy (principally CS1, CS6, CS14 and CS20);
 - The objectives of saved policy S2 of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan (UDP); and
 - Policy WM9 of the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan.
- 1.4. The SPD will support local and national policies by setting out the strategy for the development of Prescott Town Centre in the period to 2028. The masterplan seeks to promote the regeneration of the town centre and ensure that its future development delivers the Council’s wider objectives for the sustainable development of the Borough.
- 1.5. The legislative background set out below outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. Section 4 provides a screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the SPD and examines the need for SEA.
- 1.6. The preparation of the SPD will involve the local community in line with the requirements set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and in line with the Council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 1.7. This screening report is based on the content of the consultation version of the Prescott Town Centre Masterplan SPD expected to be published for consultation in February 2016. If necessary the screening report will be refreshed when a final version of the SPD is published for adoption (this should only be necessary if there is a major change to the purpose and content outlined below).

2.0 Legislative Background

- 2.1. The requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) arises from the European Directive 2001/42/EC “on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment” (SEA Directive). This Directive was transposed in UK law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). This legislation places an obligation on local authorities to undertake a SEA on any plan or programme prepared for town and country planning or land use purposes and which sets the framework for future development consent of certain projects. Guidance on the SEA process is provided in Planning Practice Guidance and *A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive* (ODPM, 2005).
- 2.2. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 required Local Authorities to produce Sustainability Appraisals (SA) for all local development documents (see section 39(2)). It is considered best practice to incorporate the requirements of the SEA Directive into a Sustainability Appraisal. However, the 2008 Planning Act removed the requirement to undertake an SA for an SPD, although this did not replace the requirement to establish whether the proposed plan or programme required SEA. (Part 9, Chapter 2, paragraph 180 of the 2008 Planning Act amended section 19, subsection 5 of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act). Therefore this report focuses on screening for SEA and the criteria for establishing whether a full Assessment is needed.
- 2.3. Supplementary planning documents do not require a sustainability appraisal but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan. A strategic environmental assessment is unlikely to be required where a supplementary planning document deals only with a small area at a local level (see [regulation 5\(6\) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)), unless it is considered that there are likely to be significant environmental effects.
- 2.4. Where the Council can demonstrate that any land-use or spatial plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (Regulation 9(3)), or where the proposed development is less than 0.5 hectares in area, a SEA will not be required.
- 2.5. A separate screening exercise to determine whether the SPD requires a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)¹ is being undertaken by MEAS. There is some potential overlap between the two types of assessment; in particular an identified requirement for an “Appropriate Assessment” under the Habitat Regulations will automatically trigger a requirement for SEA

¹ Under the European Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora (the “Habitats Directive”) and associated Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (“Habitat Regulations”)

(unless a “local level” or “minor modification” exemption applies). This report focuses on the SEA screening assessment.

2.6. The Council is required to first make a determination as to whether a Regulation 9 assessment is required, because there is a duty to consult with specified environmental organisations (Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency) when determining the need for SEA if the development falls within the criteria set by this Regulation. The Council will undertake consultation with the organisations named above during its formal consultation period. In situations where SEA is not deemed to be required, the Council has a duty to prepare a statement of its reasons for determining that SEA is not required. The SEA Screening Statement should provide sufficient information to demonstrate whether the SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects. If it is concluded that there are not likely to be significant environmental effects and therefore no need for SEA this statement will clearly indicate the reasons for such a decision.

3.0 Screening for SEA

3.1. The SEA Directive requires SEA to be carried out for specified types of plan or programme (as specified in Regulation 5(2), 5(3) and 5(4)):

- a plan which is prepared for ... town and country planning or land use, and sets the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annex I or II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC ... [*i.e. the EIA Directive*], or;
- a plan which, in view of the likely effect on sites, has been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive [*i.e. effects on Natura 2000 sites*]
- a plan which sets the framework for future development consent of projects; and is the subject of a determination under regulation 9(1) or a direction under regulation 10(3) that it is likely to have significant environmental effects

3.2. The first of the above parameters (from Regulation 5(2)) could, but would not normally, require an SPD to be made subject to SEA. The reasons why it might not are:

- i. It is the NPPF and Development Plan Document(s) (*i.e. the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy, saved policies from the UDP or policies in the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan*) which “sets the framework for future development consents” of EIA development (SPDs are supplementary to these);
- ii. It is possible that an SPD deals with matters which would not fall within the definition of EIA development.

3.3. The second of the parameters identified (from Regulation 5(3)) relates to the Habitats Directive and this is subject to consideration in the report prepared by MEAS.

- 3.4. The third parameter (from Regulation 5(4)), requires consideration of “does the plan set the framework for future development consent of projects?” - in this case (unlike the first parameter) this is not limited to EIA development, but there is potential to find that an SPD – due to its role as a supporting document to development plan documents which have already been subject to an independently examined SA/SEA process - does not “set the framework”. If the SPD “sets the framework for future development consents” in a manner which differs from the Core Strategy / Local Plan, then further consideration of whether it is “likely to have significant environmental effects” is necessary - the “determination under regulation 9(1)”. This requires consideration of the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to the Regulations.
- 3.5. The Council’s screening decision on whether SEA is required is achieved via a step-by-step review using Table 4.1 (below) - first looking at the “Regulation 5 questions”, and then – if necessary - the Regulation 9 / Schedule 1 criteria.

4.0 Assessment

- 4.1. Table 4.1 shows the Council’s assessment in consultation with the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) of whether the Prescot Town Centre Masterplan SPD will require a SEA. The questions are informed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (Regulation 5, Regulation 9 and Schedule 1).

Table 4.1

Establishing the Need for SEA		
Stage	Yes / No	Reason
Part A – Regulation 5 Assessment		
Is the plan of a description set out in Regulation 5(2)?, i.e.: (a) prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, and (b) sets the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annex I or II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, as amended by Council Directive 97/11/EC(a).	No	This SPD is prepared in relation to town and country planning, but does not “set the framework for future development consent for EIA development” because: (i) the policy framework is set at a higher level (Local Plan Core Strategy/ saved policies in the UDP/ Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan / NPPF); and (ii) it doesn’t specifically relate to EIA development The SPD does not modify the policy approaches within : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy or • Saved policies from the adopted Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan or

<p>- and if “yes”, does the Regulation 5(6) exemption potentially apply? [i.e. for (a) a plan which determines the use of a small area at local level; or (b) for a minor modification to a plan].</p> <p>N.B. such an exemption is not available if the plan, programme or modification is likely to have significant environmental effects [as determined under Regulation 9(1)] or it is the subject of a direction under Regulation 10(3) from the Secretary of State.</p> <p>[The Regulation 9 criteria, which would need to be considered in this scenario, are set out below in Part B of this table.]</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan. <p>It provides only guidance on the strategy for the development of Prescott Town Centre to support existing Local Plan policies, and national policy and guidance.</p>
<p>Is the plan of a description set out in Regulation 5(3)?, i.e.: A plan which, in view of the likely effect on sites, has been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>- and if “yes”, does the Regulation 5(6) exemption potentially apply? [i.e. for (a) a plan which determines the use of a small area at local level; or (b) for a minor modification to a plan].</p> <p>N.B. such an exemption is not available if the plan, programme or modification is likely to have significant environmental effects [as determined under Regulation 9(1)] or it is the subject of a direction under Regulation 10(3) from the Secretary of State.</p> <p>[The Regulation 9 criteria, which would need to be considered in this scenario, are set out below in Part B of this table.]</p>	No	<p>The SPD addresses the strategy for the development of Prescott Town Centre, but does not set a policy framework for future development which would have potential effects, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, on one or more Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites.</p> <p>The policy framework for development within Knowsley is set by the NPPF together with the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan. The Local Plan Core Strategy and Joint Waste Local Plan were subject to separate HRA assessments as appropriate (the UDP preceded the requirement for a HRA). The SPD only provides supplementary guidance within the parameters of the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan.</p>
<p>Is the plan of a description set out in Regulation 5(4)? i.e.: (a) sets the framework for future development consent of projects; and</p>	No	<p>The policy framework is set at a higher level by the NPPF, which together with the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside</p>

<p>(b) is the subject of a determination under regulation 9(1) or a direction under regulation 10(3) that it is likely to have significant environmental effects</p>		<p>and Halton Waste Local Plan provide the policy framework for future development. The SPD will only provide additional guidance on the way in which the Council will implement its approach to developer contributions, sought as part of new development in the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan.</p> <p>[As the SPD does not “set the framework”, a determination under regulation 9(1) is not necessary, but as a matter of record and for the avoidance of doubt a discretionary assessment against Schedule 1 is undertaken at Part C which concludes that the SPD is not expected to cause significant environmental effects].</p>
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Part B - Regulation 9 Assessment

(for determining, in relation to plans of certain types, the likely significance of effects on the environment)

N.B. the criteria in this part of the table are only relevant if a determination under Regulation 9(1) has been deemed necessary.

A “determination under Regulation 9(1)” is not necessary in this instance and therefore this part of the table is not relevant but text is retained (in red) for information.

Criteria (1) (a – e) and (2) (a – g) set out below are the criteria for determining under Regulation 9 whether a not a plan of the following types is likely to have significant environmental effects:

- the plan or programme sets the framework for future development consent of projects *[as per Reg 5(4)(b)]*
- the plan or programme determines the use of a small area at local level but is of a type which
 - sets the framework for future development consent of EIA projects [i.e. as described under Reg 5(2)] or
 - requires assessment under the Habitats Directive [i.e. as described under Reg 5(3)] *[as per Reg 5(6)(a)]*
- for a minor modification to a plan or programme which
 - sets the framework for future development consent of EIA projects [i.e. as described under Reg 5(2)] or
 - requires assessment under the Habitats Directive [i.e. as described under Reg 5(3)] *[as per Reg 5(6)(b)]*

The criteria are from Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations and must be taken into account when the responsible authority makes a determination under Regulation 9.

[This determination also requires consultation with the conservation bodies (required by

Regulation 9(2)), and a statement of reasons if it is concluded that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (required by Regulation 9(3))]

Part C – Indicative Assessment against Schedule 1

Assessment of the likely significant effects of the SPD/guidance ²

SEA Directive Criteria	Response	Is there a significant or specific effect beyond that anticipated by the parent policy framework? Yes/No
1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:		
(a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The SPD does not allocate land, specify land uses or identify sites for development. This is done by the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan. The SPD provides guidance in the form of general principles and guidance that aids understanding of the policies in the relevant plans.	No
(b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The SPD has less material weight than the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan. It only provides guidance relating to policy implementation and does not introduce new policies.	No
(c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The SPD encourages development proposals to incorporate sustainable concepts within design parameters to help enhance Prescot Town Centre. These objectives are enshrined in the NPPF, together with related policies within the Local Plan Core	No

² Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC

	Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan.	
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	The Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating SEA) and the Habitat Regulations Assessment for the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy identifies strategic environmental constraints within the Borough. These are assessed and addressed by policies within this document. The SPD relates to development in Prescot Town Centre, and does not alter the approach relating to the environmental issues assessed.	No
(e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The SPD does not provide guidance on matters which have the potential to inform Environmental Statements (EIA) and Habitats Regulations Assessments. The SPD also does not set standards, deemed to meet environmental legislation, and the guidance remains within the parameters of policy approaches within the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan.	No
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The SPD will provide guidance on the strategy for the development of Prescot Town Centre. The overall medium to long-term environmental outcome as a result of the SPD is expected to be an enhancement to the quality and character of the built environment of Prescot Town Centre. Although this effect should be positive, it is not considered to be significant in its magnitude and does not go beyond national and local policy	No

	<p>frameworks.</p> <p>The SPD will not give rise to any significant effects on the environment in addition to those considered as part of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy.</p>	
(b) The cumulative nature of the effects.	<p>Gradual delivery of the improvement to the vitality and viability of Prescott Town Centre over the life of the plan period.</p> <p>The SPD will not give rise to any significant cumulative effects in addition to those considered as part of the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy.</p>	No
(c) The trans-boundary nature of the effects.	<p>The SPD is related only to the implementation of the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan and will have no trans boundary effects beyond those considered in assessments relating to these documents.</p>	No
(d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	<p>No risks as a result of the SPD have been identified.</p>	No
(e) The magnitude and spatial effects of the extent (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	<p>The SPD is provided in the form of general principles and strategy for the development of Prescott Town Centre. This will provide additional clarity on existing policies in the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan. The SPD is not site-specific and does not allocate land, prescribe land uses or identify sites for development.</p> <p>The spatial coverage of the</p>	No

	guidance will relate to the area included in the Prescot Town Centre Masterplan. However, any influence and cumulative effects as a result of the SPD remains moderate and positive.	
(f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:		
i. special natural characteristics or cultural heritage	The SPD will not give rise to any significant effects on natural characteristics or cultural heritage other than those fully considered in the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan, and other SPDs.	No
ii. exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values	The SPD does not allocate land for development. The SPD does not promote particular uses which are likely to lead to environmental standards being exceeded. The SPD will have a beneficial effect in encouraging the implementation of higher environmental standards.	No
iii. intensive land use	The SPD does not allocate land or allocate sites for development. The SPD will not give rise to any significant effects as a result of intensification of land use, beyond those considered as part of the policy approaches of parent documents - the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan; and other area based SPDs.	No
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	There are no landscapes of national or international recognition which will be affected by the SPD. The SPD will not give rise to any	No

	<p>significant effects on natural characteristics in addition to those considered as part of the a Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan; and other area based SPDs. A separate Habitats Regulation Screening Assessment has determined that nearby sites of European significance to Knowsley would not be affected as a result of SPD. It is therefore considered there are no significant effects.</p>	
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Source: Annex 2 of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

5.0 Statement of Reasons for Determination

- 6.1. In reviewing these criteria the Council has concluded that as the SPD does not “set the framework”, a determination under regulation 9(1) Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is therefore not necessary. As a matter of record and for the avoidance of doubt a discretionary assessment against Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 has concluded that the Prescott Town Centre Masterplan SPD would not give cause to anticipate significant environmental effects.
- 6.2. In addition, the Prescott Town Centre Masterplan SPD is not a plan or project which will be implemented in its own right – it expands upon policies within the Local Plan: Core Strategy, saved policies of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan. The relevant policies within the Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy and the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan have already been subject to HRA and these were judged to have no significant effect on the integrity of the European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The separate assessment of the SPD with respect to HRA concludes that there is no need for an “Appropriate Assessment” in the context of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
- 6.3. On the basis of the above, Knowsley Council considers that the Prescott Town Centre Masterplan SPD will not have significant environmental effects beyond those considered by policies in the Local Plan Core Strategy; saved policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan; and the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan, and therefore would not trigger a need for an Appropriate Assessment or Strategic Environmental Assessment.

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