

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 11 July 2024

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director Environment & Regeneration

**PORTFOLIO:** Climate Change

**SUBJECT:** Liverpool City Region Strategic Place Partnership

**WARD(S)** Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To inform Executive Board of the ongoing work by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Homes England to create a Strategic Place Partnership for the City Region. The purpose of this new partnership model is to provide improved governance arrangements to prioritise and coordinate support and investment for residential-led development and housing renewal projects across the Liverpool City Region. This report seeks approvals for the Council to take the necessary steps to contribute to formation of the new Partnership.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board:**

- 1) Note the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Homes England are working with local authority partners to create a Strategic Place Partnership for the Liverpool City Region.**
- 2) Approves entering into a Strategic Place Partnership Memorandum of Understanding with partners, leading to production of a Business Plan and new governance arrangements to be established; and**
- 3) Provides delegated authority to the Director of Economy, Enterprise and Property, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Climate Change to agree details for the formation of the Strategic Place Partnership and finalise Halton's Priorities (Appendix A).**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 In 2023 the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) proposed that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR CA) form a Strategic Place Partnerships (SPP) with Homes England (HE). SPP's are a relatively new model of joint working at the sub-regional scale in England. The purpose is to facilitate greater collaboration at a sub-regional scale to support

delivery of place-based housing growth and regeneration ambitions. This support includes allocation and 'pooling' of grant funding from LCR CA and HE. Combined Authority areas which already have a SPP established include Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire.

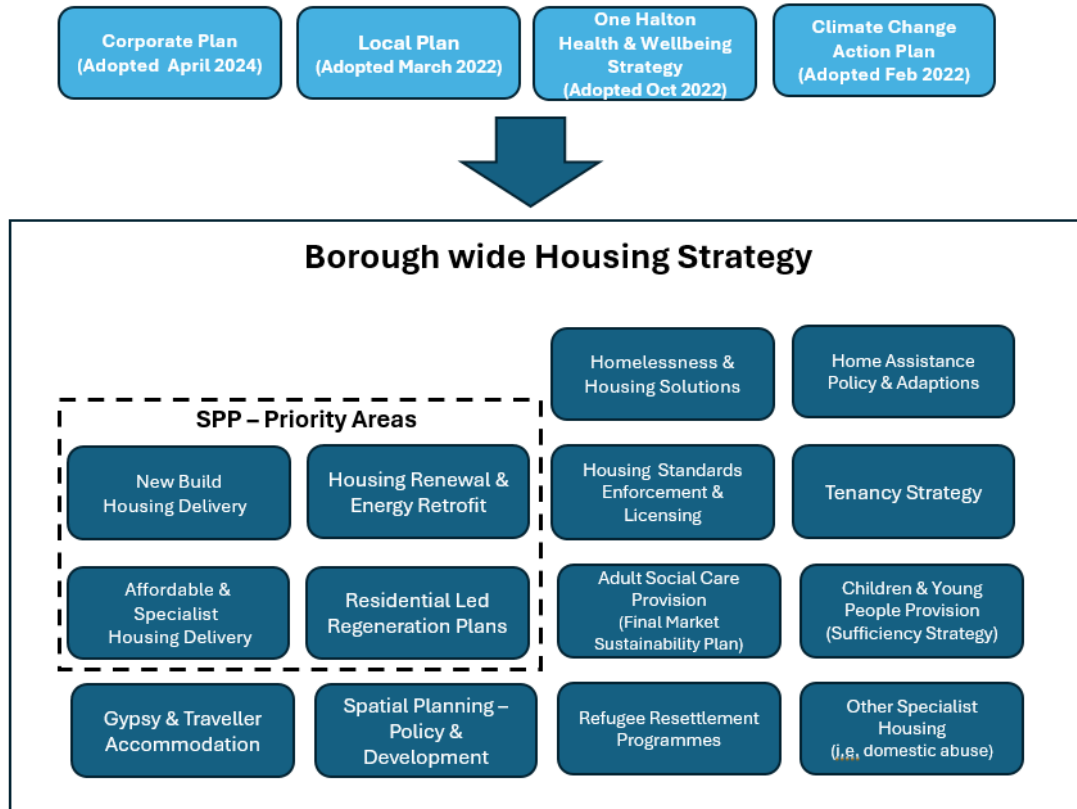
- 3.2 At its meeting on 11 January 2024, the LCR CA Housing and Spatial Planning Advisory Board endorsed the creation of an officer working group to develop a SPP. Halton's input into this working group has been led by the Director of Economy, Enterprise and Property, in liaison with the Director of Planning and Highways.
- 3.3 The working group are finalising a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between HE, LCR CA and the six constituent local authorities. The purpose of the MoU is to provide the broad parameter for how these parties will work together to establish a SPP for the Liverpool City Region. The MoU set outs:
- Purpose and Strategic Objectives for the SPP;
  - MoU will have a term of three years from signing;
  - Requirement that parties will collaborate to co-develop a Partnership Business Plan and deploy resources to aid delivery.
  - Requirement that parties agree joint working principles and governance arrangements, including the creation of a SPP Board.
  - Legal matters, including Freedom of Information, Anti-bribery and non-binding nature of the MoU.
- 3.4 The purpose of the SPP is to enable parties to "work collaboratively and flexibly at all levels of their organisations to explore creative ways to deliver more high-quality homes that will support economic growth, place making and regeneration within the Liverpool City Region". This work is guided by three Strategic Objectives:
- Develop a robust pipeline of investment ready proposals to unlock and accelerate housing delivery and regeneration in the Liverpool City Region – supporting the regions levelling up, economic growth and inclusivity objectives.
  - Realise opportunities to support place-based growth and holistic regeneration solutions to create and grow sustainable neighbourhoods contributing to the region's net zero carbon ambitions; and
  - Improve the supply of high-quality, energy efficient and affordable homes providing greater choice and opportunity for people to access a home in the Liverpool City Region that meets their housing needs.
- 3.5 These strategic objectives align with the Council's own housing regeneration and growth ambitions, with the MoU providing a strong basis for further developing and defining the SPP. It is recommended that Executive Board approves entering the MoU.

- 3.6 It is envisaged that the SPP will run for an initial three-year period. Partners are working towards a formal launch of the SPP in July / August 2024. This requires the following matters to be agreed in advance:
- 3.7 **Year 1 Partnership Business Plan.** To set out how the strategic objectives will be implemented. The Business Plan will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.
- 3.8 The Business Plan will include Halton's housing growth and regeneration priorities for support. Working to the template provided within the Business Plan, draft headline priorities are set out as 'Halton on a Page' (Appendix B). These priorities mirror the Spatial Vision for Halton, as set out in the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP). This recognises a sustainable approach to delivering new homes, which is balanced and complemented by bringing forward a range of employment, retail and leisure opportunities; and supported by ongoing investment in local infrastructure.
- 3.9 Based upon the Halton priorities a more detailed pipeline of housing projects is required. This will provide a site and project specific information to identify the grant funding and capacity support that the LCR CA and HE can 'pool' to help unlock and accelerate housing delivery and regeneration.
- 3.10 **Formalise joint working and governance arrangements.** In line with other Combined Authority area SPP's, it is anticipated that the LCR SPP will be formally chaired by Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor. It is proposed to meet on bi-annual basis, to agree the Business Plan and monitor progress and delivery. These arrangements complement and integrate with the existing governance (and Elected Member representation) provided by the LCR Housing and Spatial Planning Advisory Board.
- 3.11 Delivery of the SPP Business Plan is intended to be coordinated at the City Region level by a Working Group including Officer representation from each local authority area. Additionally, a quarterly 'Halton Place Delivery Group' will provide the opportunity for a single conversation between the Council, LCR CA and HE in respect of Halton's project pipeline. This would include representation from the following Council functions: Planning and Highways; Specialist Housing and Social Care Commissioning; Public Health; and Regeneration Team.
- 3.12 To enable the Council to shape the formation of the SPP, it is recommended that Executive Board provide delegated authority to the Director Economy, Enterprise and Property to agree SPP matters including finalising the Partnership Business Plan and formalising joint working and governance arrangements. This includes final details of Halton's housing growth and regeneration priorities and project pipeline.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 As summarised on the diagram below the SPP Business Plan is focused on support for delivery and implementation of specific areas of the Council's

housing policy responsibilities. At its meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024, the Executive Board approved commissioning a new Borough wide Housing Strategy. A tender exercise for appointment of specialist consultants is currently underway and is anticipated to conclude at the end of July 2024. This will be followed by a 12 month production period including consultation.



- 4.2 Halton’s DALP provides a strong basis for identifying housing growth and regeneration priorities for support via the LCR SPP. This is complemented by housing led development and investment opportunities identified in the Borough wide Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan, and other area-based regeneration plans and strategies. The production of new Borough wide Housing Strategy for Halton will further help define and provide evidence for SPP priorities, particularly in respect of specialist and older people housing.
- 4.3 Notably, the SPP will provide funding and other support to meet housing need in Halton as set out within the DALP. This identifies the need for provision of at least 8,050 (net) additional dwellings from 2014 to 2037, averaging 350 dwelling each year. This includes a net affordable housing need of 119 units each year.
- 4.4 Whilst focussed on housing delivery, funding and support levered into Halton via the SPP can also help achieve wider corporate ambitions. For instance, draft Halton priorities (Appendix A) includes “Town Centre Living”. Housing development which improves the choice and quality of new homes in our town centres, also helps support their regeneration and revitalisation. This approach of bringing wider benefits through residential-led regeneration, aligns with strategies of both the LCR CA and HE.

- 4.5 The establishment of a SPP for the LCR is seen as a precursor to the CA gaining additional housing powers. This would include the CA having strategic oversight of the next Affordable Homes Programme from 2026.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Halton has benefitted significantly for many years from national grant funding from HE and its predecessor organisations (such as English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation). Grant programmes administered by HE include the National Affordable Housing Programme and Specialist Housing Grants. Without HE support regeneration programmes such as Castlefields and Hallwood Park (Southgate), as well as individual developments such as the older people independent living scheme Bakla Fields and Naughton Fields, would not have been viable or delivered.
- 5.2 More recently, LCR CA have enabled access to number of housing related funds including the Brownfield Land Fund, One Public Estate Brownfield Housing Release Fund and home energy retrofit grant schemes. Through pre-development capacity funding, the CA have enabled the Council to undertake development feasibilities to support Council brownfield land disposals for housing.
- 5.3 Whilst the formation of the SPP will not necessarily immediately increase the amount funding available to Halton, it will enable the 'pooling' of LCR CA and HE funding streams, expertise and other resources to support delivering of our priorities. This would also include influencing wider funding decisions, such as CA transportation infrastructure funding.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

Adequate and safe housing provides the security to enable children, young people and families to thrive.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The choice, quality and affordability of the Borough's housing offer is a foundation stone for a strong and sustainable local economy.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Housing standards and conditions is recognised as a wider determinant of Health and wellbeing outcomes of people.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

Provision of affordable and specialist housing is important to supporting individuals and communities who are most vulnerable.

## **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Utilising vacant brownfield sites to deliver more homes and support regeneration will be supported through the SPP.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no significant risks associated with the production of a new Housing Strategy.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are none.

## **9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The SPP will support delivery of housing matters set out within the Climate Change Action Plan. This includes funding for home energy retrofit programmes and supporting delivery of low and zero carbon housing development.

## **10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.

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## Appendix A - Halton Place on a Page (DRAFT)

### Key Contextual Facts

- Population of 128,964 with 79.9% economically active
- Projected 7% population growth, and 14% household growth.
- Projected change of population of older persons, 2021 to 2040 being increase of 34% (over 65) and 70% (over 75)
- Current delivery at 122% of housing need (at end of 2022/23)

### Local Plan Status

The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan was adopted in March 2022 and sets out the long-term spatial vision, strategic priorities and policies for future development in the borough to 2037. The Local Plan is underpinned by desire to contribute to the potential of the Liverpool City Region.

The Spatial Vision for Halton seeks a sustainable approach to meeting local housing needs and developing the residential offer. This sustainable approach is achieved with housing allocations balanced and complemented by bringing forward a range of employment, retail and leisure opportunities. Alongside this the Local Plan is supported by ongoing investment in local infrastructure including the Borough's active travel network to improve connectivity.

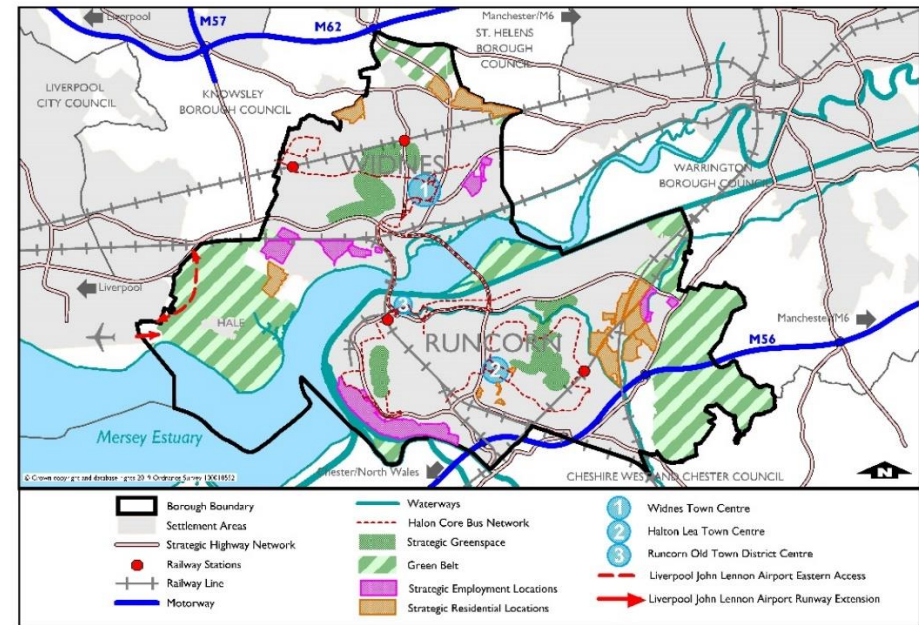
Delivering travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable and low carbon. Halton has a defined transport pipeline to realise these requirements.

The plan defines the need for provision of at least 8,050 (net) additional dwellings from 2014 to 2037, averaging 350 dwelling each year. This includes a net affordable housing need of 119 units each year.

### Housing Growth and Regeneration Focus Areas

Ambitious plans to deliver accelerated growth and regeneration that provide a platform for future generations are identified in the DALP, Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan, and area-based strategies such as Runcorn Town Investment Plan and Widnes Town Centre Vision. Spatial housing priorities include:

- Supporting urban regeneration through sustainable urban extension in both Runcorn and Widnes.
- Continued revitalisation of the Borough's town centres as sustainable places to live and focuses for local communities through increasing choice and quality of the housing offer.
- Housing and neighbourhood renewal programmes with a focus on former Runcorn New Town areas and older terraced streets.



### Focus Areas for SPP Activity

Sustainable Urban Extensions – East Runcorn (Sandymoor, Daresbury & Preston Brook), North Widnes and Halebank.

Town Centre Living – Widnes, Runcorn, Halton Lea.

Neighbourhood Renewal – West Bank and Southern Widnes, former new town areas (including Palacefields).