



Good planning practice case study no 2: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council planning for a low carbon future

Introduction

Knowsley Council has been quick to recognise the benefits of taking both a proactive and realistic approach to environmental and sustainability issues and were one of the first local planning authorities in the North West region to adopt a 'Merton Rule' style renewable energy policy in their Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which was adopted in 2006.

Knowsley are committed to addressing climate change at the local level and are proactively exploring opportunities for low carbon and decentralised energy development, laying the foundations for a successful transition to a local low carbon economy.

Experience of implementing current UDP policy

Knowsley Council adopted its UDP in 2006. Like similar policies across the country, Policy MW7 requires large scale residential, commercial and industrial development to generate 10% of the predicted total energy demand from renewable resources where practicable and viable.

Policy MW7 provides a good starting point for raising awareness of renewable energy with developers, businesses and residents who are involved with major planning applications in the Borough however the current policy does not require new developments to adhere to the energy hierarchy or refer to any specific sustainability measures.

Experience of implementing the policy has found that developers generally only aim to achieve the 10% or just above where the proposal involved a number of buildings. The developers preferred approach is often to install all renewable energy equipment into one or a few of the buildings only. There is no requirement within the policy to incorporate renewable energy technology in all buildings within the development and this can cause issues where developments are phased.

Planning consents are conditioned to ensure the development complies with the 10% renewable energy policy requirement.

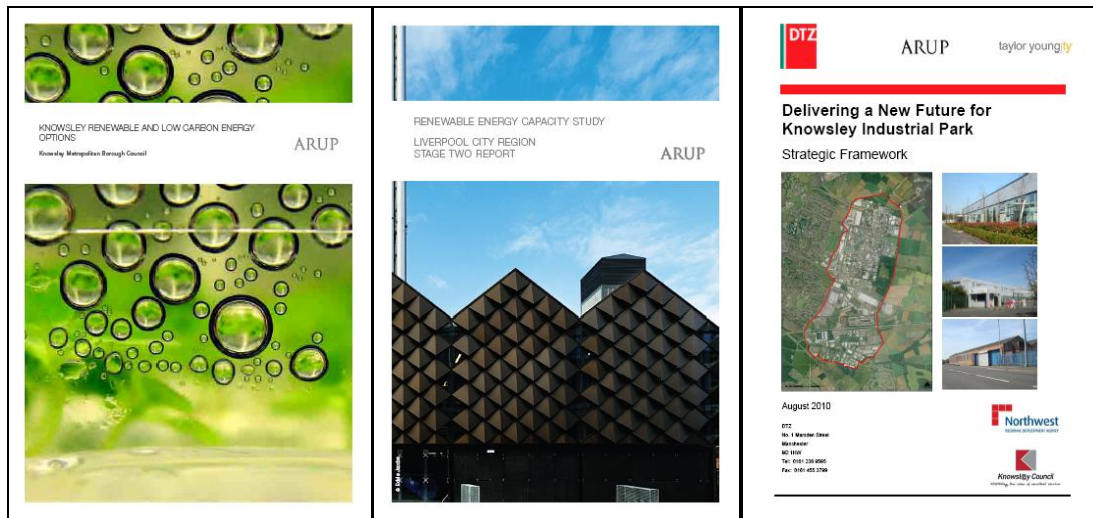
However, it is usually cheaper to reduce the energy consumption of a building than install renewable energy equipment and developments that achieve high energy efficiency standards should also be acknowledged, but the current policy does not contain provisions to take this into account. As long as the development achieves 10% onsite renewables, it satisfies the planning condition, irrespective of whether the building has a very low level of energy efficiency or big carbon footprint.

Knowsley have found that measuring the actual carbon footprint of proposed developments and monitoring of renewable energy installations post consent are the biggest challenges; they currently have no resource or mechanism for monitoring completed developments once constructed, nor do they have any way of knowing whether the equipment, once installed, is actually being used.

Knowsley recognise the policy's limitations are looking to develop a simple and effective way of measuring the carbon footprint of proposed development, and assess the contribution onsite renewable energy equipment can make to offset carbon emissions, as well as developing systems to enable the Council to monitor schemes post consent.

Moving forward, the Council's evidence base and practical experience in implementing Policy MW7 have highlighted how the policy area could be reviewed within the Local Development Framework (LDF). The new approach within the LDF Core Strategy and Sustainability in Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is likely to look at the wider implications of sustainability, including energy efficiency, national sustainability assessment methods, off-site / near site provision, and decentralised energy systems.

LDF evidence base development



Knowsley Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Energy Options

(Arup, 2009)

Knowsley has been at the forefront of developing a robust and fit for purpose evidence base within Liverpool City Region. The **Knowsley Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Energy Options study**, was one of the catalysts for developing a wider piece of work at the Liverpool City Region level and much of the methodology and analysis within the LCR study have been drawn from Knowsley's study.

The study's recommendations fall within three key areas:

- Potential Projects
- Policy Recommendations
- Increased Business Support

The study's proposals emphasised that the Council and its partners have made notable progress already but need to be more conscious of, and adopt a more proactive approach to, the implications of the climate change agenda whenever key decisions are being made.

Liverpool City Region (LCR) Renewable Energy Capacity Study

(Arup, 2010)

The Merseyside districts and neighbouring authorities of Warrington and West Lancashire commissioned the **LCR Renewable Energy Capacity Study**, which was finalised in 2010. The study considered the status and potential of renewable energy development at a strategic level.

Knowsley's involvement within the LCR work allowed the broad methodology of the Borough's own work to be transferred to neighbouring districts, therefore allowing for a

consistent picture of renewable and low carbon opportunities to be developed across the sub region. It also allowed Knowsley's initial findings to be refined as more evidence became available and regulatory / policy changes came into operation.

The results provide a key strand of evidence for the emerging LDFs and ensure a consistent approach is adopted among the partner authorities. It will also inform strategic thinking in respect of renewable energy and the low carbon economy for the Liverpool City Region. For that reason, the Mersey Partnership and LCR Environment and Waste Board were commissioning partners for the study.

The study has shown that the Liverpool City Region and wider study area is well placed to meet the challenges of the climate change agenda, as it has significant potential for deploying renewable and low carbon energy technology to support a planned transformation to a low carbon economy, which is a key theme for the City Region and its Multi Area Agreement.

Delivering a new future for Knowsley Industrial Park (KIP) – Strategic Framework

(DTZ, Arup and Taylor Young, 2010)

To provide a clear framework for investment in KIP over the next 15 years and provide a robust evidence base for the LDF, the Council and the North West Development Agency (NWDA) commissioned **Delivering a New Future for Knowsley Industrial Park: Strategic Framework**.

The primary objective of the study is to produce an independent review of the future role of KIP, to reinforce its potential capacity as key regional site, and to maximise the benefits that KIP can contribute to the employment base and low carbon infrastructure for Knowsley and the wider City Region.

The review will provide a clear set of recommendations, including how the Borough can optimise low carbon opportunities identified by earlier studies at the sub-regional and Borough-wide levels, and facilitate the transition toward a low carbon business community within the park.

Next steps for Knowsley

The main recommendations of the evidence base studies have been drawn into an Action Plan which seeks to drive implementation of specific projects. This includes the recommendation to attract further renewable energy businesses to join those currently operating from KIP to build a stronger cluster or "hub" of such businesses in Knowsley.

In summary the Action Plan focuses on six themes:

- Support for (targeted) major businesses and the wider business community;
- Opportunities through regeneration programmes;
- Knowsley Industrial Park/green energy park/biomass hub proposals;
- Housing opportunities for green energy including energy efficiency;
- Employment and Skills;
- Delivering the Liverpool City Region Low Carbon Economy Action Plan.

To deliver the key elements of the Action Plan the Council, and its partners, are now developing a targeted approach to identifying opportunities for external funding and other resources to support specific projects

Emerging LDF policy

Following completion of the evidence base studies, the findings and recommendations will be used to underpin the emerging policy framework within the LDF **Core Strategy** and **Sustainability in Design and Construction SPD**.

Knowsley is making good progress with the preparation of the LDF and the Core Strategy is currently at the “Preferred Options” consultation stage.

In the context of low carbon development and infrastructure it is expected that the consultation document will explore:

- the implementation of national sustainable build standards, such as BREEAM and Code for Sustainable Homes (CfSH);
- the preferred mechanism for facilitating low carbon / renewable energy development within identified opportunity areas at KIP; and
- new delivery and funding tools.

Sub-regional joint working

Knowsley is also part of a wider project with other Merseyside local authorities looking to develop awareness and expertise on renewables amongst community groups and planners. The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) sponsored project involves mentoring key individuals, planning development toolkits and undertaking a feasibility study for a special purpose vehicle that can help coordinate fundraising and major installations. The project is led by the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service, in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust.

Further information

Knowsley UDP

http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/pdf/unitary_development_plan.pdf

Knowsley Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Options Study

http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/PDF/KMBC_report_rev230709.pdf

Liverpool City Region Renewable Energy Capacity Study

<http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/residents/building-and-planning/development-plans-and-policy/local-development-framework-1/ldf-evidence-base.aspx>

Delivering a new future for Knowsley Industrial Park – Strategic Framework

<http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/pdf/KIPStrategicFramework.pdf>

Knowsley LDF

www.knowsley.gov.uk/ldf

Or contact the Places and Neighbourhoods team on 0151 443 2326

This case study forms part of the CLASP technical support and training programme for North West local planning authorities, delivered by Envirolink, Quantum Strategy & Technology and AECOM (2011).