

1. National Planning Policy

Since the adoption of the first UDP there have been very significant changes to National Planning Policy.

Sustainable Development

The Government's Sustainable Development Strategy sets out the need to integrate sustainable development into development plan preparation. Sustainable development is commonly defined as:-

“Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The four aims of sustainable development as defined by the Government are:-

- ◆ Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- ◆ Effective protection of the environment
- ◆ Prudent use of natural resources
- ◆ Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment

The quest for sustainable development now permeates national, regional and local policy making. The influence of the Borough's Agenda 21 Plan and the way in which this new UDP has been appraised against sustainability criteria are described in later sections of this chapter and Chapter 5 respectively.

Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's)

Government policy on topics including transport, housing and urban regeneration has changed markedly since the first UDP was prepared. This is reflected in revised versions of Planning Policy Guidance notes which set out the Government's policies on different aspects of planning.

PPG3 (Housing) is particularly significant for the new UDP as it governs the Council's approach to housing development. In particular, it promotes an increased emphasis on urban regeneration and the use of previously-developed (*brownfield*) land for new housing at higher average densities than in the past.

PPG13 (Transport) has also been revised to emphasise the importance of planning for public transport and alternatives to the private car.

Planning Reform and Local Development Documents

Since work commenced on the Replacement UDP the government has introduced a new plan-making system. At the local level the UDP will be replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF).

In order to continue to provide development plan coverage transitional provisions were introduced so that a smooth transition from an adopted UDP to the new LDF can be made. In practice this means that the policies and proposals of the UDP are automatically “saved” and will form the basis of the LDF until all or parts of it are replaced by new Development Plan Documents (DPD’s). However, the Council has taken account of Government guidance on transitional arrangements between the new and old systems to ensure a smooth transition from a Unitary Development Plan to a Local Development Framework (LDF).

The UDP therefore incorporates the following elements which, we are advised, represent the principles of the new LDF's:-

- A clear strategic vision for their area;
- More succinct text and policies;
- The omission of unnecessary or repetitive policies;
- Greater local focus in policies;
- Achievement of effective community participation in developing policies.

The UDP includes those elements of the new LDF format that can be adopted under current legislation so as to assist in making a smooth and rapid transition to the new development plan system.

2. The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) provides a spatial strategy within which individual Council’s development plans and local transport plans can be prepared. It provides the broad development framework for the region, identifying the scale and distribution of housing development up to 2016 and the priorities for environment transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals and waste treatment and disposal. It provides the longer term planning framework for the Northwest Development Agency’s Regional Economic Strategy. It will also inform the strategies and programmes of other national and regional agencies, private sector companies and infrastructure and service providers. It also now forms part of the statutory development plan (along with the UDP).

Following a Public Examination into draft RPG in 2001, the Government issued a revised version for consultation in May 2002. The Deputy Prime Minister issued the final version in March 2003.

The overriding aim of RSS is to promote sustainable patterns of spatial development and physical change. RSS’s Core Development Principles deal with:-

- Economy in the use of land and buildings;
- Enhancing the quality of life;
- Quality in new development;
- Promoting sustainable economic growth, competitiveness and social inclusion.

The Spatial Development Framework of RPG establishes the North West Metropolitan Area (which stretches from Liverpool to Manchester and includes Wigan Borough) as the focus for new development and urban renaissance resources. It gives priority to development and regeneration of the city centres of Manchester/Salford and Liverpool and their respective surrounding inner areas. In other parts of the North West Metropolitan Area (including Wigan Borough), priority will be given to development which will enhance the overall quality of life where there are concentrations of social, economic and environmental problems.

A full review of RSS has now resulted in the production of a draft revised RSS which was submitted to the Secretary of State in January 2006.

3. The Regional Economic Strategy

The Regional Economic Strategy for the North West was revised in 2006 by the North West Development Agency (NWDA). It looks forward over 20 years to a vision of what the Northwest would be like if its potential was realised:

A dynamic sustainable international economy, which competes on the basis of knowledge, advanced technology and an excellent quality of life for all where:

1. Productivity and enterprise levels are high, driven by innovation, leadership excellence and high skills; and carbon emissions are low.
2. Manchester and Liverpool are vibrant European Cities and, with Preston, key drivers of city-regional growth.
3. Growth opportunities around Crewe, Chester, Warrington, Lancaster and Carlisle are fully developed.
4. Key growth assets are fully utilised, (priority Sectors, the Higher Education and Science Base, Ports/Airports, Strategic Regional Sites, the Natural Environment especially the Lake District, and the Rural Economy.)
5. The economies of East Lancashire, Blackpool, Barrow and West Cumbria are regenerated.
6. Employment rates are high and concentrations of low employment are eliminated.

There are three major drivers to improving the Northwest's economic performance and achieving the overall goals of the vision:

1. Improving productivity and growing the market – particularly in terms of economic output per person employed. This means retaining and increasing the number of higher added-value jobs in the region by investing in innovation, R&D, leadership and higher level skills.
2. Growing the size and capability of the workforce – getting more people into work, especially in our most deprived areas, amongst disadvantaged communities and areas remote from growth. This means ensuring people have the skills to work, linking people to nearby job opportunities and encouraging more new businesses.
3. Creating the right conditions for sustainable growth and private sector investment – through investing in the region's environment, culture, infrastructure and communities. This underpins everything in the strategy.

The NWDA commissioned an economic study of the Mersey Belt sub-region (an area consistent with the North West Metropolitan Area identified in RSS) in 2001/02. Its primary purpose was to review and update the concept and understanding of the Mersey Belt and realise greater representation within it of businesses in the target sectors. The final report identified a 'gap' in the provision of sites for the 7 target business sectors, centred on Wigan Borough. It also recognised the potential for a regional park with major investment in leisure, tourism and sport, to help improve the environment and image of 'south central Wigan'.

4. The Greater Manchester Strategic Planning Framework

The framework was originally approved by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) in October 1997 and was reviewed in 1999. Its purpose was to interpret the implications of the then Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG 13) for Greater Manchester and to provide a context for RPG and UDP reviews.

With the issue of new RSS and the advent of a new Greater Manchester Strategy (described below), the strategic planning framework will need to be further updated. However, its principles remain broadly valid:-

- a focus on regeneration and sustainability;
- promotion of sustainable neighbourhoods;
- a holistic approach to urban renewal;
- competing in the global economy;
- enhancing urban centres;
- a dynamic and accessible regional centre;
- sustainable growth of Manchester Airport;
- high quality sustainable transport;
- improving the urban fringe and countryside;
- reducing population loss from the conurbation's inner areas.

5. The Greater Manchester Strategy

AGMA has produced a Strategy that reflects the increasing need for a range of agencies across the different sectors to co-operate and plan at the sub-regional level. The Strategy is intended to set out a comprehensive vision for Greater Manchester

... to become a world class city region at the heart of a thriving North West, capable of successfully competing internationally for investment, jobs and visitors. It needs to provide a vibrant, safe and healthy environment in which to live work and earn, in a cohesive manner that enables people of all ages, communities and cultural backgrounds to reach their full potential.

Stemming from this vision are seven key themes:-

- promoting a dynamic economy;
- enhancing the Regional Centre;

- promoting culture, sport and tourism;
- improving connectivity;
- raising levels of education and skills;
- creating sustainable communities;
- reducing crime;
- improving health and healthcare.

The strategy's spatial framework recognises that issues such as health, crime, poor housing and deprivation tend to be concentrated in the urban core areas. It also identifies opportunities which, in Wigan Borough, include the Regional Park, the Leigh Guided Busway and the Wigan integrated hub together with the A5225. AGMA launched the Strategy in June 2003.

6. Local Policy

The UDP is one of the principal means by which the Council sets out its *spatial strategy* for the Borough. This means that it must show how the Council's and the community's vision for the future will be translated into action on the ground. The vision for the Borough's future is contained in the Community Plan. The new UDP needs to give spatial expression to the Community Plan. It can only take account of the land-use consequences of policies and programmes for the environment, economic development, housing, health, transport, education, community safety and culture and demonstrate how it will help to put them into effect. In doing so it will link closely the Council's Corporate Plan, the Local Transport Plan, the Agenda 21 Plan and the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

The Community Plan

The Local Government Act 2000 gives local authorities a new duty to promote the economic, environmental and social well being of their area. Community planning, led by a 'Local Strategic Partnership' (LSP) is an important part of that process, with the preparation of a Community Plan at its heart.

In Wigan, the Leader's Forum is at the forefront of our LSP. The Forum brings together the voluntary and private sectors, the community and a wide range of public sector organisations, including the Council. Its mission is:-

To provide leadership and a strategic vision for partnership working in the Borough. To speak for the people and to create a better place to live and work by co-ordinating partnership activity and producing the Community Plan.

The overall structure of our LSP comprises seven thematic partnerships the Township Forums, Encompass – the Community Network as well as the Board itself. One of these in particular, the Environment and Development Partnership, has played an important role in the preparation of the plan, as a consultative body and by scrutinising the Sustainability Appraisal.

The Community Plan is the overall strategic plan for the Borough. It has been influenced by national and regional policies and by local needs and priorities, established through intensive partnership and consultation processes. The Community Plan's Vision for the Borough 20 years from now is:-

"A place where people matter and you can afford to live the life you want."

The vision is expressed in the following goals:-

1. To achieve a good standard of living for all and reduce poverty.
2. To ensure similar chances of staying healthy.
3. High aspirations, education and skills.
4. A strong modern, local economy.
5. Easy travel without having to use a car.
6. Provide access to decent homes in clean, safe neighbourhoods.
7. Make the Borough one of the most environmentally friendly in the region.
8. Increase participation in community and cultural activities.

The Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out how the Council will address those priorities within the Community Plan that relate to Council services. Together with the Community Plan, it provides the context for the Council's statutory policy framework, of which the UDP is a part.

The Council's four Political Principles guide the way in which policy, services, community engagement and performance are linked. They are:-

- Performance – to secure the best possible services to meet the expressed needs of citizens and achieve continuous improvements in performance;
- Potential – to provide the opportunity for all citizens to develop their potential whatever their background without discrimination.;
- Place – to make the Borough a more attractive place for people to live and to attract new employment and investment.;
- Partnership – to act in the interests of the whole community.

The Local Agenda 21 Plan

The Borough's Agenda 21 Plan was adopted by the Council in August 2000 following widespread consultation with local people and businesses and various public sector agencies. Its approach was grouped under four main issues:-

- Understanding the problems and being part of the solutions
- The Economy
- Social issues
- The Environment

The plan sets out 26 Key Themes which represent the Borough's main priorities in the pursuit of sustainable development. These Key Themes have informed the Community Plan and the UDP review. They have also influenced the sustainability criteria used in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Plan.

The Local Transport Plan

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is a key part of the Government's and local authorities' commitment to integrated transport policy. Wigan Borough is covered by the Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan 2, a five-year plan covering the period 2006/07 to 2010/11.

An Annual Progress Report is submitted to the Government setting out how LTP resources have been spent in the past year and the progress being made in meeting local transport objectives.

LTP2 sets out eight key themes that identify how transport can help to deliver Greater Manchester's ambitions for economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection and improve quality of life. The key themes are:-

- Promoting a dynamic economy
- Enhancing the Regional Centre
- Promoting culture sport and tourism
- Improving connectivity
- Raising levels of education and skills
- Creating sustainable communities
- Reducing crime
- Improving health and healthcare services

Government guidance requires that the policies of the UDP are in accordance with the broad objectives and principles of the current LTP.

There are a range of issues in the LTP which have land use implications and these are reflected in the UDP. They include matters such as strategies for cycling and pedestrians, proposals for traffic management and public transport interchanges and quality freight partnerships.

The Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy, prepared by the Housing Partnership, forms part of the Council's Capital Investment Strategy. It sets out the Authority's responsibility towards its tenants and residents to make sure that the best use is made of all housing in its area. It is a comprehensive, forward-looking strategy which encompasses the Council's vision for the future and has been developed using a corporate approach.

The Strategy aims to provide a decent home for all by the year 2010 through three *dimensions*:-

- Neighbourhood Renewal
- People and Choice
- Quality Homes

Clear priorities are set which include neighbourhood renewal and focusing on declining Council estates and pre-1919 clusters of private sector housing. Interventions are pragmatic, building on past success but with innovation.

The Economic Development Strategy

The Council works very closely with the local business community to plan the strategic framework and implementation mechanisms for economic development. The 'Wigan Borough Partnership' (WBP) is the Economic Partnership for the Borough (one of the seven thematic strategic partnerships within the Local Strategic Partnership structure) and its principal role is to develop the Economic Development Strategy for the Borough and to oversee the strategy's implementation. The Wigan Economic Development Plan was approved by the Council in 2005 and which articulates the economic development strategy for the Borough.

The plan's vision is:

"Before the year 2020, the Borough will be:

- *One of the best places to live and work with access to all the North West has to offer*
- *A prosperous community of skilled people and successful businesses."*

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS) was initially endorsed by the Leader's Forum, the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership in March 2001 and was updated in September 2002. It has been prepared within the context of the Community Plan and complements the UDP.

The NRS has five main roles:-

- Provides a vision which balances the needs and aspirations of our various communities;
- Provides a framework for investment;
- Supports and justifies bids for external resources;
- Acts as a framework for delivery of projects and services by the Borough's key agencies;
- Acts as the Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy.