

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board  
**DATE:** 6<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director - Environment  
**SUBJECT:** Housing Growth Points  
**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To inform Members of progress in respect of our Expression of Interest for Halton for Growth Point Status since the previous report of the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2007.

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

- (1) ratify the actions taken following the submission of the Growth Point Expression of Interest;**
- (2) authorise officers to work with our partners in the Mid-Mersey area and where appropriate private landowners to further work on the successful delivery of the Growth Point agenda;**
- (3) approve that Halton offer to act as ‘Lead Authority’ for the Mid-Mersey Growth Point; and**
- (4) note the intention to work with Peel Holdings to produce a Masterplan and Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to inform the development of the Runcorn Docklands site, in advance of the previously proposed date of 2010 for production of this SPD as contained in the 2007 Local Development Scheme.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1. Following publication of proposals to extend the Government’s Growth Points and Eco Towns programme to cover the north of England in the Housing Green Paper (July 2007) we were invited to submit an Expression of Interest (Eol) to Government Office by 31<sup>st</sup> October.
- 3.2. The Merseyside Policy Unit (MPU) co-ordinated submission of a joint Eol on behalf of Halton and the other Merseyside authorities, divided into two potential growth areas centred on Liverpool and Wirral Waterfronts, and Halton and St.Helens.
- 3.3. As Halton and St.Helens are grouped with Warrington under the title ‘Mid-Mersey’ for Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) housing matters,

Warrington were approached with a view to submitting a joint Mid-Mersey proposal but they initially declined choosing to submit their own stand-alone Eol to GONW.

- 3.4. Following post submission advice from GONW agreement has now been reached with Warrington to co-ordinate their proposals with those from Halton / St.Helens under the "Mid Mersey" banner.
- 3.5. DCLG subsequently requested significant post submission reassurances and information, principally in respect of flood risk, transport, affordable housing and governance. Significant joint working has therefore been undertaken involving colleagues from St.Helens, Warrington, GONW, the Environment Agency, the Highways Agency, Mersey Travel and United Utilities to furnish the additional material requested.
- 3.6. As previously reported to Members, Halton's Eol was dependant upon bringing forward sites within the Runcorn and Weston Docklands Regeneration Area (Halton UDP). The landowner Peel Holdings are intent on bringing this site forward as a matter of urgency and have indicated that they wish to work in partnership with the Council to produce a Masterplan to be incorporated into Planning Policy as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in a manner similar to the joint working with English Partnerships on Sandymoor.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Growth Point Status would have implications for the Local Development Framework. Delivery would be heavily dependant upon development around Runcorn Docks and this would have implications for the Core Strategy and subsequent development plan documents. This would introduce significant population numbers into an area currently sparsely populated and generate service requirements. Integration with Runcorn Old Town would be an important element to the wider success of this proposal.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 No other implications.

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

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

Halton's' contribution to the Mid-Mersey Growth Point is largely dependant upon development around the Runcorn Docks area. This will increase the population within a sparsely populated area generating demands for services and facilities for children and young people.

- 6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**  
Will provide additional housing opportunities, contribute to improving the image of the Borough and support continued economic development. The proposed development should help improve accessibility to the Runcorn College Campus.
- 6.3 A Healthy Halton**  
The proposed development will regenerate underused former industrial land and be expected to contribute towards healthy travel options.
- 6.4 A Safer Halton**  
The proposed development will regenerate underused former industrial land and be expected to adopt design principles as contained in the Designing for Community Safety SPD.
- 6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**  
The proposed development will directly regenerate a significant area within a previously defined Regeneration Area and will increase the local population within the catchment of Runcorn Old Town centre and contribute towards further improving the image of the borough.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

The Growth Point proposal is primarily based upon the development of land within a single ownership in a previously allocated Regeneration Area.

Without this, delivery of the additional units required under the Growth Point status would not be achievable without release of greenfield sites elsewhere within the Borough that the Council has not previously allocated.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no equality and diversity issues contained in the report.

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

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
The Housing Green Paper (July 2007)	Rutland House	Alasdair Cross
Merseyside Expression of Interest (Halton & St.Helens)	Rutland House	Alasdair Cross
Mid-Mersey Letter to GONW 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2008	Rutland House	Alasdair Cross

Mid-Mersey Letter to GONW 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2008	Rutland House	Alasdair Cross
Mid-Mersey Letter to GONW 31st January 2008	Rutland House	Alasdair Cross