



**Social Value in Planning
Supplementary Planning Document**

Scoping Report
June 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is this document?

This scoping report is the first step in preparing a Local Economy and Social Value Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD will provide detailed guidance on the interpretation and implementation of policies within the Halton's Local Plan period (2022-2037)

The purpose of this document is to engage key stakeholders in considering the scope and content of the SPD.

The responses on this scoping report will inform the preparation of a draft SPD, which will then in turn be published for consultation before it is then adopted. Once adopted the SPD will carry full weight as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

1.2 The Local Economy within the Borough of Halton

Halton is a unitary authority located in the North West of England which straddles the upper estuary of the River Mersey. It is located to the east of Liverpool City with the Borough of St Helens to the north, Warrington to the east and rural north Cheshire lying to the south. Home to 128,432 people, Halton lies within the core of the Liverpool City Region with excellent transport linkages to the rest of the country. Halton's prime location is well located to accommodate the growth of both new and existing businesses. Halton still has an Industrial footprint, however there is a number of Internationally recognised Science, technology and research areas, a significant amount of Logistical hubs located in the borough, providing a wide range of employment opportunities for residents.

1.3 What is Social Value?

Social value is a consideration of how a proposed activity might also improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area. It describes the difference an organisation, project or procurement can make to the local area and communities within it. It goes beyond financial value and considers how activities can increase equality, improve well-being and develop environmental sustainability, and is about maximising the local benefit that the Council can help create in everything it does and support the Council's wider aspirations related to community wealth building and inclusive growth.

The Council has a legal duty to consider social value in service contracts¹, as well as goods or works contracts where there is a service element, above a prescribed financial threshold, however, the Council can implement an approach to social value as wide as is practicable in order to optimise outcomes from procurement and

¹ [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act 2012](#)

commissioning activities. With direct implications to planning applications, there will be an expectation that developers who submit a planning application with more than 10 dwellings or 9290sqm (employment) will work with Halton's Employment Partnership to identify training and work opportunities or provide a commuted sum via a S106 agreement, in line with good practice and the DALP policy ED2.5, the Council will also consider where such activity might deliver greater social value.

Whilst there are no specific 'hooks' within the Local Plan for a separate Economy & Social Value SPD, thus reducing the need for a separate document and any repetition and overlap of similar information and guidance that that may create.

1.4 SPD Links with National Policy and Legislation

The Local Economy and Social Value SPD will be produced so it is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Regard will also be had to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

1.5 SPD Links with Halton Borough Council Local Plan up to 2037 (2022)

The Local Economy and Social Value SPD will be prepared to provide further guidance in relation to the interpretation and implementation of the policies in the Local Plan, in particular, Policy ED2: Employment Development, which states:

Policy ED2: Employment Development

1. Within Primarily Employment Areas development, for office, research and development, light industrial, factory or storage and distribution uses will normally be acceptable.
2. Redevelopment and regeneration within existing employment areas and Employment Renewal Areas will be supported where they make an improvement in the use of the site for employment purposes, having regard to:
 - a. The quality and type of employment floorspace provided;
 - b. The quality, type, number and density of jobs to be accommodated; and
 - c. The environmental quality of the site.
3. Employment uses outside of Primarily Employment Areas, Employment Allocations or Strategic Employment Sites will only be supported where they meet all of the requirements of Policy GR2: Amenity and they are considered to be of an appropriate scale and character for the area.
4. All proposals for new employment development, including extensions to existing properties, must where appropriate :
 - a. Be compatible with existing and proposed surrounding uses;
 - b. Not have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the locality in terms of its size, scale, materials, design and siting;

- c. Be designed to allow for future flexibility for a range of uses, including future subdivision and/or amalgamation for a range of business accommodation;
- d. Have an adequate access that would not create a traffic hazard or have an undue environmental impact;
- e. Be served by public transport and provide pedestrian and cycle links to adjacent residential areas;
- f. Design storage areas to minimise visual intrusion;
- g. Make adequate provision of space for on-site servicing and, where appropriate, waiting goods vehicles;
- h. Provide adequate screening, if the layout and design cannot be amended in other ways, to obscure or conceal any unsightly feature of the development;
- i. Locate security fencing, where required, to the internal edge of any perimeter landscaping; and
- j. Provide substantial peripheral landscaping where sites adjoin residential areas, open countryside or Green Belt areas.

5. Where development proposals come forward for large scale employment generating uses, obligations will be encouraged for training and recruitment of local people for both the end use and the supply chain.

6. The Council will seek to retain existing commercial/industrial (Office, Research and development, and light industry, factory or storage and distribution uses), unless it can be demonstrated that, the continued use of the site/premise for its existing use is no longer viable in terms of its operation of the existing use, building age and format and that it is not commercially viable to redevelop the land or refurbish the premises for its existing use.

Marketing of the land/property will be required to indicate that there is no demand for the land/property in its existing use.

Details of the current occupation of the buildings, and where this function would be relocated, will also be required.

Where an application relies upon a marketing exercise to demonstrate that there is no demand for the land/premises in its current use, the applicant will be expected to submit evidence to demonstrate that the marketing was adequate and that no reasonable offers were refused. This will include evidence demonstrating that:

- i. The marketing has been undertaken by an appropriate agent or surveyor at a price which reflects the current market or rental value of the land/premises for its current use and that no reasonable offer has been refused.
- ii. The land/premises has been marketed for an appropriate period of time which will usually be for 12 months.
- iii. The land/premises has been regularly advertised and targeted at the appropriate audience. Consideration will be given to the nature and frequency of advertisements in the press or specialist trade networks etc. and contact with local property agents.

In certain cases, for example where a significant departure from policy is proposed, the Council may seek to independently verify the submitted evidence, and the applicant will be required to bear the costs of independent verification.

Policy ED2 of the Local Plan, as noted above, recognises the need to work in partnership with local communities and businesses to deliver economic growth, to strengthen the local business base, and to increase aspiration, skills, and employment in the Borough. The provision of new well-located employment land and floorspace is essential to the Borough's future economic prosperity.

In addition to Policy ED2, the Local Plan contains other policies that are relevant to this SPD which, amongst others, include:

- Policy CS(R)1: Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R) 4: Strategic Employment Sites
- Policy CS(R) 3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility

2. Scope of the Local Economy and Social Value SPD

2.1 Proposed SPD Contents

The Local Economy and Social Value SPD will aim to help

- businesses already located in the Borough to grow or relocate in the Borough,
- to attract new businesses into the Borough,

and to integrate social value at the planning stage of a project, resulting in significant 'added value' benefits to the residents of Halton.

The Local Economy and Social Value SPD will aim to:

- Businesses applying for planning permission to be made aware of Halton Employment Partnership who can provide advice and practical support available in the Borough for economic development.
- Inform developers and business of possible sources of funding and grants.
- Encourage the occupiers of new or expanded premises where new jobs are being created to use recruitment methods that will increase the likelihood of recruiting local residents.
- Encourage the use of local organisations to source and help train local residents to work at new or expanded premises, especially through apprenticeships.
- Encourage applicants to seek information on where to find local construction firms, local construction goods suppliers and local general business to business goods suppliers.
- Improve the skills of local people to enable them to take advantage of the resulting employment opportunities.
- Prioritise employment and skills opportunities for young people, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities and those with a limiting long-term illness, care leavers and others deemed vulnerable.
- Enhance the reputation of the developer and create opportunities for future business growth.
- Link developers and end-use employers to economic development support services in Halton.
- The broad context and coverage of the Local Economy and Social Value SPD will be as follows:
 - Introduction and Aims/Objectives
 - Policy Context – national, regional and local
 - Interpretation of Planning Policy

- Support and Advice Available for Local Businesses (including relevant contacts)
- Transport and Travel Planning (including advice and/or support available)
- Information Required for Planning Application Submissions
- Information for Viability Assessments
- Planning Conditions and Section 106 Agreements

3. Time Schedule of SPD Preparation and Next Steps

3.1 Timescale for SPD preparation and adoption

Below is an indicative timescale for the preparation and adoption of the SPD.



3.2 Next Steps

This consultation will run for 6 weeks. Following the consultation, Council Officers will review comments received, which will inform the drafting of the SPD. A public consultation will then be carried out on the draft SPD.

Following the consultation on the draft SPD, comments received will be reviewed with appropriate amendments made to the SPD before it is adopted at a Halton Borough Council Executive Board meeting. A Consultation Statement will be produced containing details of all those consulted when preparing the SPD, a summary of the main issues raised and how those issues have been addressed within the SPD.

4. How to get involved

This document has been prepared to identify the scope of the emerging Local Economy and Social Value SPD and raise awareness of, and interest in, the document. Comments are sought on the scope that has been set out through this document and the questions in Section 5 below.

A response form has been created which allows for comments and responses on the questions contained within this document, along with any additional comments if required. This can be found at <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/Pe9z7rDD8e>

Answering the questions in Section 5 is optional and the Council will also accept other forms of written response.

You can complete and return any comments by email or post to:

Email: forwardplanning@halton.gov.uk

Post: Planning Policy Team, Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes, WA8 7QF

All comments on this scoping report should be submitted by Friday 25th July 2025.

5.Consultation Questions

Q1: Do you support the proposal to prepare a Local Economy & Social Value SPD for Halton? If not, what are the reasons as to why the Council should not prepare a Local Economy and Social Value SPD?

Q2: Do you agree with the broad context and coverage of Local Economy and Social Value SPD, as set out in this document?

Q3: Are there any other matters relating to the local economy and/or social value that should be addressed through the SPD, beyond those set out in this document? If so, what?

Q4: Do you consider that further information could be included in the SPD to enable applicants submitting a planning application. If so, what?

Q5: Are there any specific reports, documents, or guidance that you think we should be considering to inform the SPD?

Q6: What level of detail should the Local Economy and Social Value SPD go into, for example general advice or specific guidance (including case studies)?

Q7: Do you think it would be helpful for the SPD to include a list of plans, documents and information which would be required to support a planning application?

Q8: If you believe a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required, please set out why (please see accompanying SEA and HRA Screening Report for further information).