



Review of the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan

Summary of Evidence and Conclusions

June 2025



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan (JWLP) was adopted in July 2013 and since then has provided the local planning policy framework informing the determination of waste planning applications in the administrative areas covered by Halton Council, Knowsley Council, Liverpool City Council, Sefton Council, St.Helens Council and Wirral Council (the Plan Area). Over the last 10 years, 75 waste planning applications have been determined, with 95% being approved. The 16 policies in the JWLP were used a total of 366 times when determining these applications.
- 1.2 There is a statutory requirement for local planning authorities to review their local plan policies at least every 5 years from the date of their adoption. This requirement is set out in Regulation 10A of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)². Paragraph 33 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that policies “*should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary.*”
- 1.3 Due to resource constraints, the JWLP, has passed the 5 year review stage, as such, it is now vital that the JWLP is reviewed to assess if the vision and objectives of the Plan are on track to be achieved and whether the Plan’s policies are proving to be effective and remain fit for purpose.
- 1.4 The review has been completed by officers of Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service who provide specialist waste planning advice to the constituent councils and were involved in developing the JWLP. The work has been overseen by the WLP Review Group comprising planning officers from each of the councils, with regular reports to the Liverpool City Region Chief Planning Officers Group.
- 1.5 The review is set out in a series of topic papers have been prepared which provide the evidence informing the conclusions of the review. These are as follows:
 - Topic Paper 1: Review of Policies and Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) data;
 - Topic Paper 2: Review of consistency with National Policy and Climate Emergency;
 - Topic Paper 3: Spatial Strategy & Sites Review;
 - Topic Paper 4: Duty to Cooperate Engagement;
 - Topic Paper 5: Waste Needs Assessment
- 1.6 This report summarises the findings from the topic papers and draws this evidence together to provide conclusions on the review process.

2. Paper 1: Review of Policies and AMR Data

2.1 Policy Review has been informed by the AMR data over the Plan Period, along with the other papers summarised below. The results of the policy review are shown in the table below. The policies all remain consistent with NPPW.

Policy	Review Summary	Conclusion
WM0 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development	This policy remains consistent with NPPF.	The policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM1 Guide to Site Prioritisation	The policy has been applied throughout the plan period. It remains an important policy for screening all waste planning applications for new facilities.	The policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM2 Sub Regional Site Allocations	No applications have come forward on these allocations but the policy is used as part of the implementation for policy WM1. Some of the allocations are no longer available, but sufficient sites remain available.	The policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM3 Allocations for District-level Site	A couple of applications have come forward on these site allocations to date. The policy is used for implementation of policy WM1. Some of the allocations are no longer available, but sufficient sites remain available.	The policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM4 Allocations for Inert Landfill	Both allocations for inert landfill are now operational and have sufficient capacity available beyond the Plan Period	The policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM5 Areas of Search for Additional Small-scale Waste Management Operations and Re-processing Facilities	It has been an important policy for assessing applications for new waste management facilities. The areas of search are sufficiently large and spaced out to provide enough future waste sites for the duration of plan period, should they be needed.	The policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM6 Additional HWRC Requirements	This policy was specifically written to manage the requirements of MRWA for Liverpool at the time of preparing the WLP. Likely to be needed as new legislative requirements rolled out for the whole LCR.	This policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period, but will need to reviewed to widen search area in the future.
WM7 Protecting Existing Waste Management Capacity for Built Facilities and Landfill	Used both to prevent loss of existing waste infrastructure and to enable enhancements to existing infrastructure. It's been a well-used policy and likely to be going forward.	This policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM8 Waste Prevention and Resource Management	Has not met target in terms of delivery but is an important tool in terms of moving waste	This policy remains fit for purpose for the

	up the hierarchy and raising awareness in the wider construction sector.	remainder of the plan period.
WM9 Sustainable Waste Management Design and Layout for New Development	Application of this policy shared across MEAS and all the districts, so difficult to monitor effectiveness. However, likely to become more important with new legislative changes.	This policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM10 High Quality Design and Operation of Waste Management Facilities	Whilst the policy is not necessarily working as originally envisaged, it is still resulting in some sustainable design and environmental improvement at new waste management facilities.	This policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM11 Sustainable Waste Transport	Application of the policy largely falls to district Highways teams. Minimal success in promoting use of alternative modes of transport but has led to other considerations. Going forward, consideration would be given to as to whether this policy is needed or whether reliance on national and local plan policy is sufficient.	This policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM12 Criteria for Waste Management Development	This is a critical policy for assessing waste planning applications to ensure all the correct, relevant information is submitted. It has been applied to all waste planning applications.	This policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM13 Planning Applications for New Waste Management Facilities on Unallocated Sites	The policy is important in ensuring consistency and equity of applications on unallocated sites with the objectives and allocated site criteria of the WLP.	The policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM14 Energy from Waste	Since adoption of the WLP, the energy from waste market has become more saturated and nationally there is enough energy from waste capacity. With incoming legislative changes, policy WM14 will remain important in ensuring that any future EfW capacity specifically serves a local need for the duration of the plan period.	This policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM15 Landfill on Unallocated Sites	No applications for unallocated landfill have come forward. Landfill sites are now considered to be nationally significant infrastructure and therefore retention of the policy is needed.	This policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.
WM16 Restoration and Aftercare of Landfill Facilities.	The policy has only been applied once during the plan period, the policy remains relevant should any future applications come forward, or applications relating to improvements to existing closed landfill's restoration works.	This policy remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the plan period.

- 2.2 Overall, it is considered that all the policies remain fit for purpose consistent with national planning policy and provide an appropriate framework for the determination of waste planning applications across the LCR.

Monitoring Indicators

- 2.3 Analysis of the AMR data for the monitoring indicators has shown mixed results, some of the targets have been met and others have not been achieved, although have been useful in showing a direction of travel. This has been partly because elements of a policy have been difficult to implement, or that few allocated sites have come forward. Full details on the review of the monitoring indicators are shown in Table 2 of Paper 1 Review of Policies and AMR Data.
- 2.4 On reflection, at the time of preparing the WLP, there were few suitable sites available, some of those allocated had extant permissions for waste use at the time, but these have subsequently not been implemented. Furthermore, these sites are not always in the right ownership or location for the waste uses that come forward. However, the policies have been used successfully to achieve the necessary additional waste capacity and Areas of Search in particular, have been helpful in achieving this.
- 2.5 For the monitoring indicators relating to carbon reduction and impacts of waste management on carbon emissions, this data has not been available at a fine enough detail to demonstrate impact. However, in the future this data is likely to be more readily available as more information on carbon reduction is being measured to help meet climate emergency targets across the LCR.
- 2.6 Understanding the successes and/or failures of the monitoring indicators will be useful in preparing the next iteration of the WLP, both in terms of allocations, areas of search and future monitoring indicators.

Sustainability Appraisal Indicators

- 2.7 The SA indicators were created to ensure that WLP delivered across the three strands of sustainability – economic, social and environmental. There are 30 SA indicators. The monitoring results are mixed. Nine of the SA indicators overlap with the monitoring indicators and are reported above.
- 2.8 Half of the SA indicators have been straightforward to measure either spatially or through the waste planning application process and have generally shown that the policies have been successful in ensuring sites are coming forward in the right locations without impacting key assets or communities, such as Green Belt or heritage.

- 2.9 For two of the indicators, (SA3 Number of pollution incidents and SA12 Emissions from landfill sites) there has been no data available beyond 2016/17 reporting period, so these have been difficult to report. However, this should not significantly impact the effectiveness of the WLP.
- 2.10 Data sources for four of the indicators (SA20 to SA23) has changed during the course of the plan period to date, so although results are reported for these indicators the results will not be entirely consistent. However, these all relate to Local Authority Collected Waste and regular liaison with Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority is undertaken. Therefore, a good understanding of the data is possible despite the change in datasets.
- 2.11 For future iterations of the WLP, consideration would be given to the availability of data when determining what indicators would be most useful to monitor the plan.

3. Paper 2: Review of National Policy and Climate Emergency

- 3.1 Ensuring the plan is compliant with both Local and National Waste and Climate policy is essential for any plan review, but in particular for JWLP due to its age. The NPPF has been updated several times since the plan was adopted, however there have been few changes relating specifically to waste planning. However, new housing figures for the Liverpool City Region will affect the amount of waste generated in the future. For now, the WLP provides sufficient capacity and the policy framework to address immediate needs but impacts of new housing numbers will need to be addressed in the next full review.
- 3.2 Climate emergencies have also since been declared across all the Local Authorities since adoption. Climate Action Plans for each of the authorities have been reviewed to ensure the WLP is able to contribute positively to delivering these plans locally and ensure its compliance with National and Local Policies. By moving waste up the waste hierarchy, the WLP is positively contributing to climate action plans. The Liverpool City Region's Net Zero Waste Strategy has just received approval and this will aim to reduce the carbon impact of waste further. The full implications of this will be taken into account at the next full review of the WLP, but for now the current WLP is playing its part.
- 3.3 Changes to national policies generally include the themes of net zero, a circular economy and moving waste up the waste hierarchy with the introduction of schemes such as Extended Producer Responsibility, Simpler Recycling and mandatory food waste collections. The plan is compliant with the latest government legislation, policies, and guidance. However, acknowledging that a

future review of the WLP is needed to fully address the most recent changes to the NPPF.

4. Paper 3: Spatial Strategy and Sites Review

- 4.1 This part of the review focused on the Vision, Strategic Objectives, Spatial Strategy and allocated sites. Consideration was given to the where waste planning applications had come forward and whether this was consistent with the allocated sites and spatial strategy, and therefore, whether the spatial strategy remains fit for purpose.
- 4.2 Analysis indicates that whilst a significant percentage of new waste infrastructure and capacity has come forward in one district, this has partly been a consequence of increased capacity at a few large facilities. New facilities and capacity have come forward in all districts across the 10 years to date, and although most new facilities have come forward on unallocated sites they have fallen within Areas of Search. The distribution is generally consistent with the spatial strategy. Much of the new capacity has come forward because of enhanced operations and/or capacity at existing facilities.
- 4.3 Taking account of the above, it is considered that overall the spatial strategy remains fit for purpose and does not need to be reviewed at this stage.
- 4.4 Generally, it is considered that the Vision and Strategic Objectives have been met, however, some of objectives have been more successful than others. Some objectives are outside the control of the JWLP and are likely to have been affected by the pandemic, such as overall recycling rates. Others have been hard to measure due to lack of consistent data sets.

5. Paper 4: Duty to Cooperate Engagement

- 5.1 MEAS has coordinated the review process with the support of officers from each of the constituent authorities. This has included regular reporting to the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Planning Policy Managers (PPMs) Group and Chief Planners Officers Group, with a sub-group of PPMs overseeing the WLP Review process.
- 5.2 Regular liaison meetings have been held with Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) and the LCR Waste Partnership during the JWLP review process, who are also involved in implementation of the JWLP.
- 5.3 Engagement on the review has also been undertaken with other Waste Planning Authorities in the North West region, along with other relevant

planning authorities where there are significant imports or exports of waste. Regular liaison meetings are also held with North West Waste Network (formerly NW Regional Technical Advisory Body on Waste). No significant issues were raised regarding cross boundary waste movements.

- 5.4 In addition to this, MEAS has responded to a variety of duty to cooperate requests from waste planning authorities around the country in relation to their Plan-making processes.
- 5.5 Duty to Cooperate duties have been fulfilled throughout the Plan Period and during this review process. No issues have been raised that affect the review.

6. Paper 5: Waste Needs Assessment

- 6.1 The Waste Needs Assessment (WNA) brings the Initial WNA up to date to the year 2022, to enable the high-level review of the Waste Local Plan (WLP) to determine whether or not the previous predictions were accurate and on target. Therefore, enabling the review to predict whether or not the WLP is fit for purpose until the end of the plan period.
- 6.2 This had included updating waste arisings and projections. Waste fractions are split into Local Authority Collected Waste, Commercial and Industrial, Construction, Demolition and Excavation, Hazardous and other (Waste Water, Low Level Radioactive Wastes and Agricultural Wastes). It shows that the initial WNA was particularly pessimistic, and arisings have not increased to the levels predicted. Sufficient facilities have come forward to cover both the waste arisings and imports that the plan area is handling until the end of the plan period.
- 6.3 There has also been a huge shift shown within the data, in terms of self-sufficiency in waste. Previously, the area exported large amounts of waste but now imports massively exceed the amount the plan area is exporting. There are discrepancies showing within the data due to the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, and also where data sets have changed.
- 6.4 Multiple methods are used to estimate data where single data sets are not available to give an estimated range, all generally show waste handled within the area to be lower than expected, and with changes due to occur to waste collection and disposal under simpler recycling, recycling figures are likely to improve.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Taking account of all the data and information collated in the various review papers referred to above, it is considered that the JWLP remains fit for purpose for the remainder of the Plan Period. The JWLP remains compliant with national policy and is contributing to reducing the impact on climate change and

thereby assisting with delivery of Climate Emergency Action Plans for Liverpool City Region.

- 7.2 The policies continue to be effective for determining waste planning applications. It is acknowledged that most new capacity has come forward on unallocated sites, however, many of the new facilities have been in Areas of Search, and a lot of the new capacity has also resulted from enhancements and extension of existing waste management facilities.
- 7.3 There has been a marked shift during the plan period with respect to net self-sufficiency in waste. At the start of the plan period, the LCR was a net exporter of waste, it is now imports significantly more than it exports and is therefore, net self sufficient.
- 7.4 Duty to Cooperate duties have been fulfilled throughout the Plan Period and during this review process.