

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 19 March 2009
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment
SUBJECT: Review of Strategic Regional Sites: consultation
WARD(S): Borough-wide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek authority to formally respond to the North West Development Agency consultation on the Review of Strategic Regional Sites.

2. RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the designation of both 3MG (Ditton) and Daresbury be supported;**
- (2) the NWDA be requested to designate an additional site incorporating Widnes Waterfront, Widnes and Runcorn town centres and the area detailed in the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy; and**
- (3) the Executive Board authorises the Strategic Director, Environment in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Renewal to formally respond to the North West Development Agency consultation on the Review of Strategic Regional Sites.**

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

3.1 In 2005, The North West Development Agency (NWDA) designated 25 sites within the North West as Strategic Regional Sites. Sites were identified on the basis of –

- Providing a portfolio of attractive opportunities for future investment across the region
- Encouraging the development of knowledge based industry within areas of regeneration need
- Building on the regions existing clusters of knowledge based activity, especially close to universities and other research and knowledge clusters
- Providing inter modal freight facilities and terminals to encourage sustainable freight distribution
- Supporting economic growth and economic restructuring across the region

- 3.2 Designation is important in terms of site profile, development and ability to access resources to bring them to fruition. Indeed, the consultation letter specifically states that such sites will have priority, where necessary, for implementation in terms of all Agency resources and in Agency support for bids for other sources. Within Halton, two sites were identified – Ditton Widnes and Daresbury. With reference to Ditton, since the original designation this location is now known as 3MG and it will be recommended to the Agency that this is used in future.
- 3.3 The NWDA is now reviewing the list of sites and the closing date for comments is the 27th March 2009.
- 3.4 The purpose of the review is to ensure sites fit the criteria as outlined in the Regional Spatial Strategy and to reflect the changing nature of policy and the market context including the Stern (Review on the Economics of Climate Change) and Eddington (Transport) reports.
- 3.5 Of the previous 25 sites 7 are proposed for deletion and 15 are proposed for addition. Both Halton sites remain on the list. (Appendix 1 provides a full break down). The sites themselves are identified in broad terms on plans with the exact boundaries to be decided on at a later date. Each site has been identified with a primary purpose and for Halton these are:
- Ditton [3MG] is intended to create a modern inter-modal (water, rail, road) exchange, logistics and strategic rail freight facility. The regional site will:

Accommodate strategic distribution development (port and rail related) in response to regional policy imperatives and need and demand:
Accommodate businesses that will utilise the railway for the transport of freight.
 - Daresbury is intended to secure new science based investment in research and development, business services and manufacturing, building on the existing nationally important concentration of science and research, including Daresbury laboratory and the Cockcroft Institute. To support science based job growth and investment, a mix of uses will be pursued including leisure, hotel, housing, in an attractive setting close to areas of regeneration need.
- 3.6 Of particular importance is that the new designation for Daresbury has expanded the site to take in both Daresbury Park and the Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus (DSIC) which reflects the ongoing master plan work that the council is involved with in partnership with DSIC.

- 3.7 The list of proposed sites makes for interesting consideration. They are not all big traditional inward investor sites and include town/city centre and older industrial areas. As such, it is considered appropriate that this Council should seek through its consultation response to have an additional site designated. Looking at the substantial regeneration opportunities that exists within the Widnes Waterfront (the current master planning exercise could see the EDZ expand to 360 acres), the town centres of Widnes and Runcorn and the development opportunities arising from the Mersey Gateway as detailed in the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy, there is clear scope to bring all these together under one designation. Such an area has significant employment opportunities, is close to areas of need, is sustainably accessible and would contribute to the ongoing economic restructuring of this part of the region through assisting in the continued diversification of the local economy. Together, these provide a scale of regeneration opportunity comparable to many defined Strategic Regional Sites.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The development of the three locations of Ditton, Daresbury and Mersey Gateway Regeneration Area would contribute significantly to the Community Strategy Key Objective of creating and sustaining a twenty first century business environment.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The designation of all three locations would be consistent with the work presently underway on the Local Development Framework.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES.

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton.

Development of employment opportunities in sectors that are expected to see job growth over the next decade such as logistics, science and technology is important to ensure the young people of Halton have good job opportunities in the future.

6.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

The physical development of key employment sites is essential to the future of Halton's economy. The Borough needs to have more employers and to create more jobs in order to reduce worklessness.

6.3 A Healthy Halton.

No implications identified at this time.

6.4 A safer Halton

No implications identified at this time

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

There are targets within the Community Strategy for increasing the number of jobs in the borough and for the amount of land reclaimed. Securing designation as Strategic Regional Sites will assist in achieving these targets.

7. RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 To date the designation of the two existing sites has been of great benefit to bringing development forward. The most significant risk would be the loss of the designation and as such a positive response to the consultation is considered both necessary and appropriate.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The proximity of key sites to areas of need is one of the key factors that the NWDA has taken into account. Brining the sites forward will involve accessible transport planning and skills development for residents to ensure those that are presently marginalised from the workforce have the opportunity to compete for employment opportunities as they arise.

9. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

- 9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

NWDA Strategic Regional Sites Recommendations

Sites proposed for retention	Sites proposed for deletion	New sites proposed for addition
Alderley Park, Macclesfield Ashton Moss Bailrigg, Lancaster Barton (Port Salford) Basford, Crewe Central Park, Manchester Daresbury Ditton Estuary, Liverpool Kingmoor, Carlisle Kingsway, Rochdale Liverpool University Edge Liverpool Science Park Omega, Warrington Parkside, St Helens Westlakes Science Park, West Cumbria Whitebirk, Blackburn Wirral International Business Park	Carrington, Trafford Chester Business Park Cuerden, South Ribble Davenport Green, Trafford Kings Business Park ROF Chorley Twelve Quays, Birkenhead	Birkenhead Docks Central Bolton Carlisle City Centre Central Chester Dunningsbridge, Sefton Freckleton Street Area, Blackburn Central Preston Lillyhall Business Park, near Workington Liverpool North Docks Liverpool Pall Mall Manchester Piccadilly Basin Salford Quays Salmsbury, Lancs Central Warrington Wigan South Central Area

