



Knowsley Council

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough

An introduction

A brief introduction to Knowsley, its location, history, population and economy

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History

Knowsley is one of six Local Authority districts that comprise the Liverpool City Region (the others being Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Wirral, and Halton). It is located at the heart of the North West, between Liverpool and Manchester and covers an area of 33 square miles; just over ten miles from south to north, and up to seven miles across.

Knowsley was formerly a collection of villages, some dating back to AD650. The Earls of Derby have their ancestral home in the Borough at Knowsley Hall, the surroundings of which today house the popular visitor attraction of Knowsley Safari Park.

Changes to two of the Borough's main townships – Huyton and Kirkby – reflect the main factors that characterise Knowsley's transformation from a largely rural area of farming communities to the more industrially diverse Borough it is today.

Huyton expanded greatly when land owned by Lord Derby was sold to the Liverpool Corporation in the 1930's. Housing estates, most post-war, appeared over a wide area and the resulting population growth influenced the physical development of the area. Huyton Village was transformed into a modern town centre.

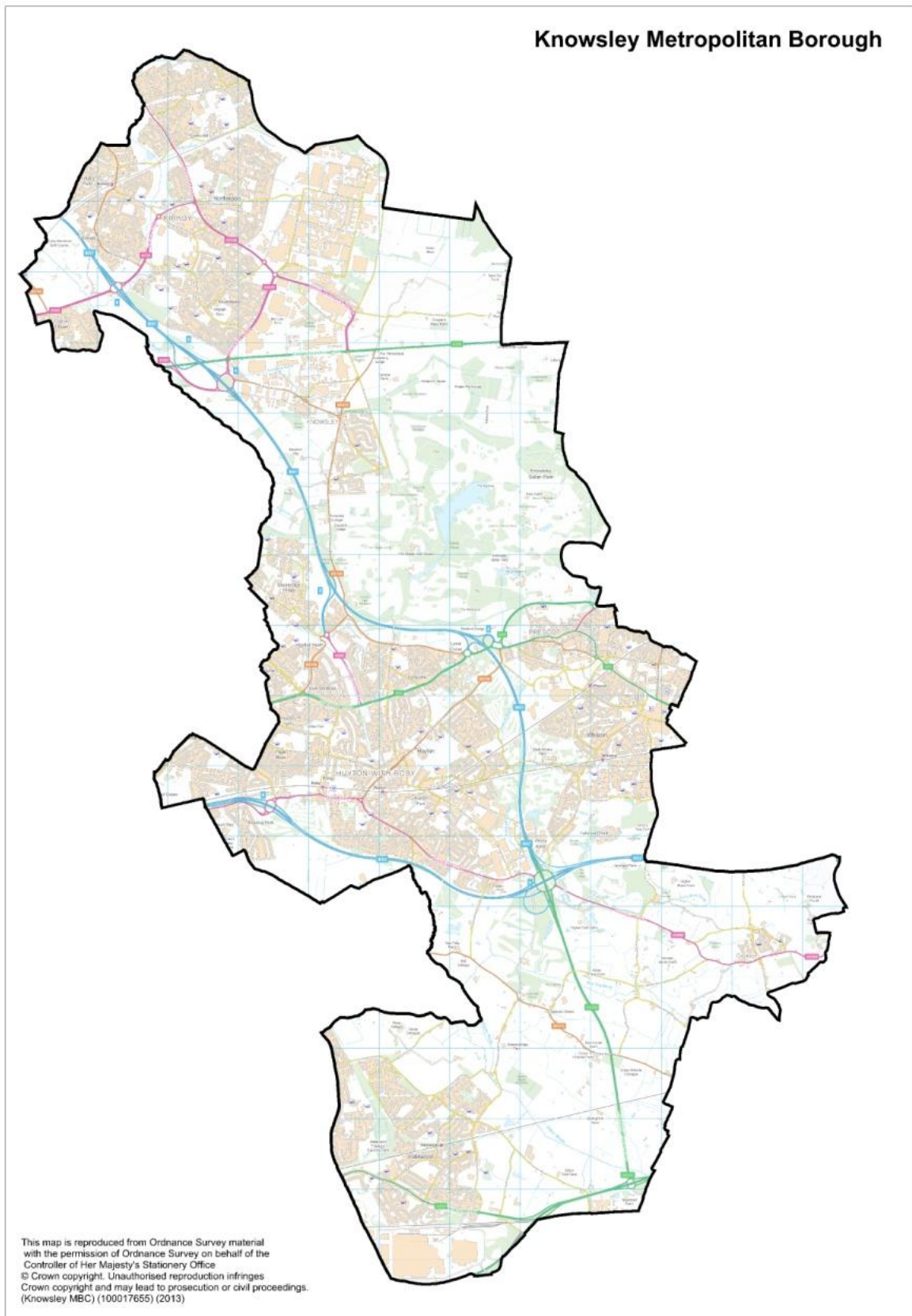
The building of the East Lancashire Road in 1935 made Kirkby more accessible and, after the war, Kirkby Industrial Estate was established and steadily expanded through the 1950's and 1960's to become one of the largest in the country. By 1971 the estate employed over 25,000 people.

Industrial development was linked to huge housing developments. The modest post-war population of Kirkby of around 3,000 people increased to over 50,000 by 1961, and a whole infrastructure emerged to support the influx of such large numbers.

Knowsley experienced rapid population expansion in the 1950's and '60's, resulting from the combination of industrialisation and migration, including some overflow from overcrowded central Liverpool. By 1971, some 194,600 lived within the Borough's present boundary. However, over the next two decades general economic decline – particularly in manufacturing – contributed to a significant fall in population to around 154,600 by 1994.

Subsequently, a population stabilisation strategy helped to stem this decline. The strategy was focused on house building and marketing the Borough to secure inward investment. Record house building rates (four times as many properties were built in 1995/96 than in 1991/92) and strong growth in inward investment yielded the Borough's first small rise in population for over 25 years in 1995. The population stabilised at over 154,000 for most of the rest of the nineties.

The place



Knowsley's topography, and its motorway and trunk road infrastructure, combine to create a natural segregation between employment and housing areas, and clear definition between urban communities. The Borough comprises a belt of large suburban towns and villages: Huyton, Kirkby, Prescot, Whiston and Halewood. Whilst the majority of development in these towns dates from the 1920s onwards, the older historic town of Prescot and a few pockets of older development in the other towns are exceptions. The suburban housing areas are served by town and/or district centres providing a range of mainly local shopping and other services.

The countryside and urban fringe areas of Knowsley are designated as Green Belt, much of which is high grade farmland, within which the attractive villages of Knowsley, Cronton and Tarbock are located. The Borough enjoys a rich and diverse environment, boasting a wide variety of public open spaces, providing a broad range of outdoor recreational facilities, including parks, playgrounds, allotments, wildlife areas and sports pitches.

The largest of the Borough's parks forms an integral part of the Mersey Forest, where thousands of trees have been planted to create attractive urban woodland. Over the years Knowsley has established strong green credentials, recognised through multiple awards for excellence for its parks and open spaces, and environment. It's also the home of the National Wildflower Centre at Roby (Huyton), a seasonal visitor attraction dedicated to creative conservatism, education and botanical research; and also Knowsley Safari Park (within the historic Knowsley Hall Estate) which receives over half a million visitors per year.

Knowsley lies at the centre of a comprehensive transport network. Motorways form its spine, with the M57 and M62 motorways, and the A580 East Lancashire trunk road intersecting and providing fast access to and from Manchester, Liverpool and the wider national transport network.

Population

In recent years, Knowsley has experienced further population loss and now has around 146,000 people living in 65,000 households. However, the rate of decline has decreased and national projections indicate that the population should grow by approximately 4,000 between 2011 and 2021.

In broad terms, the population is distributed across the Borough as follows: 38% in Huyton; 28% in Kirkby; 14% in Halewood; and the remaining 20% split between Prescot, Whiston, Cronton, and Knowsley Village.

The age profile of Knowsley's population resembles that of Merseyside, the North West and Great Britain. Although the working age population (age 16-64) is on parity with the latter, a slightly higher proportion of residents are in the 0-14 age group than regionally or nationally.

As is the case in many parts of the UK, the number of older people (over 65) in the Borough has steadily increased over the last 21 years. It rose by 24% between 1991 and 2012.

Other notable characteristics of the Borough's resident population include its comparatively small Non-White Ethnic population, representing only around 3% of residents; a higher than average proportion of lone parent households, which are particularly concentrated in the Kirkby area; and a relatively low proportion of single person households.

Economy

Knowsley's excellent strategic position contributes to its importance as a location for employment in the Liverpool City Region. The Borough is home to several large industrial and business parks, including Knowsley Industrial Park and Knowsley Business Park (in Kirkby), the Jaguar Land Rover car plant (in Halewood), and Kings, Huyton and Prescott Business Parks in the central belt of the Borough. Together they play a crucial economic role as the base for around 3,000 businesses. This number has remained relatively stable in recent years, with an average of around 340 new businesses registering for VAT in the Borough each year.

Knowsley has a working age population of 93,800, of whom around 72% are economically active, and 67% (62,600) are in employment. The Borough has historically had a high proportion of public sector workers amongst its residents and, currently, a third of employed Knowsley residents work in public sector job roles. A further 42% of residents work in industries related to the SuperPort, Visitor Economy, Advanced Manufacturing and Financial and Professional Services sectors; demonstrating the importance of the Liverpool City Region's growth sectors to Knowsley residents. However, Knowsley's residents are also important to the City Region, as more working residents commute to jobs outside of the Borough, than within it.

Knowsley does experience higher than average levels of economic deprivation, with around 20% of the working age population receiving some type of out-of-work benefit. However, the current worklessness rate in Knowsley is the lowest it has been in at least 10 years and the reduction is significantly greater than that nationally and sub-regionally over that period.