

# Agenda Item 8

**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee  
Cabinet Member: Regeneration  
Cabinet

**DATE:** 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2009  
30<sup>th</sup> September, 2009  
1<sup>st</sup> October, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Core Strategy – The Spatial Strategy: Where Should Development be Located?

**WARDS AFFECTED:** All

**REPORT OF:** Planning & Economic Regeneration Director

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Steve Matthews, Ext 3559

**EXEMPT/  
CONFIDENTIAL:** No

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY:**

To inform Members of the key findings of the background studies, how these, and the results of the early consultation reported to Members during the previous committee cycle, are helping to shape a Spatial Strategy for the borough (i.e. where development should be located) during the next 15 – 20 years.

**REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:**

The Spatial Strategy will provide a framework for future investment decisions, in particular how Sefton can best accommodate its future housing, employment and other land needs over the next 15 – 20 years.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- 1. That Planning Committee & the Cabinet Member: Regeneration:**
  - note the key issues arising from the studies carried out to dated, and the implications that these will have on setting priorities to be addressed in the Core Strategy;
  - agree that the issues outlined in section 5 are strategic priorities to be included in the Core Strategy, and endorse the spatial strategy set out in section 6 of this report;
  - draw to Cabinet’s attention any major issues that it considers should be given priority in order to further the Council’s corporate objectives as we prepare the Core Strategy; and
  - indicate their views on the options for meeting future development needs in Sefton based on the options set out in sections 6 & 7.
  
- 2. That Cabinet:**
  - agrees that the issues outlined in section 5 are strategic priorities to be included in the Core Strategy;
  - approves the spatial strategy set out in section 6 of this report; and
  - highlights any other issues that it thinks should be given priority in the Core Strategy in order to further the Council’s strategic objectives and priorities; and
  - indicate their views on the options for meeting future development needs in Sefton based on the options set out in sections 6 & 7.

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**KEY DECISION:** NO

**FORWARD PLAN:** NO

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** N/A

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

There are no alternative options; we have a statutory duty to prepare a Core Strategy for Sefton as part of our Local Development Framework, setting out the spatial planning framework for Sefton for the next 15 – 20 years.

**IMPLICATIONS:**

**Budget/Policy Framework:** N/A

**Financial:** N/A

<b><u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u></b>	<b>2006/ 2007 £</b>	<b>2007/ 2008 £</b>	<b>2008/ 2009 £</b>	<b>2009/ 2010 £</b>
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<b><u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u></b>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

**Legal:** N/A

**Risk Assessment:** N/A

**Asset Management:** N/A

## CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS

The report draws on major consultation carried out in spring and early summer on issues and options for meeting the future development needs of the Borough. The report also highlights the conclusions of a number of studies, some of which have themselves been the subject of consultation. It also builds on a report considered by the Sefton Borough Partnership in August, which set out the links between the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Core Strategy.

## CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community	√		
2	Creating Safe Communities	√		
3	Jobs and Prosperity	√		
4	Improving Health and Well-Being	√		
5	Environmental Sustainability	√		
6	Creating Inclusive Communities	√		
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	√		
8	Children and Young People	√		

## LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

North West of England Plan – Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021, GONW, September 2008  
 Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, WYG, August 2009  
 Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008 (final draft), Fordham, June 2009  
 Draft Employment Land & Premises Study, BE Group, May 2009  
 Retail Strategy Review & town centre health checks, WYG, July 2009  
 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Atkins, June 2009  
 Green Space Strategy, October 2008  
 Draft The Economic Impact of EU and UK Climate Change legislation on Liverpool and the Liverpool City Region, Regeneris Consulting and Quantum Strategy & Technology, 2009  
 Southport Investment Strategy, July 2008

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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 In the previous Committee cycle, Members considered a report setting out the results of the early consultation undertaken to inform Sefton's Core Strategy. This set out the key issues arising from the consultation; a number of other opportunities that were also identified; and a summary of the implications arising.
- 1.2 Over the past few months, Members have also received a number of reports setting out the conclusions of a number of draft studies that need to inform the preparation of our Core Strategy.
- 1.3 In August the Sefton Borough Partnership considered a report setting out the emerging vision and strategic objectives for the Core Strategy. The report sought confirmation that these were consistent with what the Borough Partnership is trying to achieve through the Sustainable Community Strategy. This link is important as the Community Strategy and our Core Strategy are expected to share a similar vision and 'story of place', and should share indicators which are jointly monitored. The Community Strategy is in the process of being refreshed, so the work that we do on the Core Strategy can influence what goes into the Community Strategy.
- 1.4 This report attempts to draw these elements together, so that we can confirm that the evidence supports our Preferred Strategy – what we want Sefton to be like in 15 – 20 years time - and what we need to do to get there. This will influence our work programme over the next few months.

## **2. Key Issues Arising From Early Consultation**

- 2.1 Based on the workshops held in each Area Committee area and other consultation with a wide range of groups and organisations, a number of key issues were identified:

- There is a difficulty in meeting housing land supply within the built-up area purely by developing brown field sites.
- A particular need exists for more affordable homes throughout the Borough, but especially in Southport.
- There is a need to protect employment land across the whole Borough to meet future needs.
- There is a need to explore opportunities for further employment land in the north of the Borough, but there are very few obvious sites within the built up area. Sites immediately adjoining the built-up area are generally in the Green Belt and some are at risk of flooding, or protected nature sites.
- Local people value their local green spaces – whether parks or other nature sites – and believe that they should be protected from future development, and where appropriate, enhanced.
- Future development must take account of flooding which was a concern of many residents, who realised this was likely to become a greater risk in the future.
- There was a consensus that town centres needed to be strengthened because of their vital role in providing local facilities and services. Many were concerned about the closure of small local retailers and felt this was a sign of decline, which needed to be halted.
- Gaps in facilities were identified – particularly for young people, and the need for better access to health services was also highlighted.
- Valued features such as the canal and coast should be enhanced, and where appropriate, positively exploited.

### **3. Study Outcomes**

3.1 The draft results from a number of the background studies have been reported to Members over the past few months. These include two housing studies, an employment land study, the retail strategy review, and the strategic flood risk assessment. In this section of the report the key recommendations of each are set out, and what they mean for the various parts of Sefton. Other studies, such as the economic assessment for delivering affordable housing, the Green Space & Recreation Study, & the Ecological Framework, are still on-going and will be reported to Members in due course. All the studies will inform how we address the issues set out in section 2 above.

(1) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

3.2 This Study shows that there is a requirement for 1,230 affordable dwellings over 5 years i.e. 246 units a year. In terms of house type, whilst most of the need is for market housing is smaller family dwellings to meet the needs of smaller household size and an ageing population, the largest requirement in the social rented sector is for larger family houses (4+ bedrooms).

3.3 The Study indicates that almost 40% of the gross annual need for affordable housing (i.e. 4,062 dwelling a year) live in Southport. Almost 20% of the need is in Bootle, with approximately 15% of the need in each of Crosby and Netherton. The remaining 10% of the need is in Formby and Maghull.

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However, when allowance is made for the supply of current affordable housing, the net housing need (i.e. 2,398 per annum) by sub area changes to 51% in Southport, almost 17% in Crosby, over 11% in Bootle, and about 7% in Maghull, Formby and Netherton (which includes Litherland & Ford). Furthermore, when people who are on housing benefit in the private rented sector, or people who pay more than 25% of the household income on housing (both of whom have an affordable housing need, albeit not a priority need), the pressing need in Sefton (as a whole) reduces this requirement to 246 dwellings a year, or 1236 over 5 years. Unfortunately, it is not possible to break this figure down geographically to provide the priority need in each area.

## (2) Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

3.4 The draft housing land supply study (SHLAA) report is currently out at consultation (until 1<sup>st</sup> October). The draft report indicates that there is only enough land in the urban area to be able to meet our regional strategy (RSS) housing requirements (500 dwellings a year net of clearance replacement) until approximately 2018. This capacity may be further reduced if the following sites are excluded:

a) sites that are currently in employment use but are not located within a Primarily Industrial Area in the UDP; and

b) some green space sites which have been identified as being of lesser value, (although the consensus from people attending the consultation workshops in the spring was that all green space should be retained).

3.5 The following table shows that the majority (approximately 40%) of the estimated future housing land supply is in Southport, with 18.4% in Linacre & Derby, and 16.2% in St Oswald & Netherton & Orrell. The other areas can only each contribute less than 10% of the estimated housing land supply.

<b>Area Committee area</b>	<b>Yield</b>	<b>% of estimated housing land supply</b>
Crosby	369	8.4
Formby	311	7.1
Linacre & Derby	811	18.4
Litherland & Ford	206	4.7
Sefton East Parishes	219	5.0
Southport	1,770	40.2
St Oswald Netherton & Orrell	713	16.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,399</b>	<b>100</b>

## (3) Employment Land & Premises Study (EL&PS)

3.6 The draft employment land supply study indicates that south Sefton has 80 percent of the sites and 76 percent of the total employment land supply in the Borough. The retention of the vast majority of the sites is important because they have scope to continue providing local employment opportunities through, and beyond, the Core Strategy plan period. However, one Opportunity Site allocated in the UDP (land at

Aintree Curve) is no longer considered to be suitable for employment use, and is seen by the consultants as more appropriate for residential use.

- 3.7 The study highlights the issues associated with the Port resulting from a lack of available land for port related uses within the port estate, making the retention of suitable land in proximity to port operations a key priority. This accords with the regional strategy (RSS), which requires land to be safeguarded close to port in Sefton for logistics, transport and port-related development. Further growth is likely to be difficult without a comprehensive partnership approach between Peel Ports, Sefton and Liverpool to address how growth needs could be satisfactorily resolved along the key routes to and from the port. This will include reconciling port-related functions, such as container storage and warehousing, with local authority objectives of improved environments and activities that create more jobs.
- 3.8 The study also indicates that there is a shortage of good quality office space, although it acknowledges that there are opportunities at the Southport Business Park and the emerging Atlantic Park. There is also scope to refurbish the existing stock, particularly in Bootle town centre.
- 3.9 Because of the limited availability of employment land in the north of Sefton, the 'backland' sites associated with residential areas, especially in East Birksdale (i.e. the area east of the railway line), serve as an important component of the current supply. Whilst individually small, collectively they are an important resource. Most are already in employment use, or are constrained by issues of multiple ownerships, difficult access arrangements and/or proximity to residential properties. Given the local employment role performed by these sites, it is important that the Council should not automatically assume, or approve, their development for non-employment uses. Notwithstanding this, it is apparent that the emerging draft housing land supply study is assuming that some of these sites could make a positive, if modest, contribution to Southport's housing supply over the medium to longer term. Clearly these conflicting pressures will need to be balanced as the Core Strategy moves forward.
- 3.10 The Study concludes that, as a consequence of the limited land availability within the borough, Sefton needs to take a robust stance to the protection of existing employment site and premises, even where individually these may represent small opportunities. None of the sites allocated in the UDP should be de-allocated. If all the land currently allocated for employment purposes is retained, there is a need for an additional 49 hectares of employment land in Sefton. The majority of this is required to meet employment needs in the north of the Borough, and specifically, there will be a need to identify a successor site to the Southport Business Park.

#### (4) Retail Strategy Review and town centre health checks

- 3.11 The health checks for Southport and Bootle confirm that the 'credit crunch' has had an impact on both town centres, as it is doing on all retail centres across the country. In general terms, whilst there have been some matters of concern, both centres seem to have weathered the impact of the recent economic downturn reasonably well and, in general, no worse than other similar centres. However, there is no room for complacency as competition from other retail centres and out-of-centre retail developments is increasing. The need for continuing investment and the enhancement of Southport and Bootle's respective retail offers is essential, if their

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vitality and viability are to be protected and enhanced, and their position in the retail hierarchy is not to suffer in the future.

- 3.12 In Southport, there is a need to identify additional comparison floorspace required over the period to 2021 (i.e. 23,000 sq m gross) in North Sefton and particularly in Southport Town Centre, which will need to meet the vast majority of this need.

## (5) Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

- 3.13 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) provides a strategic overview of flood risk in Sefton.
- 3.14 River flooding is identified as the main source of flood risk in Sefton – linked to the Alt and Crossens. The areas at greatest risk – and where river flood risk may limit the range of acceptable future land uses – include:
- most of the land to the east of the Formby By-pass;
  - the Power House site, Formby;
  - land around the Sefton Meadows area in Maghull; and
  - small areas to the north and east of Southport.
- 3.15 Development for new housing (including potential development on land currently in the Green Belt) may also be constrained in much of the River Alt corridor and north of Southport. Subject to minor boundary changes to the development site allocated in the Unitary Development Plan to exclude small higher flood risk areas, the Town Lane area is not significantly constrained by river flood risk.
- 3.16 Surface water flooding is the next most important source of flood risk in Sefton after river flooding. However, it is not possible to assess the probability (i.e. 1 in so many years) of surface-water flooding occurring in any area, as Council and United Utilities records show only that surface-water flooding has been reported in a general location.
- 3.18 Climate change will increase the severity and frequency of flood risk, especially from heavy rainfall. The uncertainty surrounding detailed climate change predictions makes it difficult to assess how this will affect different parts of Sefton.
- 3.19 Although not modelled in the SFRA, coastal erosion is occurring on the Sefton coast, particularly at Formby. This too will also have an impact on where new development should be allowed in future.

## (6) Greenspace & Recreation (PPG17) Study & Green Infrastructure

- 3.21 Work on the Green Space and Recreation Study is nearing completion. This will provide the evidence for green space and recreation issues in the Core Strategy. Green space, including recreation space, is essential if we are to provide sustainable communities within a high quality natural and built environment, and forms part of Sefton's wider Green Infrastructure.
- 3.22 The study is based on the current situation. It will not take account of any proposed development that may occur, for example, as a result of existing planning permissions, or when land identified in the SHLAA is developed for housing, or other development takes place. It also looks only at the current use of greenspace and



identify deficits and criteria for assessing these, but does not go as far as recommending what changes should be made to any area in order to meet wider green space needs.

- 3.33 A further piece of work, looking at Green Infrastructure, will help us identify which are the key areas, what functions they perform, and what deficits in provision of green space need to be met. However, taking into account the comments generated in the consultation workshops held in the spring, the consensus seems to be that the majority of green space should be retained and enhanced rather than developed to meet other needs.

(7) Local Transport Plan 3 - 2011 onwards

- 3.34 The next Local Transport Plan has to be developed to start in April 2011. New guidance emphasises the need for this to propose appropriate solutions to identified challenges, hence must have a strong evidence base, support national transport policies and priorities but integrated with and focus on local needs and objectives.
- 3.35 Hence it will be essential that LTP3 reflects and supports Local Development Frameworks and each District's Sustainable Community Strategy with Local Area Agreements forming the heart of new performance frameworks. Consequently it will be important for the Local Strategic Partnership and all areas of the Authority to be involved in the development of both transportation strategies and implementation plans.
- 3.36 The outcome of the LDF consultation to date and development of the Core Strategy will guide our input to the LTP3 process that will be managed through Cabinet Member Technical Services and established management and consultation processes. Current Keys issues centre on promoting the economy and climate change that at a local level will require measures to improve access, better manage and maintain existing assets and promoting sustainable transport.

## **4. What does this mean for Sefton?**

- 4.1 All the studies indicate that there will be intense pressure on land in the urban area and an alternative supply will be required if Sefton is to meet its needs for the whole of the plan period (to 2026). The implications are different in each part of Sefton, and in this part of the report, the needs and requirements of each main settlement area are set out.
- 4.2 Sefton is constantly evolving. We need to understand the factors that influence it as we prepare the Core Strategy. These relate to changing characteristics of the population and its needs, and the tensions and opportunities arising from the mix of people and places:
- Sefton is not an island! It is part of an urban and rural network which covers the whole of Merseyside and the adjoining area of West Lancashire
  - Sefton is also part of the Liverpool City region which has major impacts on the borough e.g. 40% of Sefton residents travel outside the borough to find work, but many people also travel into Sefton for work
  - The Indices of Multiple Deprivation show that 25% of Sefton's population is in the 20% most deprived wards nationally

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- The population of Sefton is projected to be fairly stable or to decline slightly over the period of the Core Strategy; however, average household size is falling, mainly because more people are living on their own; this means we need to provide a significant number of new homes to house a similar number of people
  - There are structural changes within the population: the population of Sefton is growing older - by 2014 the number of people aged 65+ is expected to overtake the number of people aged under 20.
- 4.3 Other factors that we need to take into account include:
- 'narrowing the gap' – reducing inequalities & deprivation;
  - meeting the needs of an ageing population (e.g. homes, health and social care);
  - the challenge of encouraging new jobs and investment at a time of recession; &
  - the need to accommodate the growth of the Port.
- 4.4 In addition, national guidance and the Regional Strategy (RSS) set out many requirements which the Core Strategy must address. These include the need to:
- provide land for 11,000 new homes by 2026 to meet needs generated within Sefton;
  - provide enough employment land to meet the needs of the Borough;
  - address what Sefton needs to do to meet the needs of a low carbon economy; &
  - respond to the challenge of climate change.
- 4.5. The Council will need to address the spatial implications of these, and any other issues that may emerge, in the Core Strategy. They will not affect all of Sefton in the same way, and the needs of each community are varied, reflecting the different character and demographics of each settlement area.
- 4.6. The next section of this report sets out what this means for each main settlement area.
- (1) Southport
- 4.7. Southport is the largest settlement in Sefton and contains approximately one third of its population. It has a high demand for affordable housing (more than 600 units), and contains about 40% of the potential future housing land supply (1,770 dwellings, excluding existing planning permissions). However, even if all these new dwellings are built on all the identified sites, this equates to less than 70% of the requirement for new homes in Southport based on household growth.
- 4.8. The housing land supply study (SHLAA) assumes that some 'backland' sites in East Birkdale and some greenspace sites (e.g. the site of Bootle High School) will contribute to this meeting this requirement. The Core Strategy & Site Allocations DPD will need to determine what the balance is between these sites remaining in their current use, particularly if the site is currently used for employment purposes (see paragraph 4.10 below), or whether it can be developed for housing or some other use.
- 4.9. Southport also has an ageing population – almost half the population is aged 45 or over, and more than 25% is of retirement age. This has implications not only on the type of housing required in the future, but also on service provision, leisure, transport etc.

- 4.10. The employment land supply study (see paragraphs 3.6 – 3.10 above) indicates that the East Birckdale area comprises an important component of the employment land supply in Southport, and that where sites are currently in employment use, this should be retained. It does, however, recognise that some sites could contribute to meeting housing needs, whilst the Greenspace Strategy indicates that parts of this area are less accessible to green space than the Sefton target.
- 4.11. This Study also indicates that there is a need to find a successor site for the Southport Business Park in about 2018.
- 4.12. Southport is also a major tourist resort, which is currently being re-branded as a 'classic resort'. The Southport Investment Strategy has been adopted by the Southport Partnership and the Council, and will guide its future development. A masterplan has been prepared which provides a development strategy for the seafront area that focuses on a number of key themes including:
- Public realm and greenspace - the key to the regeneration of the area is to improve the public realm, to build on the attractiveness of the seafront and maximise its potential as a visitor attraction and public recreation area, by developing a unified landscaping strategy for the seafront include planting, paving, lighting and signage.
  - Town centre links - in order to encourage people to move between the town centre and the seafront - and vice versa - the linking streets need to be made more attractive places to move through.
  - Transport - With the expected rise in visitor numbers, new projects will need to focus on car parking and moving people quickly, cheaply and effectively around the seafront area.
  - Urban design - to enhance the image of the area, provide landmarks in the form of striking architecture and act as gateways to particular spaces.
- 4.13. Southport town centre serves not only the local area, but also serves parts of West Lancashire. However, there is a need for further investment to ensure that the centre remains vibrant and is able to continue to serve its catchment area, as indicate in paragraph 3.12 above. The town is also served by a number of local centres.
- (2) Formby
- 4.14. Formby is surrounded by land which is constrained by a variety of factors, such as areas which are subject to coastal erosion, areas at risk of flooding, high quality agricultural land, and sites of nature conservation interest. This limits its potential for growth. The strategic housing study estimates the urban area of Formby can accommodate approximately 300 additional dwellings excluding existing planning permissions, which is approximately half the number needed to meet Formby's future housing needs based on household growth. There is a small need for some affordable housing to be provided (about 80 units).
- 4.15. There are a number of small employment sites in the urban area, some of which have already been redeveloped for housing. It is expected that this trend will continue. Whilst the Formby (Stephenson's Way) Industrial Estate is well located and could be developed further to meet employment needs generated in the north of

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Sefton, the fact that it is located in an area at risk of flooding (Flood Zone 3b) means that it should not be developed unless there are no better alternatives elsewhere in Sefton.

- 4.16. People attending the consultation workshop held in the spring felt that whilst the range of shops could be improved and a lack of parking was also an issue in the village centre, it was not felt that there were any serious gaps that needed to be filled, and the centre was generally fit for purpose. However, there is a lack of services and facilities for young people, and public transport access can be a problem. The bypass acts as a major barrier to getting around for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 4.17. Another key issue that emerged in the workshops was the impact of visitors on the Formby coast. It was agreed that there was a need for a visitor centre, but access to the coast was a big issue. Possible solutions included the suggestion that a park and ride service should operate from the bypass. More integrated, and better management of the Formby Point area is needed. It was also felt that more publicity should be given to the Lifeboat Road area, rather than directing all visitors to Victoria Road, which was at saturation point.
- 4.18. Given the good accessibility to the coast and countryside, the relative paucity of green space west of the railway was not considered to be an issue by people attending the workshops, but the consensus was that areas of existing green space, such as the former Holy Trinity school site should be protected from inappropriate development and should not be automatically considered as housing sites.

### (3) Maghull, Aintree & Melling

- 4.19. The housing land supply study (SHLAA) indicates that there is very little scope for new housing in the urban area, and that there is only space to meet 25% of future housing needs based on household growth, once existing planning permissions have been discounted.
- 4.20. People attending the consultation workshop in June felt that the Melling / Waddicar area has suffered from an excess of new housing over recent years, that service provision has not kept up, and there are issues about sewers still not being adopted even though the development has been 'finished' for several years. It was felt that no more housing should be accommodated here.
- 4.21. Although the housing market assessment (SHMA) indicates that there is little need for more affordable housing to be provided in the Sefton East Parishes area (about 90 units), this was not corroborated by the small percentage of homes that are available for rent (6% of the total housing stock in the area), the length of the Council house waiting list, or the views of people attending the consultation workshop.
- 4.22. Although there is only a small amount of employment land in the area, on Sefton Lane, the employment land supply study has not suggested that there is a need to find more employment land in the area, even though this would reduce the large commuter flows out of the town.
- 4.23. The biggest issue affecting the Maghull area is the state of the town centre. There have been a number of catalysts for change, including the relocation of the library to a new extension to Maghull Town Hall, which will also accommodate a new pool; the NHS's desire to upgrade its provision in the town centre; and the recent takeover of

the former Somerfield supermarket by Morrisons. The area around Central Square is also in need of investment. A lack of parking and accessibility round the area by public transport were also felt to be significant issues that the Core Strategy should seek to address by people who attended the consultation workshop in June.

- 4.24. The main environmental assets of the Sefton East Parishes area are the Green Belt, green space, countryside and especially the good access to the countryside. Nevertheless, there was perceived to be a lack of parks, especially in Aintree & Melling by people attending the consultation workshop. The consensus at the workshops was that green space and the green belt should be protected from development. The former is confirmed by the Green Space Strategy, which indicates that there is a below target amount of publicly accessible green space, and that there is little variety in what there is.
- 4.25. It was also agreed that the tourism potential of the canal should be developed further – especially in Maghull, Lydiate and Melling - to help bring in tourists and local investment, e.g. marina, café, pubs. The built heritage of the area was also felt to be important and should be exploited more.

(4) Crosby

- 4.26. The housing land supply study (SHLAA) indicates that the Crosby Area Committee area can accommodate approximately 350 dwellings, excluding existing planning permissions. This equates to about 25% of the number of new homes needed to meet household growth. There is also a need to provide over 200 affordable dwellings in the area.
- 4.27. Although there are currently fewer people of retirement age living in the Crosby area than the Sefton average, there are more people aged 45 – 65. As life expectancy is increasing and people in Crosby tend to live longer than the Sefton average, the number of older people is likely to increase significantly over the plan period. This will have an impact not only on the type of housing required in the future, but also on service provision, leisure, transport etc.
- 4.28. There is little employment in the area outside the two district centres of Crosby and Waterloo and the Sandy Lane industrial estate and Musker Grove. The employment land supply study recommends that the latter areas should be retained in employment use and redevelopment for housing should be resisted.
- 4.29. There are issues relating to both Crosby and Waterloo centres that we will need to address in the Core Strategy. In Crosby, these stem from Sainsbury's desire to expand so that the store can better meet the catchment area's needs, as well as the recent demolition of the Central Buildings, whereas in Waterloo many of the issues relate to high vacancy rates and the impact of the evening economy. Both areas are in need of considerable investment.
- 4.30. Although this area has more greenspace than the Sefton target, people attending the consultation workshop held in the spring felt there are issues relating to accessibility and quality. Comments made at the workshop suggested that the main concerns in the area relate to a lack of places for children to play and security. Better management and maintenance of green spaces (including the coast / Marine Park and parks in general) is also needed.

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- 4.31. People attending the workshop also felt that the Crosby area has a wide range of important environmental features - the coast, green spaces and parks, as well as the built environment, Rimrose Valley, farmland and trees. Unsung assets include Little Crosby and Crosby's floral displays. More needs to be done to join up the visitor attractions on the coast with the local economy, especially Waterloo.

(5) Bootle, Litherland & Netherton

- 4.32. The housing land supply study (SHLAA) indicates that some 1,720 new dwellings can be built in the south Sefton area, excluding sites with planning permissions. Over 50% of this is in the HMRI area, but more than 700 are in St Oswald, Netherton & Orrell. This includes a number of sites that are currently identified as green space in the UDP, some of which may have some potential. Even including all these sites, it will still not be possible to meet all the area's future housing needs based on household growth in the urban area during the whole of the plan period.
- 4.33. Unlike the rest of Sefton, there is a much younger population in this area compared to the Sefton norm, and fewer older people. People have a lower life expectancy than the Sefton average. The housing market assessment (SHMA) also notes that there are a higher proportion of single non-pensioner and lone parent households than the rest of Sefton, and that there is also a higher proportion of unemployed households.
- 4.34. Because of the large supply of RSL dwellings in the area (housing provided by registered social landlords including One Vision Housing – the former Council house stock), the SHMA suggests that the need for new affordable housing in this area is relatively modest (<20% of the total need in Sefton, or about 220 dwellings) compared to the need for new housing. However, this does not seem to correlate with the number of people on the Council house waiting list, nor the views expressed at the 3 workshops held in the south Sefton area during the spring / early summer. Most of the demand for affordable housing is for houses with 3 and 4 bedrooms.
- 4.35. The SHMA also recognises the current imbalance in the existing housing market, arising from the dominance of terraced housing (over 40% of the total stock), and the number of households living in rented housing (29% social rented & 8% privately rented in 2001), both of which are well in excess of the Sefton average. It concludes that the main housing need in the area is for market housing, with the bulk of the need being for units with 2 bedrooms.
- 4.36. Finally the SHMA concludes that nearly twice the proportion of households who have moved in the past 2 years or are expecting to move within the next 2 years, are moving to a better environment, compared to people moving in the rest of Sefton.
- 4.37. The economic activity rate in south Sefton is approximately 7% lower than the rest of Sefton. In August 2008, the unemployment rate in Linacre ward was twice the Sefton rate. This is reflected in the IMD scores, where almost all of the south Sefton area scores much worse than the Sefton average, with the majority of the area being in the 20% most deprived areas nationally.
- 4.38. Most of the employment opportunities in Sefton are located in south Sefton, but only 17% of people working in the Bootle area live in the local area. A significant number live in the rest of south Sefton, Crosby, Formby & Maghull, but more than 50% of the people working in Bootle live outside Sefton. About 25% of people working in the St Oswald, Netherton & Orrell area also live in the local area.

- 4.39. The employment land supply study confirms that not only should all the employment land in the area be retained, but it also recommends that further investment is needed in the office quarter to bring it up to modern standards, and that space needs to be identified close to the port to enable it to expand. Early work, led by the Merseyside Partnership, suggests that if Sefton wants to improve its carbon footprint and take advantage of the move towards a low carbon economy, we need to capitalise on our maritime location and the port.
- 4.40. One of the main reasons for the high unemployment rates identified by the people attending the workshops held in the spring were that people in the area had the wrong skills, and that the jobs that were created in the local area were going to outsiders. Although there is a need to support entrepreneurship in the area and to help small business start up, there were felt to be gaps in what help is available which result in some people failing to get help. For example, the Stepclever initiative is restricted to Linacre & Derby wards, and not the rest of the south Sefton area where there are also high levels of unemployment.
- 4.41. Shopping provision in the area is changing with the opening of the Asda on Strand Road and the near completion of the Tesco at the junction of Church Road and Hawthorne Road. Whilst the impact of Asda does not seem to have been significant on either The Strand shopping centre or local shopping provision, the added impact of Tesco, particularly on more fragile centres such as Seaforth, has still to take place. The Core Strategy will need to determine Seaforth's future role, and confirm that this should remain our priority for preparing an Area Action Plan to guide the regeneration of this area.
- 4.42. The situation relating to green space is more mixed. Only St Oswald, Netherton & Orrell has above the target in terms of quantity, whilst Linacre & Derby and Litherland & Ford have below the target. Linacre & Derby is also below the target in relation to the variety of green space available in the area, whilst the quality of the green space is below target in St Oswald, Netherton & Orrell. People attending the workshops generally felt that the parks were good, although there was some concern about security. Like the rest of Sefton, there was felt to be a lack of allotments in the area. The canal was also seen as an asset to the area.
- 4.43. One group in Linacre & Derby felt that the general environment - the roads, houses and pavements - are a disgrace, and that this ought to be tackled before there was any further investment in the parks. In part, this may be explained by the high density of much of the residential area, and the lack of tree cover, particularly in Linacre & Derby, as well as the proximity of the main employment areas and the Port, and the presence of main traffic routes through the area. This is something that current work on Green Infrastructure mapping will help to highlight.

## **5. Confirming our priorities**

- 5.1 The above analysis has identified a number of common themes and issues that we need to address. These will enable us to firm up the Sefton-wide outcomes and those for each area that were approved by Members in December. It will also be useful in informing the review of the Sustainable Community Strategy, following on from the report considered by the Sefton Borough Partnership in August.

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- 5.2 It will also enable us to start more meaningful discussions with utility and service providers, as we begin to quantify where growth will take place in Sefton over the next 15 – 20 years.
- 5.3 Ideally the vision in the Core Strategy should be very similar to or the same as the vision in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Our vision must clearly relate to Sefton as a place, and therefore, if we are to begin with the Community Strategy's current vision (to make Sefton a great place in which to live, work, learn, visit and do business in, and that our residents should have the best quality of life in the region), we also need to reflect the following elements:
- The unique opportunities and challenges arising from Sefton's geography and recent history;
  - Its inter-connections with a wider Liverpool city region;
  - Its coastal location, its distinctive towns and communities; and
  - The variety of its economic and environmental resources.
- 5.4 The vision will also be broken down into a number of more specific objectives:
- To provide a clear framework to encourage appropriate future investment in Sefton
  - To reduce the disparities in prosperity, health & well-being, and environmental quality between and within Sefton's towns and communities, and particularly between the north and south of the Borough
  - To tackle the chronic problem of worklessness in the most deprived neighbourhoods, specifically south Sefton and parts of Southport
  - To provide existing and new households access to a reasonable choice of housing which is affordable and well located to meet their social, family and employment requirements, particularly in the Housing Market Renewal area
  - To accommodate the needs of the port and maritime sector without unacceptable environmental costs; this will include meeting the challenges of 'Superport' and how best to cater for all future access needs
  - To strengthen town and local centres by providing residents and businesses with the right mix of shops, services and leisure facilities in an attractive environment; this means retaining Bootle and Southport as key centres, and supporting the hierarchy of district and local centres
  - To manage the increasing natural and human pressures on Sefton's coast and other 'green infrastructure' so that the diversity of its natural habitats and the range of opportunities it offers for leisure and recreation remain of regional and national importance; this will involve supporting the Landscape Partnership scheme for the coast and countryside, and giving appropriate protection to the Borough's nationally and internationally important nature conservation sites and other critical 'green infrastructure'
  - To respond to the challenge of climate change through, for example, designing & locating all significant development to minimise its environmental footprint, reducing the need to travel, and mitigating the risks arising from flooding in coastal and low-lying areas.
- 5.5 We need to know if there are more strategic objectives that we need to take account of, and how do we determine priorities if there is a conflict between competing interests.

## 6. Spatial options



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- 6.1 The major challenge for the Core Strategy is to identify sufficient land that is capable of meeting our meet need for new homes and jobs for local people. The Regional Strategy (RSS) lays down specific requirements and targets that Sefton has to meet. The housing studies referred to in section 3 above refer to the need to identify land for 11,000 new homes in Sefton by 2026 to meet our needs, as well as a significant requirement for affordable housing.
- 6.2 The figure of 11,000 new homes is specifically to meet local needs, generated within the Borough. This appears to be a high figure at a time when the population is not projected to grow and may even be declining slightly. The reason is the fall in the average size of households. In 1980 the average household size was just under 3 people; it is now 2.4 and, if this trend continues, the average number of people in each household will be just over 2 by 2030. The reason for this is that more people are living on their own – for example, people are living longer, and family units are breaking up more quickly. Fewer people are living together under the same roof, and so the same population requires a much greater number of homes.
- 6.3 The employment land supply study also noted the need to identify further employment land in north Sefton.
- 6.4 The ‘spatial’ strategy must be able to satisfy these requirements. Our constrained land supply and the number and variety of natural and environmental constraints in Sefton limit the options available to Sefton.
- 6.5 The preferred approach is to retain and renew the existing urban fabric and to continue to build within the existing built-up area where this is possible. This enables resources to be used wisely and makes the most of existing facilities and services, such as public transport, schools, health facilities, local shopping centres. Existing open spaces would mainly be protected and improved where possible. In other words, the emphasis would be on a ‘sustainable’ pattern of development. This would also include examining possibilities for mixed use development on school sites identified for closure under the Building Schools for the Future programme, though many of these are situated within land designated as greenspace.
- 6.6 Whilst this approach seems to be the most sensible for now, it cannot continue indefinitely. The strategic housing land study anticipates provision within the urban area for new homes for only about 8 - 10 years. The Core Strategy must look ahead 15 - 20 years.
- 6.7 There are some options for providing for needs beyond the 8 -10 years’ period. These include building at higher densities in selected places (e.g. close to town centres, on main routes served by public transport). Other options include building on land currently identified for employment, or building on greenspace that is less valued by local communities.
- 6.8 However, there comes a point where pursuing these options begins to put pressure on the urban fabric. Opportunities for quiet recreation within the built-up area will decrease; building on land earmarked for employment will mean more travelling between where people live and work. Building houses on employment land would also go against the conclusions of the employment land supply study, which recommended that all employment land should be retained for this purpose. Ultimately this approach of continuing to build within the urban area will become ‘unsustainable’.

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- 6.9 There are other major challenges such as accommodating the needs of the Port, in particular striking the balance between meeting development needs as opposed to preserving all of our environmental assets. This will, by necessity, mean that we have to make some hard decisions as we have to meet the requirements set out in the Regional Strategy, as well as other national and international priorities.

## 7. Conclusions and next steps

- 7.1 Some difficult decisions must be made in the Core Strategy. We have met with Government Office and taken advice from Counsel, and both are adamant that the Core Strategy must make provision for meeting the needs identified in RSS over the full life of the plan (up to 2026). The current decline in building rates is expected to even out over the lifetime of the plan and is considered to be insufficient reason not to make full provision for the targets set for Sefton in the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 7.2 In the meantime, there are some further options that the Council is expected to explore, though it is unlikely that these will result in any significant additional provision. These include discussing with those authorities adjoining Sefton to assess whether they are able to help meet Sefton's needs in their areas. However, Sefton carried out its strategic housing supply study and employment land supply study jointly with Knowsley and West Lancashire. Both authorities are finding it difficult to meet all their needs in their urban areas, so they are unlikely to be able to provide much assistance. Liverpool have not yet completed their studies, so it is not yet known whether they will be able to meet any of Sefton's deficit.
- 7.3 Sefton is also obliged to review the urban edge to see whether there are any non-strategic areas of green belt that could be released (such as the site of the former railway sidings adjacent to Hall Road station in Crosby) before any sub-regional study of the green belt takes place. But even with any supply that is derived from these sources, this will only meet Sefton's needs for 1 or 2 more years, and other options will still need to be considered for meeting needs in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the plan period.
- 7.4 Over the next month there will be meetings with all the other Merseyside districts (and West Lancashire), together with GONW and 4NW, specifically to discuss the issues arising from the housing and employment studies which most authorities have now completed, at least in draft form. It will be an opportunity to assess the implications for providing land to meet needs for homes and jobs from a Merseyside-wide perspective. This will be followed by a separate meeting between Sefton officers and a team from GONW to discuss what this means for Sefton.
- 7.5 There are no easy options for meeting Sefton's needs. A seminar for Members will take place on Tuesday 29th September, giving you the opportunity to discuss in greater depth some of the difficult choices that we have to face as we prepare the Core Strategy. Formal invitations will be sent out in the near future to all Members.
- 7.6 I will present an update next month, setting out the conclusions of the meetings referred to and possible options for meeting Sefton's needs for the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the Core Strategy plan period.