

Infrastructure Working Group Recommendations

Infrastructure was one of the key concerns that was raised during the consultation on the Local Plan and, to help to alleviate the concerns members and the public had with regards the provision of infrastructure, an Infrastructure Working Group was formed. One of the key roles of the group was to scrutinise the mechanisms for the provision of infrastructure. In this regard the group took presentations from a range of Council Departments [such as education, leisure and housing] and external organisations [including the NHS, Merseytravel and United Utilities].

The Infrastructure Working Group comprised four Councillors [2 from Labour and one from each of the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives]. Following the series of meetings, held between April and August 2014 the group provided a detailed list of 18 recommendations. At Cllr McKinley's request a report was provided in June 2015 setting out progress in meeting each of the recommendations. These are provided below with the exception of the response to recommendation 8 which has been updated to take account of new information.

1. The Working Group propose that infrastructure proposals are assessed ensuring that they are sufficient to meet the diverse needs of the local community and mitigate any local adverse effects of development that may result in the failure of Local Plan objectives, recommendations and/or plan policies and to ensure the key principles for the Spatial strategy are met.

Proposals for infrastructure, whether those as separate applications or as part of wider housing schemes, will be assessed as part of the planning application process to ensure that they conform with the Local Plan policies. The Local Plan will be assessed by an Inspector, and this will include whether the Local Plan is supported by sufficient infrastructure.

2. The Working Group recommends that the Sustainability Appraisal makes specific reference to infrastructure improvements to mitigate any problems, or maximise benefits, identified through the appraisal process. Such opportunities should be clearly highlighted through cross references between the Sustainability Appraisal and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Where mitigation is found to be impracticable or the wider impact on surrounding areas unacceptable, alternatives will be sought.

The Sustainability Appraisal identified potential problems that may occur due to new development and recommends appropriate improvements that could help mitigate these. The Sustainability Appraisal also considered the level of growth proposed and potential sites and its conclusions were used to select the strategy that would minimise any unacceptable risks and maximise benefits. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan is a document which sets out these improvements [e.g. public transport improvements, additional school places, flood prevention] and this will be updated regularly.

3. The Working Group propose that account is taken of the local evidence generated by Neighbourhood Plans and policies to ensure a holistic approach to planning within Sefton's Local Plan and associated documents in relation to the provision of infrastructure and community facilities.

Local evidence will be important in Neighbourhood Planning and will be key if communities wish to implement local policies which differ from those in the Local Plan. The Planning Policy Team will continue to support local communities who embark on neighbourhood planning and advise on what level of evidence is suitable.

4. The Working Group recommend that a report be submitted to Cabinet Members and Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Environmental Services), at the appropriate time, setting out the approach to the Community Infrastructure Levy and the potential relative priorities to be attached to the range of infrastructure needs. This process should be supported by giving priority to locally determined infrastructure needs and government guidance informing how Community Infrastructure Levy contributions should be allocated.

The Council are undertaking further work on the potential for CIL in Sefton. It is envisaged that this will include close liaison with Members and local communities on what the local priorities for infrastructure will be.

5. Flood Risk and Drainage: The Working Group recommends that any new development does not increase flood risk from any source within the site and elsewhere, and where possible reduces flood risk.

The Local Plan includes a policy that make this requirement very clear [Policy EQ8]. Work will continue with relevant partners to ensure that these policies are implemented through the development management process.

6. The Working Group is concerned at the impact large development building sites may have on existing communities. The Working Group recommends that a clear policy approach is set out in the Local Plan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan to ensure that the infrastructure needed is provided in a timely manner.

The Local Plan includes policies that make this requirement clear [Policy IN1]. Work will continue with relevant partners to ensure that these policies are implemented through the development management process.

7. The Working Group recommends that the clear policy approach includes measures to reduce or mitigate disruption caused by development including noise, pollution, increased congestion, and traffic impacts on the highway network. The Council is asked to maximise the use of planning conditions and legal agreements to control and mitigate impacts of new development – particularly in relation to traffic management, construction impacts and hours of operation.

The Local Plan includes policies that make this requirement clear [Policy EQ4]. The Development Management team will ensure that these policies are implemented through the development management process.

8. The Working Group recognises the importance of the provision of adequate health provision and infrastructure. The Working Group requests that the Local Plan team work in liaison with the relevant Health officials to ensure that the impact of new homes is managed and planned well in advance so that sufficient health care is provided in the right locations. The Working Group requests

that reports are submitted annually by Public Health (supported by Planning Services) to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees on this matter.

[Original response - The Planning Policy Team continues, and will continue, to work with our health colleagues to ensure the health needs of existing and new residents are met. A meeting is scheduled between the Local Plan team and the Public Health Team next week when we will pass on the request for an annual report to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees.]

Updated response - The Planning Policy Team has liaised, and will continue, to liaise with our health colleagues to ensure the health needs of existing and new residents are met. The Council are part of a working group to help identify suitable locations for improved GP/health provision in Sefton. The local health providers have medium to longer term aspirations to provide services from more centralised locations and to provide an extended service. The health providers are aware of the proposals in the Local Plan and are confident they can provide the improved service this may require. In terms of reporting progress with provision of health services it is likely that this is most effectively done by Planning Services, in liaison with our colleagues in the Clinical Commissioning Group, in the Council's Authority Monitoring Report.

9. The Working Group recognises the importance of not only building homes but building communities. The Working Group requests that the Local Plan ensures that sufficient /appropriate community facilities are included in new developments with support from developers.

The Planning process will ensure that essential infrastructure is provided through the development management process. Additional community facilities will be provided through Community Infrastructure Levy and other sources of funding. The need for additional infrastructure will be identified through continued engagement with local residents, including through the neighbourhood planning process.

10. The Working Group recognises the important contribution of green spaces to making Sefton an attractive place to live. The Local Plan should include appropriate policies to protect valuable green spaces – including opportunities for establishing locally determined green space standards through neighbourhood planning, site specific master plans or development briefs. To be eligible to receive Community Infrastructure Levy the Working Group would encourage local communities to consider adopting a Neighbourhood Plan to maximise benefits to their communities.

The Local Plan includes policies that make this requirement clear [Policy EQ9 for new Open Spaces, NH5 for protection of existing Open Space]. Work will continue with relevant partners to ensure that these policies are implemented through the development management process. A study is being undertaken at the moment to look at the level of playing pitches in Sefton and whether any new provision is needed. At the local level it should be up to local residents and members to determine what types of new open space they would want/need.

11. The Working Group recommends that school places are provided as close as possible to where the need arises. The Working Group recommends that the provision for school facilities be incorporated into the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, with a clear approach to where, how and when additional school places will be provided.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies the broad locations where additional school places are likely to be required. Close liaison with our education colleagues will determine when these are needed, which schools should be expanded, how this will be funded and the most appropriate admissions criteria to ensure pupils can access an appropriate school. This information will be reflected in future updates of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

12. Highways and Transport: The Working Group recommends that any development does not increase the number of additional daily car journeys to socially unacceptable levels and that policies should be included to require large developments to include (and fund) necessary highways improvements subject to them not having an unacceptable impact on the local community; such improvements should include benefits to accessibility and sustainable transport choices such as cycle lanes etc.

The Local Plan includes policies that make this requirement clear [Policies IN2 and EQ3]. Additionally the Local Plan has site specific policies that set out required improvements, such as internal bus routes and highways improvements. We also have an existing Supplementary Planning Document which sets out the requirement for improving sustainable transport within new developments. Transport planners will always be closely involved in major planning applications that result in a number of new homes or commercial developments.

13. The Working Group recognises the importance of adequate public transport and requests that the Local Plan considers ways to improve transport East/West across the borough, including developers' role in assisting with supported transport services.

The Local Plan is likely to have limited impact on the provision of east-west public transport in Sefton. However, the growth proposed in the Local Plan should help ensure that the need for improved east-west links are made a higher priority within future investment plans for sub-regional transport spending.

14. The Working Group recommends that any affordable and/or social housing is developed in a way that ensures 'pepperpotting' as opposed to clustering.

The Local Plan includes policies that make this requirement clear [Policy HC1]. Work will continue with relevant partners to ensure that these policies are implemented through the development management process.

15. The Working Group recommends that housing mix in new developments reflects the demographic need for the local community and that appropriate local evidence is used as part of the policy.

We periodically undertake Strategic Housing Market Assessments to identify what type and mix of housing is required in Sefton. This information will be used to ensure that the best mix of housing is provided on site. The Local Plan includes a policy [Policy HC2] that seeks to ensure a minimum proportion of smaller bedroomed homes.

16. The Working Group recommends that the Local Planning Authority in completing the publication draft, revisit policies related to the provision of infrastructure to ensure they are robust so that appropriate infrastructure will be delivered at the right time in the right place. A robust policy

approach should be developed to ensure that an equitable balance is achieved between viability from a developers and landowners perspective and the social costs and benefits for the local community.

We are content that the policies in the Local Plan provide a basis for ensuring essential infrastructure is provided where there is a need and at a time when this is needed. This will be managed through the Development Management Process.

17. Sefton Council write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government expressing concern about the potential risks associated with infrastructure providers and their ability to deliver required infrastructure at the right time and in the right place, and requesting the ability to apply harsher sanctions when planning conditions are unmet. The Secretary of State be asked to issue additional guidelines on viability assessments to include a more 'balanced' approach – including the assessment of community impact and value in addition to developers and landowners considerations.

A letter to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government expressing these points was sent in March. No response has yet been received.

18. That recommendations 1 to 17 above be monitored through the Authority Monitoring Report being submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Environmental Services) and Cabinet. This is a requirement for monitoring the implementation of the Local Plan and takes place at least once a year.

The AMR will include a section on CIL and what this has been spent on. We will also report on other infrastructure that has been provided and an assessment of how successful the Local Plan policies [including those set out above] have been.

In addition to the recommendations of the Infrastructure Working Group, at Council on 16 July 2015 the following recommendation was made:

Officers urgently review and update the 'Consequences Study', and undertake further work reviewing the economic forecasts, social impact and related labour supply issues.

The Council subsequently reviewed and updated its Consequences Study which looked at the issues above. This was completed in October 2015 and submitted to the examination library as MI.4.