

REPORT TO: Planning Committee
Cabinet

DATE: 9th February, 2011
17th February, 2011

SUBJECT: A review of the evidence supporting the Core Strategy
Options

**WARDS
AFFECTED:** All

REPORT OF: Planning & Economic Development Director

**CONTACT
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**EXEMPT/
CONFIDENTIAL:** N/A

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

1. To inform Members about the findings of the Green Belt Study, and how this will inform the Options stage of the Core Strategy, which is the subject of a separate report on this agenda, and to seek approval to consult on minor changes to the existing Green Belt. Both of these Studies will be subject to public consultation early in 2011 before they are finalised.
2. To update Members on a review of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which determines how much land is available in the urban areas. This will also be subject to consultation with stakeholders including the Sefton, Knowsley and West Lancashire Housing Market Partnership.
3. To inform Members about the future need to update our retail evidence in order to ensure that we have robust evidence when our Core Strategy is independently examined early next year.

REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:

The Green Belt Study is a key piece of evidence that will support the Core Strategy, as it indicates which areas outside the urban area have the potential to accommodate housing and / or employment to meet our future needs to 2027.

The SHLAA sets out how many new homes can be built in the urban area, and hence determines what the shortfall is that will need to be met from sites in the Green Belt, depending on which option is chosen (see the report on the Options paper which is also on this agenda).

Members need to approve both documents for consultation purposes in order to test their robustness.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That:

(A) Planning Committee:

- (i) notes the consultation that has taken place on the Green Belt Study with the Area Committees and some of the parishes since the previous report was deferred by Cabinet in September;
- (ii) requests Cabinet to approve the Green Belt Study and the SHLAA update for consultation purposes; and
- (iii) notes the need for a future review of the retail evidence that will support the Core Strategy, the costs of which would be contained within the Department's consultancy budget.

(B) Cabinet:

- (i) notes the consultation that has taken place with the Area Committees and some of the parishes on the Green Belt Study since the previous report was deferred by Cabinet in September;
- (ii) approves the Green Belt Study and SHLAA update for consultation purposes; and
- (iii) notes the need for a future review of the retail evidence that will support the Core Strategy, the costs of which would be contained within the Department's consultancy budget.

KEY DECISION: YES

FORWARD PLAN: YES

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: Following the "call in" period for Cabinet.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

There are no alternatives. The Green Belt Study and the SHLAA are key pieces of evidence that support the preparation of our Core Strategy. We need to consultation on them before they are finalised, in order to ensure that these pieces of work are as robust as possible.

IMPLICATIONS:

Budget/Policy Framework: None directly associated with the outcomes of this report, although the need for a future review of the retail evidence will have financial consequences.

Financial:

The future retail work is estimated to cost in the region of £30K. This cost would need to be managed from within the Department's existing resources, in particular out of consultancy budgets. Approval would also be needed from the Vacancy Management Panel before this work can be commissioned.

<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>	2010/ 2011 £	2011/ 2012 £	2012/ 2013 £	2013/ 2014 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure		30K		
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources		30K		
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? No	When? N/A			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

Legal:

The Acting Head of Corporate legal Services has been consulted during the preparation of this report. Counsel's opinion has also been sought as part of the preparation of the Core Strategy Options.

Risk Assessment:

The above consultation will help ensure that the evidence base that supports our preparation of our Core Strategy is robust.

Asset Management:

This report has no implications on any of the Council's assets.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS

The Interim Head of Corporate Finance & Information Services has been consulted and his comments have been incorporated into this report. **(FD627 /2011)**

The Acting Head of Corporate Legal Services his comments have been incorporated in the report. **(Ref LD 00035/11)**

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

The two Green Belt studies will be published on the Council's website www.sefton.gov.uk/greenbeltstudy & the SHLAA update on www.sefton.gov.uk/shlaa. The first two documents will not be published until consultation takes place on the Core Strategy Options, whilst the SHLAA Update will be published when consultation takes place with the House Builders Partnership for a 4 week period from mid-February.

1. Background

- 1.1 At Minute 112 (30th September 2010), Cabinet deferred the report outlining the methodology used to carry out the Green Belt Study and the draft results contained in the Study in order that we could give a presentation to each of the Area Committees prior to Cabinet agreeing that the Study should be approved for consultation purposes. Since that date presentations have been given to all the Area Committees and to a number of parish councils setting out the findings of the Study and the possible implications for their areas.
- 1.2 In December 2010, Planning Committee considered a report setting out the key findings of the Green Belt Study and the feedback from initial consideration by the Area Committees and some of the Parishes. Presentations to the Parishes have continued during January, and will continue over the next couple of months. This report also set out the evolving situation about how many new homes we need to build as a result of recent challenges to the Secretary of State's announcement last July to revoke the Regional Strategy (RSS).
- 1.3 Section 2 of this report summarises the views of Members, parish councillors and Members of the public about the Study's implications for their area and the evolving Core Strategy. A separate report on this agenda sets out the draft findings of the NLP Study which has assessed the continuing relevance of the RSS housing requirement,.
- 1.4 In March / April 2010, the key findings of the Joint Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment were reported to Planning Committee, the Cabinet Member: Regeneration & Cabinet. This indicated that at the base date of 1st April, 2008 Sefton had a 'risk assessed' housing land supply in its urban area of 5,254 dwellings compared to a need (when assessed against the RSS requirement) of 7,916, or a 9.4 year supply.
- 1.5 We have now updated the Study's findings to a base date of 1st April, 2010. The key findings of the update are set out in Section 3 of this report.
- 1.6 In July / August 2009 Members were informed of the key findings of the Retail Strategy Review Update, including health checks of Bootle and Southport town centres, which had been carried out by our retained retail consultants. However, this only updated the findings of the last District, Local Centres and Shopping parades Study, which had a base date of 2004, and not the original data. It is widely accepted that these studies should be updated at least once every five years and more frequently where significant retail change has taken place. In Sefton, this has included not only the opening of the Tesco and Asda superstores in south Sefton and other retail development, but also the impact of Liverpool One on our centres.
- 1.7 This means that although the Update took account of the recession, its findings are beginning to get very outdated. The need for a complete new Study is set out in Section 4 of this report.

2. The Green Belt Study and the Options paper

- 2.1 We have used the briefings with Area Committees and parish councils to ensure that Members and parish councillors fully understand the factors driving our Core Strategy, including the quality and robustness of the evidence base we have collected.
- 2.2 All have accepted our assumptions about why we need to go into the Green Belt if we are to produce a 'sound' Core Strategy to meet our future housing and employment needs. They have also understood why we are unlikely to be able to meaningfully increase the supply of land in the urban area from other sources, and that, as a result, we are unable to meet all of our future needs in the urban area.
- 2.3 In all areas, Members, parish councillors and members of the public have agreed that we should not be seeking to meet future housing needs in only one or two areas, and should seek to meet needs in the areas where they arise. They also were clear that we need to be precise about which areas of land could be developed, and should not identify "broad locations" in the Green Belt.
- 2.4 Members and parish councillors were also unanimous in expressing the view that we needed to consult people on our proposals in the areas where they were most affected. Thus in Southport, we needed to consult people locally in Churchtown and Ainsdale, whilst in the rural areas, we needed to engage with people where they live.
- 2.5 We have taken these comments into account as far as we can in preparing the Options paper, which appears elsewhere on this agenda.
- 2.6 In addition to the main Green Belt Study, we have also reviewed the boundaries of the existing Green Belt to ascertain whether they formed a robust basis for carrying out the Green Belt Study. A small number of minor amendments are proposed, mainly to correct drafting errors arising from the scale at which the Green Belt boundary was initially built, or to take account of subsequent development. None of the proposed alterations alter the extent of the Green Belt.
- 2.7 Like the main Study, any comments received on the draft "Boundary Review Study" will be assessed and reported to Members before the study is finalised.

3. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

- 3.1 The SHLAA study is one of the key evidence gathering studies underpinning the Core Strategy. It has been undertaken in order to assess how much land is potentially available for new housing within the urban areas of Sefton over the next 15 years. In making this assessment, the study provides a picture of how much urban land is left that is suitable and available for development, and have a realistic prospect of being developed.
- 3.2 The general approach to undertaking SHLAAs is now well established. Sefton's last SHLAA had a base date to 1st April 2008 and was undertaken jointly with

Knowsley and West Lancashire Councils. The recent SHLAA has updated the Study to 1st April 2010, and has also been carried out in collaboration with Knowsley and West Lancashire Councils. Consultation on the update will be carried out in conjunction with these Councils, and includes discuss with the Sefton, Knowsley and West Lancashire Housing Market Partnership.

3.3 In identifying potential sites, Sefton’s SHLAA update has drawn from the following sources:

- Sites with planning permission for housing
- Sites with expired planning permission for housing
- Sites that are allocated for housing in Sefton’s Unitary Development Plan
- Council owned sites that are surplus to requirements
- Sites submitted to the Study by land owners and developers
- Sites identified in previous housing land studies

3.4 As part of the SHLAA update (as well as for the original Study) we have undertaken a ‘Call for Sites’ exercise. Landowners and developers were asked to submit potential housing sites for consideration. A small number of new sites were identified as a result of this process. Green Belt sites were specifically excluded from the assessment process.

3.5 Due to the large number of small sites (below 0.1 ha) without planning permission, a 10% sample approach was taken to updating these sites. It is not possible to disaggregate these by settlement.

3.6 The Study calculated that there was potential for an additional 5,154 new homes to be developed in Sefton’s urban areas compared to 5,254 in 2008. However, when future known demolitions and Sefton’s historic underperformance against housing targets are factored in, the ‘net’ supply is reduced to 4,343. The differences can be explained for a variety of reasons. On the ‘plus’ side, this is as a result of ‘windfall sites’ being identified through the ‘Call for Sites’ process, and on the ‘down’ side as a result of a number of issues including viability and the assumptions about the potential contribution from backland sites in Southport. Full details will be provided in the SHLAA update report when it is published on the web.

3.7 This supply of sites is not spread evenly throughout Sefton, as is shown in the table below:

Settlement	0 - 5 yrs	6 - 10 yrs	11 - 15 yrs	Total
Bootle (inc Netherton)	1526	518	106	2149
Crosby & Hightown	347	107	8	463
Formby	186	9	39	234
Maghull & Aintree	118	36	2	155

Southport	1071	684	49	1804
Small sites (<0.1 hectares)	0	360	0	360
GRAND TOTAL:	3248	1714	204	5154

- 3.8 Members may notice that the total figure is 11 less than the sum of the figures above. This is due to rounding up figures to whole numbers.
- 3.9 As can be seen, the majority of the potential development sites are clustered in Bootle and Southport. This has implications for meeting housing needs arising in other settlements, and will be addressed in the Options paper (a separate report on this agenda).
- 3.10 Members should note that the land supply identified will not necessarily cover every single site that will be developed for housing in the years ahead. Unforeseen sites (i.e. 'windfall' sites) will always come forward, and these sites will be factored into our calculations as they come through the planning process. However, the clear thrust of government guidance is that no allowance can be assumed for such sites as part of any SHLAA.
- 3.11 If we continue to build houses at an average of 500 a year (as stipulated in the soon-to-be-abolished RSS) then this supply of land would last for just under 9 years. This has clear implications for the emerging Core Strategy, which is required to plan ahead for 15 years.

4. The need for updated retail work

- 4.1 PPS4 : *Planning for Prosperous Economies* is clear that in assessing the need for retail development local planning authorities should, among other things, '*assess the need [i.e. for new retail floorspace] over the development plan document period, as part of the plan preparation and review, and update such assessments regularly.*' In this regard, it is widely accepted that such assessments should be updated at least once every five years and more frequently where significant retail change has taken place. This requirement has been consistently confirmed by the Planning Inspectorate at development plan (including Core Strategy) inquiries and at S78 planning appeals.
- 4.2 Importantly the last District, Local Centres and Shopping Parades Study was undertaken in 2004 and this fed (by providing reliable and up-to-date estimates of local out-of-centre retail floorspace) into the last full survey based Retail Strategy Review which was undertaken in 2005, albeit the latter was partially updated (without any further survey work but taking account of recent forecast retail expenditure changes) in 2009. The cost of these studies at the time they were undertaken was £50k. In the intervening period significant changes will have taken place in the pattern of retail activity in Sefton, arising from such developments as Liverpool 1 (which will have a major impact on comparison retail trading patterns in the sub- region) and the two new major foodstores in

South Sefton (i.e. Asda at Bootle and Tesco at Lanstar), together with a significant number of smaller retail developments across the Borough.

- 4.3 Given the above, it is therefore apparent that there is an urgent need to undertake further retail studies for Sefton in the early part of 2011/12 to (a) inform the emerging Core Strategy process with regard to retail policy matters and potential future land allocations and (b) provide a continuing and up-to-date evidence base to inform advice and decisions on future retail planning applications. Bearing in mind the current very tight budgetary situation and the increasing need to undertake these studies in a cost effective way, our retained retail consultants WYG are currently firming up a price for this work but have provisionally indicated that the District and Local Centres and Shopping Parades Study and the Retail Strategy Review could be undertaken for a combined cost of £30k of which almost a third (£9k) would relate to subcontracted survey costs (which are fixed) for the Retail Strategy Review. WYG have also confirmed that new health checks for Bootle and Southport town centres would be included in this overall price. It is anticipated that this cost can be contained within the Department's consultancy budgets.
- 4.4 A further committee report on this matter will follow at a later date.