Meeting:	Planning Committ	ee		
Date of Meeting:	9 th February 2011			
<u>Title of Report:</u>	Sefton Core Strate consultation	egy - Green Space Study: draft for	public	;
<u>Report of</u> :	Andy Wallis, Director of Planning and Economic Development	This report contains	Yes	No
		CONFIDENTIAL		
<u>Contact Officer</u> : (Telephone No.)	Andrea O'Connor 0151 934 3560	EXEMPT information by virtue of paragraph(s)of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (If information <u>is</u> marked exempt, the Public Interest Test must be applied and favour the exclusion of the information from the press and public).		V
		Is the decision on this report DELEGATED ?		

Purpose of Report

To seek members' approval of the draft Green Space Study for public consultation, linked to the consultation on the Core Strategy options and draft Green Belt Study.

Recommended that

1. The **Planning Committee** approve the draft Green Space Study for public consultation alongside the Core Strategy Options Paper and draft Green Belt study.

Corporate Objective Monitoring

Corporate Objective		Positive Impact	<u>Neutral</u> Impact	<u>Negative</u> Impact
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			

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	2009/ 2010 £	2010/ 2011 £	2011/ 2012 £	2012/ 2013 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure	-	-	-	-
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
REVENUE IMPLICATIONS				
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?				

Departments consulted in the preparation of this Report

Director of Leisure Services, Director of Children's Services - comments incorporated into the report.

List of background papers relied upon in the preparation of this Report

Draft Green Space Study

Green Space Strategy for Sefton (2008) – see <u>http://www.sefton.gov.uk/greenspacestrategy</u>

1. Introduction

1.1 Greenspace in Sefton plays an important role in each of our communities. Urban greenspaces can provide a range of benefits and be much valued by the local community, such as Botanic Gardens in Southport or Derby Park in Bootle. Other areas of greenspace may offer few benefits and be of little value to local people.

1.2 The purpose of the Green Space Study is to assess the benefits of Sefton's urban greenspace and to determine the importance of each urban greenspace in terms of level of benefits it provides. The study forms part of the evidence for the preparation of the Core Strategy.

1.3 It is important because recent employment and housing studies have shown that there is not enough land within Sefton's urban area to provide the 500 or so homes needed each year for the next 15 years. Nor is there enough land within the built-up area to provide the further employment land which will be needed in Southport in the longer-term.

1.4 Members will be aware from reports elsewhere on this agenda that possible options to meet the shortfall could include building at higher densities, building on some urban greenspaces, releasing land from the Green Belt, and meeting some of Sefton's needs in other local authority areas.

1.5 The Study will help to determine whether all urban greenspaces should continue to be protected, and whether there is scope for some urban greenspaces to contribute to meeting future housing or other development needs.

1.6 The assessment of the benefits of each urban greenspace will also provide evidence which will help in making decisions on development proposals on urban greenspaces.

1.7 Even if the Study were to recommend that an urban greenspace might be suitable for development, the current planning policy framework set out in the Sefton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2006), and especially policy G1 'Protection of Urban Greenspace,' would remain the main basis for assessing development proposals. The Green Space Study would be an additional material consideration. Proposals for development on urban greenspace would still need to meet the requirements of the UDP, or be treated as 'departures' from the development plan. This would only change when a new development plan with detailed greenspace policies was in place.

1.8 Urban greenspaces are designated in the UDP. They are green areas of 0.05 hectares (500 sq metres) or more, which provide one or more of the benefits set out in Figure 13.1 of the UDP (e.g. amenity, buffer between different land uses, biodiversity value). Urban greenspaces are all within the urban area - none are in the Green Belt. Urban greenspaces include publicly accessible and private sites, and sites which the public can access with permission (e.g. allotments, sports club sites).

1.9 Urban greenspaces are important parts of Sefton's "green infrastructure". Just as roads, railways, sewers, electricity and gas services and so on provide the essential "grey infrastructure" for our society; green infrastructure has been defined as "the region's life support system – the network of natural environmental components and green and blue [that is, water] spaces that lies within and between the North West's cities, towns and villages which provides multiple social, economic and environmental benefits".

1.10 Green infrastructure includes parks, play facilities, country parks, natural and seminatural green spaces; outdoor sports facilities; amenity spaces; allotments; private gardens; cemeteries and churchyards; rivers, canals and other water features; trees (including street trees); woodlands, agricultural land and coastal habitats.

2. Draft Green Space Study - Overview

2.1 The urban greenspaces have been assessed against 10 widely-recognised benefits (e.g. climate change, recreation, wildlife), using a high, medium and low scoring system, measured against detailed, objective criteria.

2.2 Due to resource constraints, generally no assessments have been made for urban greenspaces which are considered unlikely to be available for development. These include parks, sports pitches or playing fields managed by the Council, Parish Councils or One Vision housing; schools, or churchyards or cemeteries.

2.3 The results of assessment have been analysed, focusing on the numbers of high benefits for each site.

2.4 Over two hundred of the total of 401 urban greenspaces were assessed. Of these, across the Borough, 31 urban greenspaces had no high benefits, 52 had one high benefit, 47 had 2 high benefits, 40 had 3 or more high benefits, 21 had 4 or more high benefits and 12 had 5 or more high benefits. More details are set out in Figure 2.1 below.

	Figure 2.1- number of urban greenspaces with high benefits					
Number of	Area Committee areas				Total	
high benefits	Bootle	Crosby	Formby	Sefton East Parishes	Southport	assessed
0	21	3	0	1	6	31
1	16	6	10	7	13	52
2	14	5	8	9	11	47
3	12	3	3	9	13	40
4	4	3	3	2	9	21
5+	3	1	0	1	7	12
	70	21	24	29	59	203

3. Commentary

3.1 The draft Green Space Study assessment process is a first stage. To determine whether there is any scope for urban greenspaces to contribute to meeting future housing or other development needs, it is also necessary to consider other factors, notably:

- The importance of an individual urban greenspace to the local community;
- Public green space provision in the local area, and especially whether residents live within 1km of a larger park or accessible nature space. This is based on the public green space targets set out in the Green Space Strategy for Sefton (2008);
- The fact that a single high green space benefit may have over-riding importance for example, even if the only high benefit of an urban greenspace is its contribution to storing or intercepting flood water, national planning guidance strongly discourages developing such sites, e.g. Land at The Pastures, Baytree Close, Southport.

Likewise the local cultural [i.e. historical and community] importance of Waterloo Rugby Club, Southport FC and Bootle Cricket Club means that use of such urban greenspaces is unlikely to change;

- Former school sites (see section 4 below);
- Sites which no longer have an urban greenspace function (see paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 below). In any case these sites could make little or no additional contribution to future housing land supply.
- Other site-specific factors For example, size, shape or road access issues might make it difficult to develop. The intentions of land owners are also relevant.

3.2 These factors have been considered in setting out draft recommendations for each urban greenspace. However, more information is needed especially about the importance of an individual urban greenspace to the local community. It is anticipated that public consultation on the draft Green Space Study will help to clarify this, and that some draft recommendations may need to be amended. Conversely, it is possible that the public may welcome development on a few urban greenspaces, because of local issues.

	Fig 3.1 Draft Green Space Study				
	Urban greens	paces assessed	, with draft reco	ommendation of	
Number of high benefits	retention	Changing designation from urban greenspace	Possible change to designation	[some] development or need further consideration	of urban greenspaces assessed
0	9	2	6	14	31
1	34	1	7	10	52
2	42	0	1	4	47
3	38	1	0	1	40
4	20	0	1	0	21
5+	12	0	0	0	12
	155	4	15	29	203
Not assessed	192	4	1	1	198
Revised totals	347	8	16	30	401

3.3 The draft recommendations are summarised in figure 3.1 below.

Urban greenspaces which should be retained

3.4 The draft study recommends that the overwhelming majority of urban greenspaces should be retained – 347 of 401. This includes 155 of the 203 urban greenspaces

assessed, and 192 which were not assessed because they are public parks and outdoor sports sites, schools sites and cemeteries and churchyards.

Sites which no longer have an urban greenspace function.

3.5 It is considered that there are 4 urban greenspaces, which were fully assessed, and 4 others, which no longer have an urban greenspace function. Most of these sites have already been developed and so should not be seen as sites for future development.

3.6 They include for example sites at Brooke Road West, Crosby and Hatfield Road, Bootle which are now incorporated into private, back gardens of surrounding houses; the site of Dobbies Garden centre, Kew, Southport; Atlantic Industrial Open Space, and Dunnings Bridge Road, Netherton, which is part of the adjacent industrial site It is recommended that at an appropriate time – perhaps during the preparation of the Site Allocations development plan – these sites be removed from the urban greenspace designation. Most would be redesignated as Primarily Residential Area.

Urban greenspaces where a change to the designation should be considered

3.7 There are a further 16 urban greenspaces (15 assessed) where at an appropriate time – perhaps during the preparation of the Site Allocations development plan – consideration be given to removing these sites from the urban greenspace designation. Again, most would be re-designated as Primarily Residential Area. These sites are varied in character. These sites would remain green and open while in their current use, but if the use ceased the urban greenspace protection would no longer apply.

3.8 Some, like the site of Formby swimming pool, have a very limited urban greenspace function, being largely developed. Others are operational tennis or bowls club sites surrounded by housing on 4 sides, for example Brownmoor Park Sports Club, Crosby, Argyle Tennis Club, Southport. Until replaced, Unitary Development Plan policy G5 'Protection of recreational open space' would apply to these sites. Others are sites which have no high greenspace benefits, such as the open space in the former Gas Depot in Bootle, or the pub garden next to the Hightown Hotel, Hightown.

4. Former school sites which may be suitable for development

4.1 Since August 2004, around 15 Sefton schools have closed. The sites of most of these former schools are designated as urban greenspaces. St George of England High School, Bootle is due to close on 31 August 2013 – this is also an urban greenspace.

4.2 Some of the schools have been re-used or are due to be re-used – for example the former Netherton Park Primary School site, Dunnings Bridge Road, Netherton has been redeveloped as the Bridge Community Centre. Others have no current formal use, and in some cases (e.g. Bootle High School, Browns Lane, Netherton) the buildings have been demolished. In a few cases, land or buildings are owned by the Roman Catholic (RC) Archdiocese or Church of England (C of E) Diocese, with the balance of the site owned by the Council.

4.3 School playing fields are covered by a national Direction which restricts their loss to development for ten years from the date of school closure. However, some of the schools are 5 or so years into this ten-year period, and there is a continuing need for housing sites over the next 15 years. Other legislation means that we have to consult Sport England on planning applications on playing fields, and if they object schemes may be referred to the Secretary of State.

4.4 The Director of Children's Services has also pointed out that the Localism Bill is due to "introduce powers for communities to bid for the ownership and management of community assets. Local authorities will be required to maintain a list of public or private assets of community value put forward for consideration by communities. When listed assets become available for disposal, a moratorium will come into effect to give communities more time to develop a bid and raise the capital to buy the asset." The Government also plans to preserve former school sites to support the creation of free schools in areas where there is demand.

4.5 The Director of Children's Services comments further that, all things being equal, the former school sites not being used are a [financial] burden as they have to be 'mothballed', so it would be appropriate for them to be developed, where they are not needed by the community or for free schools. The Director of Leisure Services is also broadly supportive.

4.6 After assessment of the green space benefits of these former schools, I consider that in principle the following sites would be suitable for development of some or all of the site, with the balance of the site (where relevant) being enhanced for public recreation use – for example allotments or linear parks (St John Stone, Southport).. These sites are within 15 to 20 minutes walk of larger parks and accessible nature spaces.

4.7 The former school sites which are considered in principle to be suitable for development are set out below. A map of the sites is shown at the end of this report in section 7. Potentially they could yield around 530 homes, around 500 of them in Bootle.

Former school site	Draft comment	Estimated poss. no. of homes	10 yrs from closure
Bootle		458	
Former St Mary's School playing field, Ashcroft Street, Bootle. <i>(Linacre Ward).</i>	Within Coffee House Bridge Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) area. In line with SPD, some housing development & some new public green space. Priority should be on a green link through site linking canal, development and St Mary's Gardens (but Leisure Services would not want to manage it).	82	Sept 2015
Former St Marys C of E Primary School, Irlam Rd, Bootle. <i>(Linacre Ward).</i>	Within Coffee House Bridge SPD area. (Site is owned by the C of E Diocese - Council own the caretaker's house but not the rest of the site). In line with SPD, some housing development & some new public green space. Priority should be on green link through site linking canal, development and St Mary's Gardens (but Leisure Services would not want to manage it).	Already counted in housing supply	Sept 2015
Former Thomas Gray Infants School, Balfour Road, Bootle. <i>(Linacre Ward).</i>	Previously developed site unlikely to be suitable for allotments. Director of Children's Services recommends that should be offered as school playing field for Thomas Gray Junior School. If not required, I recommend housing development.	30	Sept 2019
Former St Joan of Arc Primary School, Rimrose Rd, Bootle.	Approved Development Brief to develop most of the site & retain some of the greenspace. However, recommend development of whole	36	Sept 2019

Former school site	Draft comment	Estimated poss. no. of homes	10 yrs from closure
(Linacre Ward).	site subject to green buffer along A565 boundary, linking to former Rawson Rd school and Seaforth Triangle.		
Former Rawson Road Primary School, Elm Drive, Seaforth. <i>(Linacre Ward).</i>	School closed. Development brief suggests part development, part retention of greenspace, but brief should be revised to allow development of whole site subject to improvements to nearby parks (e.g. Bowersdale Park).	28	Sept 2015
Assessment Centre (former School of the Good Shepherd), Sterrix Lane, Netherton. (Ford Ward).	Assessment centre is not used & boarded up; another part of the School of Good Shepherd is used for offices. Scope for development on playing fields (& building if offices were relocated) as site within 1km of larger parks & accessible nature space, but need to retain most trees or plant new as compensation.	27	Sept 2014
Former Beach Road School Playing Fields, Ranelagh Avenue, Litherland. <i>(Litherland Ward)</i> .	Recommend that site is developed in its entirety, subject to improving quality of & access to nearby greenspaces (e.g. Chaffers Fields, Rimrose Valley, Hatton Hill Park) & opening up the Right of Way route next to site as part of any development scheme.	26	Sept 2018
IMPACT Pupil Referral Unit (former Daleacre Primary School), Daleacre Drive, Netherton. (St Oswald Ward).	Recommend development on all of site not used by IMPACT, subject to sensitive treatment along canal & in groundwater zone, visual improvements, greening etc on boundaries.	52	Sept 2015
Bootle High School, Browns Lane, Netherton. (St Oswald Ward).	School closed & building demolished. Scope for development on most of site, retaining a green link along part of canal and the northern site boundary	110	Sept 2019
Former St Raymonds RC Primary School, Harrops Croft, Netherton. <i>(St Oswald Ward).</i>	(Footprint of the buildings belongs to the Catholic Archdiocese). Recommend development of northern part of site & 'odd' spaces in south-subject to strong green routes/front garden planting, and extension & enhancement of Killen Green Park on southern part of site (part funded by this development).	67	Sept 2015
Crosby Thornton Primary School, Stannyfield Drive, Thornton. (Manor Ward).	Former school site, both buildings and part of playing field re-used. Investigate whether any scope for limited housing development around the former Infants' building.	?	Sept 2020
Formby Former Holy Trinity C of E School, Lonsdale Road, Formby. (Harington Ward)	(Footprint of building belongs to the C of E Diocese). Local residents and Parish Councillors have a variety of views about future of the site. I recommend that consideration be given to making site	-	Sept 2015

Former school site	Draft comment	Estimated poss. no. of homes	10 yrs from closure
	available for any of the following - town centre uses including leisure uses, housing, an extension to the adjacent sports club, housing or public green space (but not managed by Leisure Services).		
Southport		30	
Former St John Stone RC Primary, Meadow Lane, Southport. (Ainsdale Ward).	(Footprint of the buildings belongs to the Catholic Archdiocese). Building currently being used as offices. Investigate scope for housing development on part of rest of site, as long as create a public, linear park along riverside (eastern) boundary, linking to Sandbrook Rd Recreation Ground & Woodland.	30	April 2018
Sefton East			
Parishes			
[None]		-	
Total		488	

5. Other urban greenspaces which may be suitable for development or should be considered further

5.1 I consider that some of the following urban greenspaces may be suitable for development, in principle. In these cases it would be most likely that the balance of the site (where relevant) would need to be enhanced for public recreation use. Further consideration is needed for the other sites set out below before a more specific recommendation can be made.

5.2 The urban greenspaces are set out below. While estimates of possible housing numbers are set out below, the availability of sites (including land owners' intentions) or other factors affecting their suitability has not yet been taken into account. As set out in paragraph 3.1 above, comments made in the forthcoming public consultation will also need to be taken into account. A map of the sites is shown at the end of this report in section 7.

5.3 Some of these urban greenspaces have already been counted in the housing supply figures (the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment - SHLAA).

5.4 The Range Road Open Space (Kerslake Way) at Hightown is included in the table below. However, it must be stressed that the draft comment is that further consideration should be given to the future of this urban greenspace.

5.5 The draft comment below says that: "Privately-owned site but high health benefit because of informal public use. Partial development could make a small but important contribution to meeting local housing needs. Possible scope for partial development including, for example, a formal path through site and new habitat creation. Strong local support for greenspace designation."

5.6 Regarding the local support for site as greenspace, we are aware of a petition of 470+ signatures from residents of Hightown supporting the retention of the whole of the site as urban greenspace (autumn 2010). We have received a letter from 3 residents (January

2011) reiterating Hightown residents' opposition to any future development on this land.

Urban greenspace	Draft comment	Estimated poss. no. of homes
Bootle		100
Bank Road open space, Bootle. <i>(Linacre Ward).</i>	In Coffee House SPD area and so development should carried out in accordance with the SPD.	Already in housing supply
Ashcroft Street open space, Bootle. <i>(Linacre Ward).</i>	In line with SPD, would be suitable for some housing development & some new public green space. Priority should be on green link through site linking canal, development and St Mary's Gardens (but Leisure Services would not want to manage it).	Already in housing supply
Pleasant Street Open Space, Bootle. <i>(Linacre Ward).</i>	Limited recreation function. Recommend that consideration be given to changing designation to Primarily Residential Area at next opportunity, & possible housing development although road layouts etc mean that could at best support a few houses.	6
Peel Road Play Area, Bootle. <i>(Linacre Ward).</i>	Develop all or most of site subject to compensation monies to improve children and teenagers' play facilities in Poets Park, and incorporation of substantial tree planting within the development scheme.	15
Seaforth Road Open Space (south) - Near Verdi Street, Seaforth. <i>(Linacre Ward).</i>	Important for climate change, and especially in terms of air quality and due to the density of nearby housing. Development on a small part of site may be appropriate subject to substantial green space buffer along A565 and enhancements to this site, the larger part of Seaforth Triangle & Bowersdale Park.	2
Seaforth Road Open Space (north), Seaforth. <i>(Linacre Ward).</i>	Important for climate change and especially air quality aspects. Recommend limited development near 'International' to enhance Listed Building; with restoration of former petrol station. If possible retain & enhance rest of greenspace, G036 & Bowersdale Park.	5
Norfolk Place Open Space, Seaforth. (Linacre Ward).	Recommend that site is developed - most likely for housing.	Already in housing supply
Fernhill Road Sports Centre. (Netherton & Orrell)	School use - to which sports centre now linked - ends 2013: If Sports Centre closes, need to see whether there is a community need for pitches. If not, consider scope for housing development.	36
Bootle Sports Stadium. (Derby Ward).	Unused site, former outdoor sports use - indoor tennis centre in use. Potential to develop around half of site for housing, & new allotments (and retention of tennis centre) on remainder (funded by the development) - although Leisure Services would not want to manage them.	63
Deepdale Park & Youth Training Centre. (Linacre Ward).	Consider whether development of site could give greater benefits (through enhancements to other parks and green spaces in the local area) than would be lost.	22
Longfield Road Park, Litherland.	May be suitable for development if other nearby larger parks - notably Hapsford Park - are improved. It is	Already in housing

Urban greenspace	Draft comment	Estimated poss. no. of homes
(Litherland Ward).	understood that the response to recent local consultation by One Vision is generally supportive of housing development on this site.	supply
Orrell Lane Sports Ground. (Netherton & Orrell Ward).	Site has existing planning permission for housing (Alfred McAlpine Homes). S106 monies part of package for new Netherton Activity Centre.	Already in housing supply
Land between the canal and Brunel Drive Litherland. (Ford Ward).	Likely to be very difficult to develop for housing or canal or recreation- linked uses, due to access issues, shape & canalside location of site. If housing not feasible, retain as urban greenspace.	4
Crosby		27
Range Road Open Space (Kerslake Way) <i>(Manor ward)</i>	Privately-owned site but high health benefit because of informal public use. Partial development could make a small but important contribution to meeting local housing needs. Possible scope for partial development including, for example, a formal path through site and new habitat creation. Strong local support for greenspace designation.	19
Victoria Park west of Somerville Road (Victoria ward)	There is no public access to this site, which is on the opposite side of the road from Victoria Park. Consider scope for housing development of this site (and site to north of it between rail line and Somerville Road).	8
Formby [None]		-
Sefton East [None]		
Southport		47
Land north of Dobbies Garden Centre, Kew. <i>(Kew ward).</i>	Consider whether scope for limited housing development on northern edge, but need to retain at least 75% of site and put in green route corridors, as it is an important link (pinch point) in narrow part of greenspace system & links to Newlands.	47
Formerly classed as Christ the King School (not used by school). <i>(Birkdale Ward)</i> .	Consider scope for housing development, incorporating green route link between housing and Newlands Country Park (through land north of Dobbies Garden Centre).	Already in housing supply
Total		174

6. Recommendations

6.1 The Planning and Economic Development Director recommends that members approve the draft Green Space Study for public consultation.

7. See below for maps showing Urban Greenspaces which may be suitable for development.









