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<b>Report to:</b> Planning Committee Cabinet	<b>Date of Meeting:</b> 5 December 2012 13 December 2012
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**Subject:** Local Plan for Sefton - Outcome of Studies

**Report of:** Director of Built Environment      **Wards Affected:** All

**Is this a Key Decision?** Yes      **Is it included in the Forward Plan?**  
Yes

**Exempt/Confidential**      No

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### **Purpose/Summary**

To inform members of the outcome of key studies which will help in preparing the Local Plan, to agree a brief for a Consequences Study, and to approve an updated timetable for preparing the Local Plan.

### **Recommendations**

That Planning Committee

- (1) Note the findings of the various studies referred to in this report and recommend that Cabinet accept these findings for the purposes of carrying out a Consequences Study
- (2) Recommend that Cabinet approve the updated housing figures [as set out in paragraph 3.5 of this report] for use in the Consequences Study
- (3) Recommend that Cabinet agree the brief for the Consequences Study, attached as Annex 1 to this report, subject to any minor alterations that may be necessary, to be delegated to the Head of Planning Services
- (4) Recommend that Cabinet agree to updated timetable for the Local Plan, as set out in the revised Local Development Scheme [section 5 of this report]
- (5) Endorse the use of the Planning Advisory Service to provide critical advice at key stages of Sefton's Local Plan

### **That Cabinet**

- (1) Accept the findings of the studies referred to in the report for the purposes of carrying out a Consequences Study
- (2) Approve the updated housing figures, as set out in paragraph 3.5 of this report for use in the Consequences Study
- (3) Agree the brief for the Consequences Study, attached as Annex 1 to this report subject to any minor alterations that may be necessary, to be delegated to the Head of Planning Services

- (4) Agree the revised Local Development Scheme setting out the updated timetable for preparing the Local Plan, as set out in section 5 of this report
- (5) Endorse the use of the Planning Advisory Service to provide critical advice at key stages of Sefton's Local Plan

**How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?**

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

**Reasons for the Recommendation:**

To inform Members of the results of the studies and to agree next steps.

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

**(A) Revenue Costs**

The estimated cost of the Consequences Study is up to £40,000 [this is less than previously anticipated as the scope of the study has been simplified]. This sum has been identified from within the Planning Department's (Planning Policy) Revenue budget.

**(B) Capital Costs**

None

**Implications:**

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

<b>Legal</b>	Incorporated into report
<b>Human Resources</b>	None

**Equality**

- |    |  |                                     |
|----|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | No Equality Implication                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | Equality Implications identified and mitigated   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 3. | Equality Implication identified and risk remains | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

**Impact on Service Delivery:**

None

**What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**

The Head of Corporate Finance (FD1957/12) has been consulted and her comments have been incorporated into the report.

The Head of Corporate Legal Services (LD1274/12) has been consulted and her comments have been incorporated into the report.

**Are there any other options available for consideration?**

No.

**Implementation Date for the Decision**

Following the call-in period after the Cabinet meeting.

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**Background Papers:**

Review of Sefton Housing Requirement [NLP, 2011]

[Updated] Review of Sefton's Housing Requirement [NLP, 2012]

Employment Land and Premises Study [BE Group, 2010]

[Updated] Employment Land and Premises Study [BE Group, 2012]

Agricultural Land Study [ADAS, 2012]

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment [Capita Symonds, 2012]

Ecological Surveys [Gail Portly-Bishop, 2012]

These documents can be accessed via this link: [www.sefton.gov.uk/planningstudies](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/planningstudies)

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In February/March 2012, Members received a report of the consultation on Options which had taken place in summer 2011. Members agreed to a programme of further key studies which would provide essential information in preparing the next stage of the Core Strategy.
- 1.2 Since then the Government has published the National Planning Policy Framework to simplify the planning system and to promote sustainable development and economic growth. Following a change in the law in early 2012, development plan documents are now to be collectively known as 'local plans'. This means that we will now take forward our work on the Core Strategy under the name of the Sefton Local Plan.
- 1.3 The key areas of further work which have been undertaken in recent months include the following:
- An update of the number of homes we require in the Borough to take account of the latest information e.g. from the 2011 Census and latest official population and household projections.
  - An update of the employment land and premises study: the previous study dates from a 2008 base date and only looked forward until 2026; however, the Local Plan must look ahead to 2030 and so the update looks forward a further for a further 5 years, to 2031.
  - Agricultural land study – the quality of the agricultural land which was being identified as potentially suitable for development was a major issue during the 2011 consultation on Options
  - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment –this is an update of the previous SFRA study and its main purpose is to inform decisions on where development is appropriate.
  - Ecological study was undertaken to add to existing data on the ecological value of sites in a number of sites in Sefton.

## 2. Findings of the studies

- 2.1 This section presents summaries of the key findings from the various studies. The studies themselves will be published in full on the Local Plans website.

**None of the studies allocate development sites, nor make any recommendation for a preferred option of the Local Plan.** This will be done next summer at the Preferred Option stage [see section five]

### Review of Sefton's housing requirement and housing supply.

- 2.2 Independent consultants Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP) were appointed to update their previous work to derive a housing target for Sefton to replace the current Regional Spatial Strategy Housing figure for the borough.
- The original NLP Study, published in early 2011, provided the housing target that underpinned Core Strategy Option 2 which was consulted on in summer 2011. This has now been updated to reflect the most recent demographic information.
- 2.3 The NLP Study has taken account of a range of demographic and other information including official population and household projections, the latest 2011

Census information, natural change, migration, affordable housing need, and modelled a future housing requirement to 2031.

The most recent NLP work has considered a number of alternative approaches for modelling Sefton's housing requirement. In particular, NLP have undertaken a **baseline assessment** which models the implications of the latest 2010-based population projections from the Office for National Statistics [ONS] which were published in 2012. They have applied those projections to the most recent (2008-based, and published in November 2010) household projections from Communities and Local Government to derive a best estimate for likely household growth for Sefton.

- 2.4 This results in a requirement of 750 dwellings a year over the period to 2031, assuming a baseline vacancy rate in the housing stock of 4.7% for Sefton. This is the figure which they applied in previous work but the vacancy rate for Sefton has now actually reduced to 4.1%. This reduction was due to a number of 'one off' factors, including the demolition of vacant properties in the HMR area, and the re-occupation of a large number of One Vision Housing properties that had previously been vacant whilst undergoing refurbishment. Officers consider there is opportunity to introduce a policy objective of reducing the vacancy rate in the Borough into the Local Plan. This was a priority issue in last summer's consultation. When NLP apply a stock vacancy rate of 4%, this figure reduces to 700 dwellings a year.
- 2.5 The latest ONS 2010-based population projections are informed by assumptions of significant net inward domestic migration of 5,900 migrants over the period to 2031, and 8,760 net inward migrants over the same period from abroad. This is based on ONS' updated means of recording where people move to, mainly from abroad, providing local information at a greater level of detail than before. It shows a much higher figure of inward migration for Sefton than had been recorded previously. However, NLP question the robustness of these projected future migration assumptions and they query whether it is reasonable to assume that the recent higher rate of net inward migration is likely to be sustained in the future.
- 2.6 NLP have therefore recommended a more precautionary approach and, as an **alternative and preferred assessment**, have adjusted downwards the assumptions about the number of people moving into Sefton both from abroad and also from this country. This results in a requirement of 560 dwellings a year over the period to 2031, assuming a stock vacancy rate of 4.7%. However, when they apply a stock vacancy rate of 4%, this figure reduces to 510 dwellings a year over the period to 2031. This latter figure is the basis for a revised Local Plan option 2 which will be assessed as part of a Consequences Study. This figure is very close to the current Regional Spatial Strategy [RSS] housing figure for Sefton of 500 homes a year. [The RSS is due to be abolished in 2013].
- 2.7 This updated figure of 510 is contingent on maintaining this vacancy rate at 4% over the plan period and whilst this is only marginally lower than the current figure of 4.1% it will be a challenge, especially in the context that much is beyond the control of the Council. A 4% vacancy rate is therefore considered to be an achievable target for Sefton that would be just below the current North West average of 4.2%.

### Housing supply

- 2.8 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) makes an assessment of how much land in the urban area is suitable and available for housing development. It provides an assessment of the capacity of the existing settlements to accommodate new housing development.
- 2.9 This study is updated annually to ensure that new sites that emerge are taken into account. We are currently updating the Study from 2011 to a 2012 base-date, and the findings will be available before the end of the year. This work is to ensure that we identify maximum opportunity for new development in the urban areas.

### Employment land and premises study

- 2.10 Independent consultants BE Group were commissioned to produce an Employment Land & Premises Study refresh for Sefton. This updates the previous 2008-based Employment Land & Premises Study (also by BE Group) that was jointly produced with Halton, Knowsley and West Lancashire Councils.
- 2.11 The Study has assessed Sefton's future employment land needs to 2031. It has also assessed the quality of our existing development sites and the ability of these sites to meet future business requirements. It has found that Sefton has a comparatively small pool of employment sites relative to other Merseyside districts, and that these sites are of varying quality. A key challenge will be to ensure the delivery of identified development sites, and the remodelling of currently under-used land.
- 2.12 Some of the key findings are as follows:
- There is a total need for 77.28 hectares (ha) of employment land in Sefton to 2031. Only 53.78 ha of this can be developed on brownfield sites in the urban area. This leaves an outstanding requirement for 31 ha of land.
  - The Study recommends that two new business parks are identified in Sefton to meet this requirement (as well as longer term needs) – one in North Sefton, and one in South Sefton.
  - Also, the study recommends that Green Belt land to the rear of Crowland Street, although not suitable for a Business Park, could comprise an industrial estate as an extension to the existing area.
  - Sefton has significantly fewer business development sites than any other Merseyside authority. Sefton's 53.78 ha of development land compares to 157.97 ha in Knowsley, 273.17 in Wirral, 157.97 in Liverpool, and 87.41 in St Helens. There are 49.66 ha of land in neighbouring West Lancashire. Importantly, with the exception of Liverpool and Wirral, each of these authorities has a significantly smaller population than Sefton.
  - Due to the limited supply of employment land, identified 'Primarily Industrial Areas' should be protected from non-employment uses (such as housing) unless wholly exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.
  - The Study identifies four sites that should be identified as 'key employment sites' to deliver high quality office / industrial development. These sites are:

Southport Business Park, Atlantic Industrial Complex, Senate Business Park, and the former Peerless Refinery site.

- Two sites are identified as being unsuitable for employment uses, and are recommended to be allocated to housing. These sites are the 'People's' and 'Aintree Curve' sites in Bootle, which should be developed for housing.
- Regeneration / remodelling opportunities within existing employment areas (such as at Heysham Road, Netherton) should continue to be explored.

#### Agricultural land study

2.13 Independent consultants ADAS were appointed to:

- (i) Provide an updated policy context which sets out the issues to be taken into account when decisions about the future of Sefton's agricultural land are made;
- (ii) Update the 1990 analysis of the Sefton rural economy;
- (iii) Detail the benefits arising from Sefton's soil resource, including food production as well as benefits relating to ecosystem services, recreation, amenity, biodiversity, and managing flood risk;
- (iv) Review the extent and coverage of agricultural land quality across Sefton and validate agricultural land classification surveys submitted in connection with the Options consultation in 2011, and make an updated assessment of agricultural land quality of potential development sites in the Green Belt; and
- (v) Assess the impact development would have on agricultural land, the rural economy and jobs.

2.14 This study was commissioned directly as a consequence of the issues raised regarding Sefton's agricultural land in the options consultation last year. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework states that "LPAs should take into account the economic and other benefits of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. Where the significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, LPAs should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to higher quality agricultural land".

2.15 The study tells us that there in 2010 there were 60 farm holdings in Sefton occupying an area of about 3,700 hectares. The Study found that agriculture comprises about 82% of Sefton's Green Belt. Within the areas surveyed as part of the Agricultural Land Study, approximately 70% of the agricultural area is farmed as 'general cropping', and 30% as 'lowland grazing livestock' units. Cereals occupy about 40% of the agricultural area. However, the most valuable crop is potatoes due to the much higher than average yields compared to the North West and England, although potatoes only occupies about 5% of the area.

2.16 The following table shows the area of crop proportion in Sefton compared with the North West and England.

**Crop production in Sefton, North West and England in 2010**

Crop	Area (ha), 2010			Percentage of land used for each crop, 2010		
	Sefton	NW	England	% Sefton	% NW	% England
Cereals	1,440	76,457	2,496,798	57%	68%	64%
Oilseeds	271	5,224	599,675	11%	5%	15%
Potatoes	201	7,722	99,939	8%	7%	3%
Horticulture	172	5,403	104,529	7%	5%	3%
Fallow land	409	4,302	149,316	16%	4%	4%
Other crops	14	14,077	471,810	1%	12%	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,507</b>	<b>113,185</b>	<b>3,922,067</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*N.B. figures may not add to 100% due to rounding*

2.17 However, this only represents a very small amount of the total crop production in England as the following table shows:

Crop	Area (ha), 2010			As a proportion of crops in England (%) 2010	
	Sefton	NW	England	% Sefton	% NW
Cereals	1,440	76,457	2,496,798	0.1%	3.1%
Oilseeds	271	5,224	599,675	0.0%	0.9%
Potatoes	201	7,722	99,939	0.2%	7.7%
Horticulture	172	5,403	104,529	0.2%	5.2%
Fallow land	409	4,302	149,316	0.3%	2.9%
Other crops	14	14,077	471,810	0.0%	3.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,507</b>	<b>113,185</b>	<b>3,922,067</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>

2.18 The Study confirms that agricultural land quality in Sefton is higher than the regional and national average. As a result, yields for all crops on Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land is expected to be generally higher than regional and national yields.



**Typical yields for key crops in Sefton by agricultural land classification grading (tonnes per hectare)**

<b>Agricultural Land Classification</b>	<b>Winter Wheat</b>	<b>Winter Barley</b>	<b>Winter Oilseed Rape</b>	<b>Potatoes</b>
Grade 1	9.3	7.4	4.9	74
Grade 2	8.6	7.4	4.3	62
Grade 3a	7.4	6.2	3.7	49
Grade 3b	6.8	6.2	3.1	49
Grade 4	6.2	5.6	2.5	37
Grade 5	5.6	4.9	2.5	30
<i>England average*</i>	7.8	5.8	3.3	42
<i>NW Average*</i>	5.7	4.8	3.5	<i>Not available</i>

*\* Figures for wheat, barley and oilseed rape yields are five-year averages (2006-2010; for potatoes, yield data is the five-year average (2005-2009).*

- 2.19 Surveys undertaken as part of the Agricultural Land Study confirm that some sites have a lower agricultural land classification grading than previously documented in the provisional maps produced by DEFRA / Natural England (which confirms what many of the detailed studies carried out previously have found), but in some cases, the Provisional maps (produced by DEFRA) under-estimated the grading of agricultural land. Generally, it is land around Ainsdale, Formby and Hightown which have been under-graded on the Provisional maps, and land east of Southport and around Thornton and in Sefton East Parishes that is over-graded. However, the majority of the areas surveyed still contain predominantly best and most versatile agricultural land (i.e. Grades 1, 2 and sub-grade 3a).
- 2.20 If Option 2 or 3 were to be progressed in the Local Plan, a small amount of Sefton's agricultural land would be lost to development. This equates to about 144 hectares or 2.1% of the Green Belt under Option 2, or 226 hectares or 3.4% of the Green Belt under Option 3. The loss of food production in Sefton, even under option 3, would be very small when compared with the North West (0.02 - 0.03% of the agricultural area in the NW) or England (0.003 - 0.006% of the agricultural area in England).
- 2.21 The impact of potential development on individual crops could be between 20% – 50% greater than the regional and national averages because of the higher yields in Sefton. However the overall impact on food production regionally and nationally would still be minute.
- 2.22 The Study concluded the impact of development [on Green Belt land as described here] on economic output and jobs would also be very small. This is shown in the following table:

### Gross margin and employment per ha by farm type in the North West

Farm Type	Associated GVA* £ per ha 2009	Associated Employment per ha*, 2010	Impact on GVA		Impact on employment	
			Option2 (144ha)	Option3 (226ha)	Option2 (144ha)	Option3 (226ha)
General cropping	£829/ha	0.02 jobs/ha	£82k (99 ha)	£129k (156ha)	2.0 jobs	3.0 jobs
Lowland grazing livestock	£550/ha	0.01 jobs/ha	£25k (45 ha)	£39k (70ha)	0.5 jobs	0.7 jobs
<b>All farms**</b>	-	-	<b>£107k</b>	<b>£168k</b>	<b>2.5 FTE</b>	<b>3.7 FTE</b>

\* Using Gross Margin as a proxy

\*\*Assumes no specialist horticulture units.

Source: Farm Business Survey (FBS) 2009/10 for the North West Region<sup>1</sup>

### Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

- 2.23 The main purposes of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, are to provide the evidence to:
- direct development away from areas at greatest risk of flooding, and manage residual risk, taking into account the impacts of climate change (using the so called 'sequential' and 'exceptions' tests);
  - make sure that any development is safe, does not increase flood risk (from any source) elsewhere, and if possible reduces flood risk overall; and
  - develop appropriate policies for the management of flood risk from all sources within Sefton.
- Government advice is that only river and tidal flood risk should affect the location of development sites, but that all flood risk from all sources should be taken into account when looking at the design of development or where exactly it is built within the site.
- 2.24 The 2012 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) [undertaken by Capita Symonds] updates the previous (2009) SFRA, and is nearing completion. The SFRA assesses the risk of flooding from all sources, drawing on the Environment Agency's most up to date information on river and tidal flooding, recent information from the Sefton Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) on surface water flood risk, and other information on sewer, groundwater, canal and reservoir flood risk (no reservoirs in Sefton, some in Knowsley could affect Sefton). All of these sources of flood risk affect some parts of Sefton. The SFRA also provides further guidance and recommendations for development management and the preparation of the Sefton Local Plan.
- 2.25 River flood risk is important in a number of areas, notably in the areas to the north and east of Formby, and around the River Alt from north of Ince Blundell, through the rural area to the western fringes of Maghull and the northern fringes of Nethererton and Aintree. Tidal flood risk is largely managed by the existing defences.

- 2.26 The principal source of flood risk within the borough of Sefton is from surface water flooding, and this is a risk across Sefton. The SWMP identified that approximately 38,000 properties could be at risk in the event of a 1 in 100 year storm with an allowance for climate change. Sewer flooding is considered to be a significant issue across the borough, largely as a result of sewer systems that generally have insufficient capacity to cope with severe rainfall.
- 2.27 Government advice is that it is acceptable to develop sites at risk of surface water flooding, as surface water can and should be managed within the site through use of sustainable drainage systems. It is considered important in Sefton for Local Plan policies to limit surface water run-off rates for both greenfield and brownfield sites; and to make sure both that the development on the site is safe from surface water (as well as other) flood risk and does not increase flood risk elsewhere. Where possible, development should be designed to reduce flood risk overall - for example through provision of additional flood water storage areas.
- 2.28 Although extensive, the direct risk of groundwater flooding to people and property is considered to be relatively low. The risks of canal and reservoir flooding are localised, and also considered to be relatively low. None of these three risks alone would affect the choice of development sites, but as for flood risk from any sources, they may affect the design of development or where exactly it is built within the site.

#### Ecological study

- 2.29 Specialist consultants carried out ecological surveys for some of Sefton's Local Wildlife Sites (Sites of Local Biological Interest, or SLBIs) in summer 2012.
- 2.30 These provide up to date snapshots of the current habitat value of the sites, and showed that all of the surveyed Local Wildlife Sites retain their habitat importance.
- 2.31 Like international and national wildlife site designations, and priority habitats, the Local Wildlife Sites form part of the core biodiversity area in Liverpool City Region's Ecological Framework.

### **3. Consequences Study**

- 3.1 The results of the aforementioned studies will be critical in formulating the Preferred Options, which is the next stage in preparing Sefton's Local Plan. Counsel has advised that it is important to assess the impact and risks of various options, from an economic, social and environmental perspective on both Sefton and its adjoining authorities. This assessment will effectively be the Consequences Study. Planning Committee were previously informed [25 July 2012] on the need and scope of a Consequences Study. This report updates this and seeks approval of the brief for the study [draft brief provided at Annex 1].
- 3.2 In order to assess an appropriate range of impacts, it is proposed to identify three different levels of housing requirements as the main basis for this work. While providing new homes is only one aspect of the Local Plan, it will have implications for many other parts of the Plan, mainly because of the issues raised by finding suitable land. None of these options currently has specific Council support, but the scope of these levels of housing requirement should demonstrate a wide

range of effects and help the Council to decide which approach best suits Sefton's needs and aspirations.

- 3.3 In order to take full account of the updated evidence set out above, and to take account of updated Government planning requirements, it will be necessary to formally update the three options that were previously consulted upon. As a reminder, those options were:  
Option One: 270 homes a year– 'urban containment' [i.e. meet all development needs within the built-up area without any green belt encroachment]  
Option Two: 480 homes a year + a new business park in the north of the Borough – 'meeting identified needs'  
Option Three: 650 homes a year + new business park – 'stabilising the Borough's population'.
- 3.4 As stated earlier, the most recent published government demographic and household and Census information now shows that, instead of an overall outward move of population from Sefton, there is now an overall increase in the population moving into the borough. This trend is projected to continue. The 2010 based population projections [published in 2012] suggest Sefton will now experience population growth from 275,000 in 2011 to 286,300 in 2031, a growth of 4.1%.
- 3.5 The revised options are as follows:  
Option One: 270 homes a year– 'urban containment' [i.e. meet all development needs within the built-up area]  
Option Two: 510 homes a year + a new business park *in both the north and the south of the Borough* – 'meeting identified needs'  
Option Three: 700 homes a year + new employment areas both north and south – 'optimistic household growth'  
The number of homes for options two and three above are dependent on achieving and maintaining a vacancy rate of 4%.
- 3.6 The brief for the Consequences Study is attached as Annex 1. This would draw on the findings of the studies which have just been completed, together with other Sefton studies, and similar studies for adjoining authorities. The consequences study would have regard to the (updated) three rates of development set out above and will identify the key effects on, and risks to, Sefton of pursuing any of these options.
- 3.7 It is intended that the Consequences Study will be commissioned in January and will be completed by May. The conclusions of this study will help determine the choice of 'preferred option'. Agreeing a 'preferred option' is the next key stage in preparing the Local Plan and will be the subject of a further 12-week consultation in summer 2013.
- 3.8 For completeness, Members are advised that a number of other studies will be commissioned shortly to inform the Local Plan. A refresh of our Strategic Housing Market Assessment will be undertaken to update the evidence we have on the range of housing needs [including affordable housing] that exist in Sefton. We will also be part of a Liverpool City Region group that will commission a sub-regional study of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

#### 4. External review

- 4.1 In addition to the need for up-to-date evidence, a Local Plan must take account of the latest Government guidance and best practice. The Local Planning team is working closely with the national Planning Advisory Service [PAS] to secure advice on key aspects of preparing the Plan.
- 4.2 PAS is offering guidance and comment on the process of preparing the Plan, on key requirements like sustainability appraisal and viability assessment, and of how to develop appropriate approach to consultation which makes sure as many people as possible can contribute to the preparation of the Plan.
- 4.3 The contribution of PAS draws on the experience of authorities elsewhere, advice from CLG, and how Inspectors are assessing other Local Plans. This will ensure that the process of preparing Sefton's Local Plan can benefit from critical external appraisal at key points in preparing the Plan.

#### 5. Local Development Scheme – update

- 5.1 Each Local Authority must maintain a Local Development Scheme which sets out the timetable for the production of its Local Plan. Sefton's current Local Development Scheme has become out-of-date due to the need to update evidence in a number of key areas.
- 5.2 Given the recent completion of many of these studies, and with agreement sought to bring the findings of these studies together in a Consequences Study [see section 3 above], it is now possible to set out the dates of the key stages for the Local Plan to its completion.
- 5.3 These stages are set out below:

<b>Preferred Options Consultation [12 weeks]</b>	July – September 2013
<b>Publication</b>	March 2014
<b>Publication period [6-8 weeks]</b>	March - May 2014
<b>Submission to SoS</b>	June 2014
<b>Pre-hearing meeting</b>	August 2014
<b>Examination</b>	October 2014
<b>Adoption</b>	February 2015

- 5.4 If agreed, this timetable will be used to update the Local Development Scheme and be placed online and made available on request. This will enable local residents and other interested groups to identify periods when they can expect to

be consulted and make representations. It will also give the Council more certainty in allocating its resources.

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