
Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 5 November
Subject:	Sefton Local Plan - Further Post- Submission Changes	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Report of:	Chief Executive		
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes	Is it included in the Forward Plan?	Yes
Exempt/Confidential	No		

Purpose/Summary

Since submission of the Local Plan for examination in August, it is proposed to make a number of changes to take account of representations where they will help to secure that the Plan is ‘sound’, updated evidence and to make minor editorial changes etc. This is regarded as good practice. An initial set of proposed post-submission changes were approved by Cabinet on 1 October 2015.

Recommendation

The list of proposed post submission changes to the Local Plan as set out in Annex 1 of the report be approved for consideration by the Planning Inspector at the Local Plan examination.

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

	<u>Corporate Objective</u>	<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
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 have in place a number of proposed changes to the Local Plan prior to the examination hearings which are due to begin in mid-November. This will help show how the Council intends to respond to a number of representations where it accepts the premise of the argument and which would help to make the Plan sound.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None. It is good practice to suggest post submission changes which the Council supports before the hearings stage of the examination of the Local Plan. This will also help to reduce the length of the hearings.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

Within the Local Plans 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:

Financial		
Legal		
Human Resources		
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 of the Proposals on Service Delivery:

None

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Chief Finance Officer has been consulted and notes the report indicates no direct financial implications for the Council. At this stage revenue costs can be met from existing budgets agreed for the Local Plan. (FD 3831/15)

The Head of Regulation and Compliance has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report. (LD 3114/15)

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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Background Papers:

The representations to the Local Plan can be accessed via www.sefton.gov.uk/localplan, the evidence base via www.sefton.gov.uk/examlibrary

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 The Local Plan for Sefton was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 3 August 2015. Mr Martin Pike has been appointed as the Planning Inspector to examine the Sefton Local Plan. On 24 September a Pre-hearing meeting was held. This was an opportunity for the Inspector to set out how he intends the examination hearings to be run. Following the Pre-hearing meeting the Inspector confirmed that the hearings will commence on Tuesday 17 November 2015 for a period of 4 – 5 weeks.

1.2 As we progress towards the Examination hearings there is an opportunity for the Council to suggest to the Inspector proposed changes to the draft Local Plan. These are known as ‘post submission changes’ and a list of these is provided at Annex A. Members will recall that in September 2015, authority was granted to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control to be given delegated powers to agree minor proposed changes to the submitted Local Plan during the examination hearings. This power has been exercised with respect to a number of minor changes, such as typographical errors or changes to improve accuracy, clarity and consistency.

However there are a number that change the meaning or direction of a policy. These may be a result of the Council responding to comments made during publication stage or as a result of new evidence that has emerged since the Council published the Local Plan in January. A first list of post submission changes was agreed by Cabinet on 1 October 2015.

1.3 Since the pre-hearing meeting, the Inspector has issued ‘Matters, Issues and Questions’ that the Council (and everyone else who wishes to) has to respond to by 30 October. This is a very significant stage of preparing for the hearings and sets out the key aspects the Inspector wishes to concentrate on at the hearings.

2. Further Proposed Post Submission Changes

2.1 In response to a question from the Inspector it is proposed to amend Policy MN1 ‘Sefton’s housing and employment requirement’ to set out more specifically that Sefton will undertake an immediate review of the Local Plan to address emerging issues of housing and economic growth, including the impact of port expansion. The amended policy will also confirm Sefton’s commitment to working with the other Merseyside and West Lancashire local authorities in undertaking studies to inform that review in a timely manner. Currently this is set out in an early chapter but, given its importance, it is proposed to include this commitment more explicitly in this policy. A proposed change to the early part of the plan also sets out that the early review will enable the Council to jointly work with our neighbours on an approach to wind energy, in line with the recent Ministerial Statement.

2.2 It is proposed to add an additional new policy in the Local Plan to provide additional guidance on how the site at Moss Lane, Churchtown (MN2.4) should be developed. This site is allocated for housing and the policy sets out how the Council intends to address issues relating to this site which have emerged since the publication of the Local Plan in January 2015. In particular, the issues relate to vehicular and pedestrian access, provision of public transport, mitigation of the potential impact to Southport Old Links Golf Course with the proposed housing, retention of the existing woodland, mitigating any impact on North Meols Conservation Area, flood risk mitigation and habitat creation and management.

- 2.3 It is also proposed to add a new policy to guide development at Marine Park, Southport. Currently the site is included in policy ED8 ‘Southport Seafront’. This will give the redevelopment of this site greater prominence. The site provides a major opportunity for visitor-related development in Southport and the inclusion of a policy will help the Council to better clarify the type of development it expects to be achieved. The policy covers issues such as design, access, landscaping, the impact of the site’s seafront setting, impact on conservation and nature areas, and the need to have a development strategy for the whole site so that is developed in a comprehensive manner.
- 2.4 It is proposed to add a requirement to Policy MN5 Policy ‘Land south of Formby Industrial Estate’ that requires any floodlighting to be sensitively designed. This is to ensure that the development does not have an adverse impact on protected species that feed nearby. An additional sentence is also proposed to Policy MN6 ‘Land at Brackenway, Formby’ to explain that whilst there will be a loss of part of a Local Wildlife Site as a result of development of this site, the management of the remaining Local Wildlife Site will provide a major ecological benefit.
- 2.5 Proposed changes to the explanatory text to Policy ED5 ‘Tourism’ identifies additional tourism and visitor related attractions that are in Sefton, such as the Hornby Centre, the Trans Pennine Trail and the Coast Path.
- 2.6 Proposed changes to the section in the Local Plan on Energy Infrastructure [paragraphs 9.33 – 9.34] provide an overview of the recent Ministerial Statement on wind energy. This requires that local planning authorities should only grant planning permission if the proposed development site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan; and if, following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by affected local communities have been fully addressed and has their backing. It is also proposed to clarify that the area of search for wind energy in Ince Blundell that was identified at the ‘preferred option’ stage has not been included in the Local Plan.
- 2.7 Significant amendments to Policy EQ2, ‘Design’, are proposed to strengthen the policy. The policy will more closely correspond to the existing Design policy in the Unitary Development Plan (policy DQ1) which has proved to be very successful at appeal. The proposed new policy is more comprehensive than that in the submitted Local Plan and it is considered the changes will better assist the Council in securing better quality development.
- 2.8 Changes to Policy EQ9 ‘Provision of Public Open Space, Strategic Paths and Trees in Development’ are proposed that amend the requirements for ‘on’ and ‘off’ site open space provision. The proposed changes seek a higher housing threshold for on-site open space provision and provides greater clarification for when off-site contributions will be accepted. There is a corresponding proposed change to the explanatory text which clarifies the Council’s recreation accessibility standard.
- 2.9 Some changes are proposed to the heritage asset policies [NH11 ‘Development affecting Conservation Areas’, NH13 ‘Development affecting archaeology and scheduled monuments’ and NH14 ‘Development affecting non-designated Heritage Assets’]. These changes are in response to Historic England’s comments to the Local Plan and are intended to provide greater protection to Sefton’s heritage assets.

2.10 There are a range of other additional proposed changes that update latest information on the plan in terms of referring to new guidance, adding policy links between policies, editorial changes to improve layout and how a policy reads and correcting grammatical errors. Some will also help us to respond to the Matters, Issues and Questions issued by the Local Plan Inspector. It is also proposed to include an appendix to set out which policies from the existing Unitary Development Plan will be replaced by the emerging Local Plan policies.

3. Next Stages

3.1 Once the proposed changes are agreed we will submit these to the Inspector. The Inspector will consider the proposed changes and, if he is minded, recommend the Council includes them as Modifications to the Local Plan. There are likely to be other modifications to the Local Plan arising from the examination hearings. The Council is required to consult on the main Modifications to the Local Plan before any changes are incorporated into the document prior to its adoption.