1. **Local Planning**

   **The Sefton Local Plan**

1.1 Planning applications continue to be submitted on allocated sites. Of the 47 housing sites allocated in the Local Plan (policy MN2) planning applications have been received for 25, equating to approximately 4,650 homes (as at late October 2019). We expect a number of other large applications to be submitted over the next 12 months on our housing allocation sites.

   **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and other policy documents**

1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that creating high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. On 1 October 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published a National Design Guide, which illustrates how well-designed places that are ‘beautiful, enduring and successful’ can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government’s collection of planning practice guidance and is to be read alongside the separate national planning practice guidance on design process and tools.

1.3 The Policy Team will undertake a comprehensive review of the existing suite of supplementary planning guidance to determine what changes are necessary to bring them up-to-date with the National Design Guide, within the context of the recent climate change and environment announcements. This review will result in a new Design SPD or suite of SPDs, which is now likely to include ‘Landscape’, ‘Shop fronts, security and signage’ and ‘High Streets’ matters. Also it may result in amendments to other existing SPDs.

1.4 A draft update of the ‘Flats and HMOs’ is nearing completion for consultation later this year.

   **Liverpool City Region work**

1.5 The Combined Authority has commenced early engagement with the public on the Spatial Development Strategy for the Liverpool City Region, with web-
based consultation at www.lcrlistens.co.uk/ourplaces running until 14 January 2020. The Policy Team continues to contribute to work on the Spatial Development Strategy, and to cross-boundary and other strategic work including City Region wide studies and the a ‘Visitor Management Strategy’ for the Greater Merseyside area.

1.6 The Statement of Common Ground on strategic, cross-boundary planning matters which was jointly prepared by the Combined Authority and the City Region authorities (including West Lancashire) is nearing the end of the approvals process for each authority. This will be followed by formal sign off. Sefton approved the document in principle in July.

Neighbourhood Planning

1.7 The Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan was supported at a referendum held on 10th October 2019. It is due to be ‘made’ (i.e. adopted) by the Council in November 2019 and will then be part of the Development Plan.

Other work

1.8 Members of the Local Plans team continue to provide policy advice on all relevant planning applications and pre-application inquiries, including large housing developments on the Local Plan allocations.

1.9 As a result of the Government’s publication of a revised national planning policy framework, we are reviewing our Local Plan policy approach to the provision of affordable housing, particularly as a result of new threshold and definitions that have been introduced. We commissioned a consultant to undertake a review of Sefton’s Strategic Housing Market Assessment to determine the implications for Sefton’s housing needs. This has been completed and was made available for public comment in the Summer.

1.10 As part of the requirements set out in the NPPF we not only have to have a 5-year supply of deliverable housing, but we also need to ensure that we pass the 3-year Housing Delivery Test. If we do not, we have to set out an action plan indicating what steps we will undertake to address the deficit and boost the delivery of housing in Sefton. This could result in us having to review our Local Plan, which will require a major input of both financial and staff resources.

1.11 As part of our statutory requirements, and to ensure we meet the tests set out above, we are updating our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This is done each year and looks at the supply of land available for housing in the borough, with the emphasis on supply in the next 5 years.
1.12 We are currently undertaking an Urban Capacity Study, looking at potential development sites across the borough street by street. This will provide us with information on sites that are potentially available in the urban area and whether they are suitable for development.

2. **Heritage and Conservation**

**Heritage at Risk**

2.1 We are continuing to work towards the removal of the 6 Conservation Areas from the National Register. This includes a number of different work areas including raising their profile through Twitter and Facebook, regeneration funding bids, working with the local community, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, taking enforcement and other legal action in relation to a number of derelict sites and listed buildings in these Areas, including the major Lord Street Verandah project.

2.2 Recent success includes the continued restoration of Verandahs on Lord Street, Southport, along with the improvements undertaken at previous derelict and vacant sites.

**Regeneration**

2.3 The Second Round development bid for the Southport Townscape Heritage project, work has been completed and submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) in accordance with the deadline timescales in June 2019. The National Lottery Board confirmed in September that the bid was successful and fought of competition nationally from a number of other schemes. The grant includes £1,625,000 from NLHF with a combined funding pot of £2,358,211 ready for delivery over the next 5 years.

2.4 The project will focus on the properties between Lord Street and the Promenade and enhance the quality and strength of the linkages between the town centre and the Seafront so that the two become better integrated. This will include increasing the levels of economic activity within the target area to reduce the number of vacant and underused properties, through repair and reinstatement of historic features, along with complementary training and education initiatives.

2.5 The High Street Heritage Action Zone first round bid was submitted in July 2019 to Historic England. In September, it was confirmed that this bid was not successful.
Development Management

2.6 In terms of the general day to day responsibilities, allied to the increased development pressure which the wider Service is facing, the Conservation officers have formulated 91 detailed consultation responses from August-October on planning applications and pre-applications relating to a number of Listed Buildings and developments within a number of our Conservation Areas. We have also continued involvement in various appeals, on site monitoring and enforcement cases.

3. Development Management

3.1 The pressure on this part of the Service continues as we consider the submission of a number major applications relating to sites identified for development in the Local Plan.

3.2 Between August and October we have approved 141 units of residential accommodation (taking account of the numbers in full or ‘reserved matters’ applications only, and not ‘outline’).

The following 5 major developments were considered and approved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DC/2018/00020</td>
<td>Land Opposite 34 To 70 Altcar Lane Formby Liverpool L37 6AY</td>
<td>Erection of 24 dwellings with associated landscaping and infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC/2019/00527</td>
<td>KTC Edible Oils Ltd Rear of Allied Bakeries Dunnings Bridge Road Netherton Bootle L30 6TG</td>
<td>Erection of a single storey extension to the side of the warehouse, a new acoustic barrier to 3m in height in the north-west corner of the site and a replacement acoustic barrier to 3.5m in height along the canal boundary of the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC/2019/00952</td>
<td>Activity For All Maguire Avenue Liverpool Bootle L20 9PQ</td>
<td>Demolition of Sports Hall 1 and ancillary building to be replaced with an upgraded sports/leisure facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC/2019/00492</td>
<td>Kings Park Seaforth</td>
<td>Erection of 21 dwellinghouses including associated access and landscaping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC/2018/00588</td>
<td>Land North Of Liverpool Road Formby</td>
<td>Erection of 68 dwellings with associated access, parking, landscaping and infrastructure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 We have received a total of 427 applications in this time scale, including 53 pre-application enquiries.

3.4 The capacity of the Service is stretched by the increased pressure relating to the processing of these applications. It is a team effort across the Service to process, assess and determine applications expediently and in line with Government targets.

3.5 The 20% increase of planning fees (introduced in January 2018) and additional fee income through entering Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) has allowed us to recruit two further staff. One of these left in April and in late May we engaged a contract planner for three months to help deal with the increased workload. The additional staff has proved crucial to maintaining a high level of performance as we are dealing with significantly more complex and contentious proposals following the adoption of the Local Plan.

3.6 Staff levels have improved following extended periods of sickness within the team, and a team leader has been recruited to strengthen the enforcement side of the service which has been under constant and increasing pressure in recent times. Carl Salisbury has settled well into the Planning Officer (Trees) post and we are exploring ways in which he can work collaboratively with the Green Sefton team, offering efficiencies in how we provide this part of the Service and opportunities to generate income.

3.7 We continue to look for opportunities to organise our staff and procedures to make sure that the maximum effort is directed towards those schemes which are the most sensitive, complex and contentious, and that we provide the best possible service within existing constraints. This will mean new ways of working and we will continue to explore these where we feel they lead to an improved service.

3.8 The National Design Guide, and any future changes to the SPDs, will require amendments to the local validation list to ensure that applicants are clearly demonstrating how they are addressing good design, and the principles of climate change, within their proposals. This is likely to be done by seeking better quality Design and Access Statements.

Enforcement update

3.9 Review of the quarter from 1st August to 25th October 2019

- Number of complaints received: 157
- Number of complaints closed: 178
- Retrospective application fees from 25 schemes (including enforcement notice compliance checks): £5899
4. Building Control

Performance targets

4.1 The Building Control Team continues to meet its key statutory targets in relation to plan-checking and the carrying out of site inspections. It also meets the majority of the locally set performance targets. Results for the 2nd quarter of financial year 2019/20 showed that the Team’s market share is 73% - which remains equal to or better than that of neighbouring authorities and is significantly above the average for English Councils, which stands at 67%. Given the demise of Approved inspector, Aedis earlier this year, it is expected that the current level of market share will rise in the second quarter of 2019/20.

Income and financial performance

4.2 Building Regulation income for the 2nd of 2019/20 is currently on target to deliver an operating surplus - which will be used to off-set the cost of providing the statutory elements of the service such as dealing with dangerous structures, safety at sports grounds etc.

Safety at sports grounds

4.3 As part of conditions of the Safety Certificates held by Southport FC, Marine FC and Aintree Racecourse, annual inspections are currently being made by the Building Control Team.

Approved Inspector – Aedis

4.4 A number of private Approved Inspectors – including national outfit Aedis, have recently ceased trading. As a result, a programme has been put into place to revert approximately 400 Sefton applications (previously being dealt with by Aedis) to Sefton Council Building Control. In terms of the resulting increased pressure on the current establishment, monitoring will take place over the next quarter, in order to establish whether or not additional staffing resources will be required.

Staffing issues

4.5 Approval has been obtained from the Councils Establishment Control Panel to re-designated the vacant Building Control Officer position to that of Building Control Officer. During the 3rd quarter of 2019/20 steps are to be taken to fill that vacant position at the earliest opportunity.

5. Technical Support

5.1 Performance against targets for the period of August to October 2019 is detailed below:-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Aug-Oct</th>
<th>May-Jul</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning Applications Validated</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majors (within 8 days)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (within 5 days)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Application Enquiries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered within 3 days</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land Charge Searches</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed within 10 days</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed within 7 days</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building Regulation Applications</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered within 3 days</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of long-term sickness continue to be a barrier to achieving our targets. As a result, we have re-allocated staff across the team to minimise the impact that this has on performance. We have recently recruited a new planning apprentice and this has helped to maintain performance levels.

There has been an increase in the time take to validate major applications, up 5% on the last quarter, now exceeding the target by 3% however the time taken to validate all other applications decreased on the last reported quarter and is 1% below target. This is a direct result of staff sickness.

The booking in of pre-application enquires has increased from last quarter by 6% and now lies within 1% of the target.

The staffing shortages and summer holiday annual leave has had an impact on land charge searches. Although the number of searches completed within 7 days’ target is 8% more than the last quarter, the 10 day target is 3% below target.

The booking in of Building Control applications has increased 3% on the last reported quarter and performance now exceeds the target.

### 5.2 Service Development

We have introduced a system to make better use of technology available to officers. From 21 October officers within the technical Support and Development Management teams have been dealing with planning applications electronically. The processes have been mapped and workflow tasks set up to ensure that all cases progress as expected. It is anticipated that this way of working will reduce the amount of printing done within the department, provide a more efficient process, help officers prioritise their workloads and prompt officers when key milestones are due. Officers have provided in house training to ensure everyone is aware of the new process, able to measure plans accurately and make decisions without any hard copies needed.
Officers within the Building Control team have been dealing with Building Notice and Regularisation application processing electronically for some time. All site visits are undertaken using mobile technology enabling plans and documents can be checked on site.

**Land Registry Local Land Charge Project**

Work on the data required for the transfer of the Land Charges Register to HM Land Registry (HMLR) has continued. In the last 2 weeks data has been analysed by HMLR and a project plan put in place to ensure our data is in a suitable format for transfer. There is a significant amount of data cleansing to be done and officers are working to complete this before the end of January 2020.