

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) – 21 January 2020

COUNCILLOR	PORTFOLIO	DATE
Daren Veidman	Cabinet Member Planning	21 January 2020

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 31 December 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 and amendments to other SPDs to reflect updated design principles. Other SPDs will be published in the early part of 2020 covering topics such as ‘Landscape’, ‘Shop fronts, security and signage’ and ‘High Streets’.
- 1.4 A number of SPDs will also be refreshed in 2020 including ‘Flats and HMOs’, ‘New Housing’ and ‘House Extensions’.

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.lcrlistsens.co.uk/ourplaces concluding on 14 January 2020. The Council has submitted high level comments to the consultation and the Planning 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) has now been approved. This will now guide co-operation between Local Planning Authorities.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 1.7 The Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan was supported at a referendum held on 10th October 2019 and was 'made' (i.e. adopted) by the Council in November 2019. This now forms part of the Development Plan for Sefton.

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 recently reviewed our Local Plan policy approach to the provision of affordable housing, particularly as a result of new threshold and definitions that have been introduced. Slight changes to how we apply the Council's affordable housing planning policy will now be enacted, including a slight change to the tenure mix of affordable homes.
- 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 Last year, for the first time for many years, the Council has been able to demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land. However, in the most recent Housing Delivery Test results (to March 2018) show that the Council have not delivered the number of homes required. In order to improve housing delivery going forward the Council are looking to set up a Housing Delivery Task Group

to look at what barriers there are for housing delivery and how they may be overcome. The group will hold its first meeting in the spring.

- 1.12 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.
- 1.13 We are also 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 Southport Townscape Heritage project, has now been given permission to start from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) in accordance with the detailed second round submission. This will be delivered 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 Work has begun on the capital grants aspect of the project with a number of site meetings with potential grantees. Further development of the

complementary initiatives part of the project is also underway including more detailed discussions with prospective partnerships.

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 75 detailed consultation responses from October - December 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.

2.7 Planning Policy

The draft Green Lane Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been out to public consultation which ended on 3rd January. Comments are being reviewed and collated with consideration being given to inclusion within the document.

3. Development Management

3.1 The pressure on this part of the Service continues with planning applications having been received for 25 of the 47 housing sites allocated in the Local Plan (approximately 4,650 homes). We expect a number of other large applications to be submitted over the next 12 months on our housing allocation sites.

3.2 Between October and December we have approved 117 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:

Reference	Address	Proposal
DC/2019/01069	Land To The North Of Bartons Close Southport PR9 8NF	Erection of 30 dwellings
DC/2019/01164	St John Stone R C Primary School Meadow Lane Ainsdale	Erection of 47 dwellings
DC/2019/01387	Santander Uk Plc Bridle Road Netherton L30 4GB	Erection of new 20,211 sq. metre (GIA) office buildings (Use Class B1) and three pavilions

		comprising a total of 496 sq. metres (GIA) of floorspace (Use Classes A1/A2/A3/A4/A5/D1/D2),
DC/2019/00662	Car Park Lifeboat Road Formby	Erection of four bin surrounds and three pay and display machines with associated works, works to the main and overflow car parking areas, temporary male/female and disabled toilet units and staff welfare unit
DC/2019/01602	12 King Street Southport PR8 1JZ	Change of use of the ground floor to retail (A1) and the first and second floors to 10 self-contained apartments (C3) including the erection of 2 dormers to the front elevation.

- 3.3 We have received a total of 456 applications in this time scale, including 56 pre-application enquiries.
- 3.4 The capacity of the Service is stretched by the increased pressure relating to dealing with many complex and contentious applications. It is a team effort across the Service to assess and determine applications expediently and in line with Government targets.
- 3.5 This part of the service has lost a senior member of staff during the past year which is affecting its ability to perform as effectively as possible. In May 2019 we engaged a contract planner for three months to help deal with the increased workload. We intend to recruit to our vacant post from April 2020.
- 3.6 The enforcement side of the service has been strengthened over the past year and is responding well to increased pressure and a constantly busy workload. 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 our planning guidance, 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. There are other proposals to improve the quality of design through creating a Design Panel and establishing a Design Awards scheme.

Enforcement update

3.9 Review of the quarter from 1st October 2019 to 31st December 2019

- Number of complaints received: 172
- Number of complaints closed: 215
- Retrospective application fees from 24 schemes (including enforcement notice compliance checks, ground A enforcement appeal fees): £6464

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 is also meeting the majority of the locally set performance targets. Results for the 3rd quarter of financial year 2019/20 showed that the Team's market share remains at 73% - which is 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, in mid 2019, it is expected that the current level of market share will rise in the fourth quarter of 2019/20.

Income and financial performance

4.2 Building Regulation income for the 3rd of 2019/20 is currently on target to deliver a small 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, the Building Control Team undertakes annual inspections in order to check the grandstands are properly maintained. The inspection of the five grandstands at Aintree Racecourse were undertaken in December 2019 and the remaining inspections at Southport FC and Marine FC will be completed earlier in the new year.

Staffing

4.4 Approval has recently been obtained to fill a vacant Building Control Officer post. Arrangements will be made to advertise, interview and appoint to co-inside with the start of the new financial year.

Appointment of consultants

- 4.5 Following the removal of the Council's in-house structural calculation checking facility, steps have been taken to appoint Liverpool CC as the replacement checking consultant. Arrangements are also in place to re-advertise for the Council's emergency contractor – following the end of the current contract period with Sovini.

5. Technical Support

- 5.1 Performance against targets for the period of October to December 2019 is detailed below.

	Target	Aug-Oct	Oct - Dec
Planning Applications Validated Majors (within 8 days) Others (within 5 days)	80% 80%	83% 79%	100% 74%
Pre-Application Enquiries Registered within 3 days	93%	92%	95%
Land Charge Searches Completed within 10 days Completed within 7 days	100% 80%	97% 90%	99% 96%
Building Regulation Applications Registered within 3 days	96%	98%	96%

Overall performance has improved across the areas highlighted. Staff shortages have impacted our ability to meet all our targets. The team have been working flexibly to ensure we maintain good standards of service and minimise the impact on performance wherever possible.

There has been a significant increase in the time take to validate minor applications as a direct result of staff absence and delays in the recruitment process. Authorisation has been given to fill 1 post, although recruitment will not take place until April. The team's performance levels, although 6% below target, were enhanced due to the introduction of paperless working.

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. Officers have undertaken training and are working well with the new system.

Work is underway to set up a Sefton Design Review Panel and a Sefton Design Awards Ceremony. The Panel will be made up of a multi-disciplinary group of technical specialists that will review recently completed developments.

Work on the transfer of the Local land Charges Register to HM Land Registry is ongoing. An initial export of the data has been checked and an analysis of specific data issues has been compiled. Sefton have formally been included in the HMLR transfer schedule for 2020/21. The transfer will only take place once the data update and issue resolution are complete. This project will need to be resourced from existing staff with a knowledge of data requirements and standards. The completion of this project may have knock on implications for the other areas of the work of the team but it is hoped that this can be managed effectively to avoid dips in performance.