



AGENDA ITEM: 5(h)

**PLANNING COMMITTEE:
5 September 2013**

CABINET: 17 September 2013

Report of: Assistant Director Planning

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor M Forshaw

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SUBJECT: SEFTON LOCAL PLAN – PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION

Wards affected: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the Sefton Local Plan Preferred Options consultation and to seek approval for the proposed consultation response at Appendix A.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

- 2.1 That Planning Committee consider the proposed consultation response at Appendix A and that agreed comments be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 3.1 That the proposed consultation response provided at Appendix A for submission to Sefton Council be approved.
- 3.2 That Call In is not appropriate for this item due to the deadline for consultation responses of 27 September 2013.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Sefton are currently consulting on their Preferred Options for the Sefton Local Plan. Their Preferred Options document has developed since their Options consultation in the summer of 2011, taking into account various new background evidence that Sefton have collated.

4.2 Previously, at Options stage, Sefton consulted on three options involving different levels of residential development, with two of the options involving significant Green Belt release. Our consultation response at that time stated:

West Lancashire would hope that, in identifying locations for any Green Belt development, Sefton will also take into account the need to limit urban sprawl and protect the strategic gaps created by Green Belt between settlements in Sefton and West Lancashire and to ensure that development on the Sefton side of the boundary will not compromise flood risk or infrastructure on the West Lancashire side of the boundary.

4.3 This remains the central issue for West Lancashire to consider in relation to the Sefton Local Plan, alongside any transport or environmental implications for West Lancashire of development in Sefton.

5.0 PROPOSALS IN THE SEFTON LOCAL PLAN PREFERRED OPTIONS

5.1 The Preferred Options of the Sefton Local Plan selects Option 2 from the previous Options consultation in relation to residential development. Option 2 involves Sefton meeting their own housing needs within their Borough (10,700 dwellings between 2012 and 2030), but not seeking additional housing growth over and above those objectively-assessed needs.

5.2 This means that Sefton are not seeking that West Lancashire, or any other authority, should help them to meet their own housing needs. However, it does mean that Sefton have had to propose quite significant areas of Green Belt release across their Borough, including some close to or adjoining the borough boundary with West Lancashire.

5.3 Proposed allocations (Policies SR4 and SR5) that are close, or adjacent, to the Borough boundary include:

- a housing site at Moss Lane, Churchtown, which adjoins the Borough boundary and North Meols ward;
- A mixed-use site (housing and employment) at Crowland Street, Southport, which adjoins the Borough boundary and North Meols and Scarisbrick wards;
- A strategic employment site at Southport Business Park at Town Lane Kew, adjacent to the Borough boundary and Scarisbrick and Halsall wards;
- A number of smaller housing sites on the edge of Ainsdale adjacent, or close, to the Borough boundary and Halsall ward;
- A strategic employment site to the north of Formby industrial estate, lying between the A565 (Formby bypass) and the Borough boundary, so directly adjoining Aughton & Downholland ward; and

- Two sites to the north of Lydiate allocated as reserve housing sites, which are close to the Borough boundary and Aughton & Downholland ward.
- 5.4 The most significant area of Green Belt release proposed in the Preferred Options of the Sefton Local Plan is to the east of Maghull between the M58 and the existing built-up area of Maghull and any development here is proposed to include a new train station on the Ormskirk to Liverpool Central line to serve North Maghull and improvements to Junction 1 of the M58 to make the junction a full, four-arm junction and so enable access to and from the Switch Island direction.
- 5.5 Policy SR10 of the Preferred Options outlines Sefton's transport priorities, which include the Thornton-Switch Island Link and "*Improved access to Southport from the east [A570 corridor]*". However, there are no details as to how this access to Southport from the east may be improved.

6.0 PROPOSED CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 6.1 A proposed consultation response is provided at Appendix A for consideration by Cabinet. It is the view of officers that the Preferred Options of Sefton's Local Plan will have little direct effect on West Lancashire, despite some of the proposed allocations being directly adjacent to the borough boundary and so it should be broadly supported, particularly in relation to its selection of Option 2 for housing requirements and their rejection of Options 1 and 3 which would have had greater impacts on West Lancashire. However, there are some concerns that it is worth WLBC making comment on so that Sefton Council are fully aware of the potential impacts on West Lancashire.
- 6.2 The key concern relates to the potential impact of new development in Sefton (particularly in Southport) on the road network in West Lancashire. Despite the planned Thornton-Switch Island Link, it is likely that any Southport traffic seeking to access the motorway network will still need to travel across West Lancashire to access the M58 or M6, along with any traffic travelling to parts of West Lancashire itself or places like Wigan on the other side of West Lancashire.
- 6.3 New development will inevitably lead to an increase in this traffic flow across West Lancashire which will have impacts on the A570 and the moss roads in the Western Parishes. While it is welcome that the Sefton Local Plan lists as one of its transport priorities "*Improved access to Southport from the east [A570 corridor]*" there has to be a concern as to what such improvements might be and whether they will in any way improve movement of traffic generally along the A570 or dissuade traffic from using the moss roads.
- 6.4 The allocations at Moss Lane, Churchtown; Crowland Street, Southport; and Southport Business Park are likely to have particular impacts on traffic on the A570 and the moss roads. The concern with the impact on the A570 is not simply about flow through the Western Parishes but also flow through Ormskirk, given that any traffic between Southport and the M58 is likely to end up coming through Ormskirk on the A570.

- 6.5 The other key concern for officers relates to the allocation of two reserve housing sites to the north of Lydiate. While these sites will not have any significant impact on West Lancashire itself and it is acknowledged that they are only reserve housing sites, were these sites to be released from the Green Belt and ultimately be developed, they would close the strategic Green Belt gap between Maghull / Lydiate and Aughton / Holt Green.
- 6.6 The village of Holt Green to the south of Aughton is only 1.5 km from the existing built-up area of Maghull / Lydiate. The release of these sites from the Green Belt would reduce this gap to less than 1 km. The gap to the main built-up area of Aughton would be reduced to 2 km. As such, given the potential impact on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt (in particular that of preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another), it is recommended that we ask Sefton to reconsider the release of Green Belt in this location and the allocation of these reserve housing sites.
- 6.7 In summary, while it is right and appropriate for WLBC to make comment to Sefton on the areas of concern highlighted above, it is unlikely that the Sefton Local Plan will have an unacceptable impact on West Lancashire. As such, WLBC's response should be one of broad support of Sefton's selection of Option 2 with the caveat that Sefton should investigate further the concerns WLBC have raised on specific points.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 7.1 The sustainability implications of the Sefton Local Plan revolve around potential localised impact on those parts of the Borough adjoining proposed allocations across the borough boundary in Sefton and the potential impacts on highways in the Borough, especially the A570. If the A570 becomes further congested as a result of the additional development in Southport, this could have a negative impact on those villages along the A570 and, in particular, Ormskirk.
- 7.2 The Sefton Local Plan has no significant impact on crime and disorder within West Lancashire. The Sefton Local Plan has no significant links with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial or resource implications of this report.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Were WLBC not to provide a consultation response to the Sefton Local Plan Preferred Options consultation, outlining any concerns the Council has over Sefton Council's proposals, Sefton Council cannot take them into consideration as they refine their Local Plan. It may also prejudice any representation WLBC may make at Publication stage for the Sefton Local Plan as if WLBC chose not to raise concerns now it may undermine the reasoning for doing so at later date.

9.2 In addition, WLBC are bound by the Duty to Co-operate to ensure ongoing co-operation with neighbouring authorities on all strategic and cross-boundary planning issues for both our own planning documents and those of our neighbours. If WLBC do not demonstrate that ongoing co-operation, it can lead to concerns regarding our legal compliance with legislation and regulations when preparing our own future Development Plan Documents.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Sefton Local Plan Preferred Options document and other background evidence is available to view at: www.sefton.gov.uk/localplan

Equality Impact Assessment

There is no direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

Appendices

- A. Proposed Consultation Response to the Sefton Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation
- B. Minute of Planning Committee held on 5 September 2013 (Cabinet only)