

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 6 NOVEMBER 2008

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE NORTH WEST – IMPLICATIONS FOR WIRRAL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Secretary of State published the North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) on 30 September 2008, replacing Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13, March 2003). The new RSS will provide the framework for development and investment in the region over the next fifteen to twenty years. It will form part of the statutory Development Plan for Wirral alongside the Council's Unitary Development Plan and will have implications for the determination of individual planning applications and other decisions under the Planning Acts, with immediate effect.

This report summarises the main content of the new RSS and sets out the implications for future decisions, policies and initiatives in Wirral. This report recommends that the policies of the new RSS are used in development control decisions for all planning applications determined after 30 September 2008; that the principles and priorities of the new RSS are incorporated into the Council's Local Development Framework; that the Council's Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development is reviewed subject to the outcome of a public inquiry at Rockybank Road; and that a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for Wirral is prepared as part of a joint commission with Liverpool City Council to reflect the arrangements already agreed for the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Secretary of State published the North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) on 30 September 2008. The new RSS replaces Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13, March 2003). It also replaces many of the policies previously contained within the Structure Plans for Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumbria and the Lake District. It sits alongside other regional strategies for housing, transport and the economy. In the next two years, it is expected that the RSS and the existing Regional Economic Strategy will be redrafted as the Single Regional Strategy.
- 1.2 The new RSS forms part of the statutory Development Plan for Wirral alongside the Council's Unitary Development Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework. It will have implications for the determination of individual planning applications and other decisions under the Planning Acts, with immediate effect.
- 1.3 Cabinet considered the previous stage in the preparation process, consultation on the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy, on 14 May 2008 (Minute 8 refers).

- 1.4 A full copy of the documents associated with the publication of the new RSS can be viewed at <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gonw/Planning/RegionalPlanning/?a=42496>

2 Summary of Content

- 2.1 The new RSS is intended to be more than just a land use planning document, as part of the Government's commitment to the wider concept of spatial planning, to achieve a more integrated approach to policy development and decision making across the North West of England. It will provide the framework for development and investment in the region over the next fifteen to twenty years (paragraph 1.1).

Vision

- 2.2 By 2021, the region is expected to have acted to deliver sustainable development, leading to a higher quality of life and reduced social, economic and environmental disparities, with Liverpool and Manchester firmly established as world class cities at the centre of their respective City Regions and with the Central Lancashire City Region established as an additional focus for growth and development.

3 Spatial Principles

- 3.1 Policy DP1 introduces the eight spatial principles that underpin the new RSS, which will be applied to all other regional, sub-regional and local plans and strategies as well as all individual proposals, schemes and investment decisions:

- building **sustainable communities** where people want to live and work by addressing disparity and improving quality of life (Policy DP2);
- promoting **sustainable economic development** to improve productivity and close the gap in economic performance and inequality (Policy DP3);
- **make the best use of existing resources and infrastructure** by using existing buildings and previously developed land within settlements first, followed by other suitable infill within settlements, followed by other land well-located in relation to housing, jobs, services and infrastructure (Policy DP4);
- **manage travel demand, reduce the need to travel and increase accessibility** with an emphasis on reducing the need to travel by car, enabling people to meet their needs locally and genuine accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling. Major growth should, as far as possible, be located in urban areas where strategic networks connect and public transport is well provided (Policy DP5);
- using locational choices and investment decisions to **marry opportunity and need** (Policy DP6);
- **promote environmental quality** by respecting setting, character and distinctiveness, maximising opportunities for regeneration and addressing impacts on biodiversity, air and water quality, noise and health and the impact on sites of international importance for nature conservation (Policy DP7), including sites in Wales (paragraph 4.11 and paragraph 11.6);

- **mainstreaming rural issues** (Policy DP8); and
- **reduce emissions and adapt to climate change** which the Government believes is the greatest long term challenge facing the world today (Policy DP9).

4 Regional Spatial Framework

4.1 The overall spatial framework for the region is set out in four key policies:

Spatial Priorities

- 4.2 Policy RDF1 is the cornerstone of the new RSS, setting out a series of spatial priorities to guide decision making and the targeting of resources and investment (paragraph 5.1). However, whilst RDF1 is the cornerstone, Government makes it clear that RSS policies should be read together.
- 4.3 The first priority for growth and development will be the regional centres of Manchester and Liverpool. The second priority will be the inner areas surrounding these regional centres with the emphasis on areas in need of regeneration and Housing Market Renewal Areas. Towns and cities elsewhere within the City Region, like Ellesmere Port, Chester, Runcorn, St Helens, Southport, Warrington and Widnes are third priorities.
- 4.4 Birkenhead has been deleted from the list of third priority towns, as requested by the Council (Cabinet 14 May 2008, Minute 8 refers), to reflect its location within the second priority inner area. Policy RDF1 has also been amended to indicate that development in larger accessible suburban centres would be acceptable. Development may be acceptable elsewhere, if it satisfies Policies DP1 to DP9, but the emphasis should still be on addressing regeneration and housing market renewal and restructuring.
- 4.5 Further guidance on these spatial priorities is provided in the more specific policies for the Liverpool City Region (summarised in section 5 of this report).

Rural Areas

- 4.6 Plans and strategies should concentrate development within Key Service Centres with good transport links to fulfil the needs of local communities for housing, employment and services and to enhance quality of life (Policy RDF2). Text has been added to clarify that Green Belt policies will continue to take precedence in the open countryside (paragraph 5.11).

Coast

- 4.7 Plans and strategies should enhance the economic importance of the coast and the regeneration of coastal communities in ways that safeguard natural, built and cultural assets and address environmental and socio-economic decline (Policy RDF3). West Kirby (paragraph 5.19), the Mersey Waterfront (paragraph 5.20), the Port of Liverpool, the Manchester Ship Canal and the potential of disused areas of dockland to provide significant opportunities for regeneration, bringing new employment (paragraph 5.21) are specifically mentioned.

Green Belts

- 4.8 The general extent of the Green Belt will be maintained and no substantial change will be required in Merseyside before 2011 (Policy RDF4). Any subsequent change should be brought forward through a future review of RSS, following a strategic study carried out by the Regional Planning Body and relevant stakeholders (paragraph 5.25).
- 4.9 Local detailed changes can, however, be made to Green Belt boundaries through Local Development Frameworks, subject to the agreement of the Regional Planning Body and the Government's commitment to maintain or increase the amount of Green Belt in every UK region (paragraph 5.25). Special provision has already been made to allow Green Belt boundaries to be amended at Liverpool John Lennon Airport (paragraph 5.26).

5 Liverpool City Region

- 5.1 The principal objective for the City Region is to maximise economic potential and promote urban renaissance and social inclusion within the Regional Centre and its surrounding Inner Area. The Inner Area is defined by the Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Area, which includes parts of east Wirral (Policy LCR1).
- 5.2 Policy LCR2 deals with **the Regional Centre and Inner Areas**. Plans and strategies should support and enhance the role of Liverpool as the primary retail centre, main employment location and primary economic driver of the City Region. Residential development should be focussed into the adjacent Inner Areas to secure a significant increase in population and to support major regeneration activity. This will include enhancing the role of Birkenhead, revitalising the housing market by providing a good range of quality housing with a high quality environment, supporting the maritime economy, sustained investment in the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park and the provision of local facilities and employment.
- 5.3 Policy LCR3 deals with **the Outer Parts** of the Liverpool City Region. This includes the remaining areas in east Wirral, outside Newheartlands, to the east of the M53 Motorway (paragraph 11.9). Here, the focus should be on expanding the quality and choice of housing, providing employment, addressing worklessness, enhancing the role of existing centres and supporting any further housing market restructuring.
- 5.4 Ellesmere Port has been included within West Cheshire (paragraph 11.9 and Policy LCR5 refers) but text has been added to promote joint working with the Outer Parts of the Liverpool City Region to address common challenges (paragraph 11.14).
- 5.5 Policy LCR4 deals with **the remaining Rural Parts** of the Liverpool City Region. This includes west Wirral, to the west of the M53 Motorway (paragraph 11.13). Development in this area should be focussed on key service centres to improve access to services, support and diversify the rural economy and provide housing to address barriers to affordability and to meet identified local needs, consistent with other regeneration programmes and policies. The Secretary of State has added the word "identified" for clarification.

6 Thematic Policies

- 6.1 The remainder of the new RSS sets out a series of thematic policies related to the economy, housing, transport and the environment:

Economy

- 6.2 The principal economic objective is to strengthen and regenerate the regional economy and address worklessness, the latter added to the final RSS following the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes (paragraph 6.1).
- 6.3 Advanced manufacturing and engineering, financial and professional services, media, creative and cultural industries, biomedical, ICT/digital and communications, high value added knowledge based industries and services sectors, are identified as key targets for the Liverpool City Region (Policy W1). Regionally significant sites should be located within urban areas, well related to areas of worklessness, close to sustainable transport nodes (Policy W2).
- 6.4 A regular review of employment land will be required every three years to ensure that the future supply reflects the actual scale of economic growth (Policy W3). This review should be "stringent" (paragraph 6.18). In between reviews, there should be a presumption against the release of allocated employment sites for other uses (Policy W4). Office development should be focussed in regional centres or in or adjacent to town centres (Policy W2 and Policy W3).
- 6.5 Table 6.1 shows a shortfall of employment land across Merseyside and Halton to 2021 of between 206 and 494 hectares. District level figures have not been provided and there is a requirement for joint working to agree the distribution of land across the sub-region (paragraph 6.12).

Retail

- 6.6 Retail development should be located to assist the regeneration of town centres. It should not undermine any other centre or create unsustainable shopping patterns. Birkenhead is listed alongside Chester, Southport and St Helens as a centre where comparison retailing should be encouraged. There is a presumption against new or large scale extensions to out-of-centre regional or sub-regional comparison retail facilities (Policy W5).

Tourism

- 6.7 Tourism development should seek to deliver improved economic growth and quality of life, focused on Liverpool, Chester, Birkenhead and coastal resorts. In rural areas, development should be of an appropriate scale (Policy W6). Attractions and services should be easily accessible, reflect natural attributes and environmental sensitivities, facilitate regeneration, improve the public realm and harness the potential of sport and recreation (Policy W7), including major events such as the Open Golf Championship (paragraph 6.32).

Housing

- 6.8 The principal social objective is to ensure that everyone can have a decent home, which they can afford, in a secure environment, with reasonable access to health care, educational provision and recreational facilities (paragraph 7.1). Policy L1 requires the accessible provision of a full spectrum of services, for all members of the community, based on a wide ranging assessment of local needs.
- 6.9 Local housing policies should be based on a regularly updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment, to achieve a better match between supply and need (Policy L2), including specialist provision for older people (paragraph 7.9) and gypsies and travellers (paragraph 7.10). Areas requiring comprehensive regeneration should be identified, with a target of reducing vacancy rates to 3% (Policy L3).
- 6.10 Local authorities should work in partnership with developers and other housing providers to secure a mix of appropriate house types, sizes, tenures and prices to address local needs, using the results of up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments, and maximise the re-use of accessible vacant and under-used brownfield land within existing urban areas (Policy L4).
- 6.11 In Wirral, the stated priority of RSS is to provide sufficient new residential development in the eastern part of the district to support the inner area as a priority for economic growth and regeneration, including via the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder. Elsewhere provision should focus on meeting local and affordable housing needs, with careful monitoring to ensure that new housing does not result in an adverse cumulative impact on local and neighbouring housing markets (paragraph 7.18, item f)
- 6.12 The text that appeared to single Wirral out with regard to the potential impact of future housing development on sites of international importance for nature conservation has been removed.
- 6.13 Wirral will be required to accommodate 9,000 additional homes between 2003 and 2021, at an annual average rate of 500 net new dwellings, with at least 80% provided on previously developed brownfield land (Table 7.1). These figures are not absolute targets and may be exceeded where evidence of need, demand, affordability and sustainability issues fit with relevant strategies. A minimum five-year supply of deliverable land must be maintained, in accordance with national advice in Planning Policy Statement 3 (paragraph 7.19).
- 6.14 Annual average figures for adjoining areas include 1,950 for Liverpool, 400 for Ellesmere Port and 417 for Chester. The figures for Sefton and Halton are both 500, for Knowsley 450 and for St Helens 570. The brownfield requirements for Knowsley, Halton, St Helens and Sefton are at least 65% and for Liverpool at least 90% (Table 7.1).
- 6.15 Policy L5 sets out options for the delivery of affordable housing. Text has been added to reflect growing affordability issues even in areas in low demand.

- 6.16 References to a minimum residential density of 30 dwellings per hectare have been deleted.

Transport

- 6.17 The principal transport objectives are to maintain existing infrastructure, improve journey time reliability, reduce adverse impacts and secure a shift towards more sustainable modes of travel (paragraph 8.1).
- 6.18 Transport problems and issues should be examined on a multi-modal basis, based on making the best use of existing infrastructure (Policy RT1). The emphasis should be on increasing the role of public transport and demand management (paragraph 8.3).
- 6.19 Policy RT2 seeks a co-ordinated approach to managing travel demand, to reduce car-borne commuting and education trips during peak periods, by promoting “smarter choices”, supported by the re-allocation of road space, the greater use of on-street parking controls and maximum parking standards. The Council has already responded to the North West Parking Standards (Table 8.1), in Supplementary Planning Document 4 – Parking Standards, adopted in June 2007.
- 6.20 The focus for public transport should be on reducing overcrowding and enhancing accessibility (Policy RT3), to ensure access to jobs and services especially in disadvantaged areas (paragraph 8.11). Management of the highway network should focus on improving road safety, reducing traffic growth and mitigating the impacts of road traffic (Policy RT4). The economic activity generated and sustained by Liverpool John Lennon Airport should be supported (Policy RT5).
- 6.21 The use of ports and waterways should be optimised. Operational and infrastructure requirements should be identified in Port Masterplans with a strong presumption in favour of safeguarding land close to ports for logistics, transport and port-related development, especially where alternative uses, such as housing, would be difficult to reverse (Policy RT6). Birkenhead is identified as having potential for further port-related development (paragraph 8.25).
- 6.22 Local authorities should work with rail, port and inland waterway operators to increase the proportion of freight moved by water (Policy RT7). The Manchester Ship Canal could play a greater role (paragraph 8.31). Birkenhead Waterfront and Eastham Docks have been identified as broad locations where terminals to facilitate an increase in the movement of freight by rail and/or water should be considered (Policy RT8).
- 6.23 New proposals should incorporate high quality pedestrian and cycle facilities. Integrated networks of continuous, attractive and safe routes should also be developed to widen accessibility, with priority given to linking residential areas with employment areas, transport interchanges, schools, hospitals and other community services (Policy RT9).
- 6.24 Policy RT10 explains how general priorities for transport investment and management will be determined, in line with the need to consider the full range of policy options (paragraph 8.35).

Environment

- 6.25 The principal environmental objectives are to conserve and enhance valued assets, address climate change, promote low carbon and renewable energy technologies and tackle waste (paragraphs 9.1 to 9.3).
- 6.26 Policy EM1 provides for assets to be identified, with a foundation of no net loss as a minimum requirement. Plans and strategies should in particular protect distinctive landscape features, increase biodiversity, support conservation-led regeneration and encourage a steady expansion of tree and woodland cover as part of a more integrated approach.
- 6.27 Other policies provide for contaminated land (Policy EM2), green infrastructure (Policy EM3), Regional Parks, for which the Dee and Mersey waterfronts have been identified as areas of potential (Policy EM4 and Table 9.1), integrated water management (Policy EM5) and a strategic integrated approach to managing the coastline (Policy EM6).

Minerals

- 6.28 Policy EM7 seeks to secure a steady and adequate supply of minerals (Policy EM7) including land-won aggregates (Policy EM8) and secondary and recycled aggregates (Policy EM9).

Waste

- 6.29 Policy EM10 sets out the approach to meeting regional targets by providing for alternative facilities for reprocessing, treatment and disposal to reduce the reliance on landfill (paragraph 9.22). Policy EM11 sets out an eight stage sequence consistent with national policy for waste management beginning with minimisation, re-use, composting and recycling, intermediate treatment, production of refuse derived fuels, energy recovery and ending with residual disposal to landfill as a final resort. Areas with limited capacity for landfill will need to pursue additional facilities further up this sequence (paragraph 9.35).
- 6.30 Policy EM12 sets out locational principles, in accordance with national policy. Communities should take more responsibility for their own waste and final disposal should be at the nearest appropriate installation. The unnecessary carriage of waste over long distances should be avoided. Policy EM13 requires facilities to be identified to deliver capacity to 2020. There is a preference for using established sites, wherever possible. Primary reception, treatment and transfer facilities should be located near to the source of arisings with secondary treatment and disposal located on a sub-regional strategic level, identified on the basis of joint working. Sites for existing, proposed and allocated facilities should be safeguarded (paragraph 9.34).
- 6.31 Table 9.3 sets out the indicative annual capacities required to deal with non-hazardous commercial and industrial wastes. Table 9.5 sets out the indicative capacities for municipal waste.

6.32 Members will be aware that the Council has been working with other local authorities in Merseyside and Halton to prepare a Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document. The latest stage will be considered by Cabinet on 27 November 2008.

Renewable Energy

6.33 Sustainable energy production and consumption should be promoted (Policy EM15) alongside energy conservation and efficiency (Policy EM16). New renewable energy capacity (Policy EM17) including decentralised energy supplies (Policy EM18) should be promoted, supported by regional generation targets for five year periods from 2010 to 2020 (Tables 9.6 and 9.7 refer).

7 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

7.1 The effectiveness of RSS will be regularly monitored against its main objectives and national core indicators (paragraph 14.6). An annual monitoring report will be produced by the end of February each year, with the cooperation of regional stakeholders including local authorities (Policy IM1). The Council has contributed local data for the NW annual monitoring report since 2004/05.

8 Directors Comments

8.1 The new RSS effectively divides Wirral into three spatial areas:

- The Inner Area (Policy LCR2) – the first priority for investment in Wirral – is defined by the Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Area, which includes Wirral Waters, Birkenhead Town Centre, Woodside, Hind Street and Cammell Lairds.
- The Outer Area (Policy LCR3) – the second priority for investment in Wirral – includes the remainder of the eastern area of Wirral to the east of the M53 Motorway (paragraph 11.9). The associated key diagram (RSS, page 136) excludes Leasowe and Woodchurch, which were previously contained within the North West Metropolitan Area identified under RPG13 (March 2003).
- The Rural Areas (Policy LCR4) – the lowest priority for investment in Wirral – includes the remainder of Wirral to the west of the M53 Motorway, including Leasowe and Woodchurch (paragraph 11.13).

8.2 The regional priorities for the sub-region are clearly focussed on the Regional Centre of Liverpool and the surrounding Inner Area. The focus on the Inner Area, as the second priority within the sub-region outside Liverpool City Centre and the first priority within Wirral, means that major regeneration schemes at the heart of the urban area are still given a very high level of support.

8.3 As the objectives for the Outer Area include economic development, addressing worklessness and maximising the employment potential of the Strategic Investment Areas, employment-related projects such as Wirral International Business Park could also continue to be supported by RSS. Projects related to the regeneration of

coastal resorts could be supported by RSS, subject to their relationship to key service centres (Policy RDF2) and environmental impacts (Policy RDF3).

- 8.4 The Inner Area, defined by Newheartlands, excludes some of the areas identified as Regeneration Priority Areas in the Council's Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development (October 2005). A plan showing the difference between these two areas is provided as an attachment to this report. The excluded areas include New Brighton and Leasowe, a small part of Seacombe, part of Liscard, part of Bidston and St James including Beechwood, parts of Birkenhead and Tranmere, part of Rock Ferry, all but a small part of Bromborough and the Unilever Research Complex in Clatterbridge.
- 8.5 The priority given to the Inner Area suggests that it will no longer be appropriate to apply the same level of priority in housing policy terms to areas falling outside Newheartlands, unless these areas are identified as being in need of regeneration in the Wirral Housing Strategy (part of the Sustainable Community Strategy). Relevant indicators include vacancies, poor environment, poor housing stock condition, a lack of quality community facilities, worklessness and inequalities in health and skills (paragraph 11.12).
- 8.6 One of the objectives for the Outer Area is to expand the quality and choice of housing (Policy LCR3). In the Rural Areas housing is to be provided to address barriers to affordability and to meet identified local needs (Policy LCR4).
- 8.7 This will have implications for the extent and content of the Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development, which will need to be reviewed pending inclusion in the Council's emerging Local Development Framework.
- 8.8 The Council supported the increase of the housing requirement to 500 net new dwellings each year, to accelerate regeneration at the heart of the urban area and to support wider opportunities, including the potential for up to 25,000 new jobs at Wirral Waters, as part of the Council's wider Investment Strategy. The delivery of an appropriate level of housing within Wirral Waters, which is now identified as part of the proposed Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, will be critical to the Borough's ability to meet this new requirement.
- 8.9 A report setting out a programme of development for the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point was considered by Cabinet on 16 October 2008 (Minute 234 refers). The acceptance of the Growth Point would raise the housing requirement for Wirral to 600 net new dwellings each year, with up to 400 net new dwellings each year being provided within the Growth Point between 2008/09 and 2016/17. Were new dwellings to come forward at a slower rate, the Council's response would need to be determined by the wider housing land supply.
- 8.10 A summary of the current housing land supply is provided as an attachment to this report. Wirral's gross housing land supply at March 2008 was 3,494 dwellings with extant planning permission, including an allowance for net conversions and changes of use. The net supply taking account of demolitions is 2,244 dwellings.
- 8.11 The need to back date the calculation to reflect actual performance since March 2003 reduces the net supply further to 1,530 dwellings, as net completions have

only exceeded the target of 500 by 6 dwellings in 2006/07 and by 15 dwellings in 2007/08. This is currently 970 dwellings short of the five year supply target of 2,500 net dwellings at 500 per annum or 1,470 dwellings short of a five year supply target of 3,000 net dwellings at 600 net dwellings per annum. This means that the Borough will need to see an annual average of 555 net new dwellings completed over the next thirteen years to meet the RSS target of 9,000 dwellings by 2021.

- 8.12 The housing trajectory submitted with the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point bid Programme of Development on 27 October 2008 shows that over the period to 2016/17, housing land supply is in balance and the shortfall of the early years is compensated by the higher rate of development from Wirral Waters at the end of the Growth Point period. However, this is dependent upon the Wirral Waters project delivering up to 400 new dwellings per year.
- 8.13 On 7 October 2008, the Council presented evidence to a public inquiry into the refusal of planning permission for eight flats in Rockybank Road, Prenton, which is located in the Outer Area, at the edge of the Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Area, just outside the boundary to the Interim Planning Policy Priority Area. The decision is expected to be available from the Planning Inspectorate during the week commencing 24 November 2008. This will be the first indication of how the new policies, including the new housing land requirement, will be interpreted.
- 8.14 The new RSS encourages cross boundary working in the consideration of issues related to housing markets and housing land supply in line with national policies (paragraphs 7.20 to 7.21). Cabinet on 16 October 2008 resolved to use the first tranche of Growth Fund monies to jointly commission a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for the Growth Point area with Liverpool City Council (Minute 234 refers). It is proposed to extend this into a single study for the whole of the Borough area, jointly commissioned with Liverpool City Council to reflect the arrangements already agreed.

9 Next Steps

- 9.1 A Partial Review of RSS is already underway to provide additional guidance on matters related to gypsies and travellers, travelling showpeople and regional parking standards. This now excludes issues related to housing, waste management and renewable energy (Cabinet 26 June 2008, Minute 94 refers).
- 9.2 In the longer term, the North West of England Plan is expected to be replaced by a Single Regional Strategy (SRS). Consultation on the evidence base for the SRS began in July 2008 with a view to submitting a final document to the Secretary of State by mid-2010. As the statutory status of the SRS will need to be clarified by new primary legislation, the new RSS may continue to remain in force beyond this point.

Local Development Framework

- 9.3 The principles and priorities set out within the North West of England Plan will need to be incorporated into the Council's own Local Development Framework, which must be developed in conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy subject to a

more locally specific assessment of the impact on sites of international importance for nature conservation (paragraph 4.11).

- 9.4 Issues and options for the Core Strategy for the Borough, developed from the results of initial consultation, will be reported to Members towards the end of the year, for public consultation early in the New Year.
- 9.5 Issues related to waste will be dealt with at sub-regional level as part of the emerging Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document being prepared on behalf of the Merseyside districts and Halton. The latest stage in the preparation of the Joint Waste DPD will be considered by Cabinet on 27 November 2008.

10 Financial Implications

- 10.1 The new RSS will be used to guide future investment decisions by both private and public agencies, with particular implications for projects that will require planning permission.
- 10.2 The requirement to undertake a formal review of employment land availability will cost in the order of £50,000 every three years. The Council's latest Employment Land and Premises Study will be reported to Members early in the New Year.
- 10.3 The requirement to undertake an up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment will cost in the order of £100,000 every five years. The Council's latest SHMA was reported to Cabinet on 7 February 2008 (Minute 506 refers).
- 10.4 Funding for these studies will need to be identified as growth items at the appropriate time.
- 10.5 The Council had set aside £25,000 for the preparation of an up-to-date Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (Cabinet 7 February 2008, Minute 502 refers).
- 10.6 Cabinet on 16 October 2008 resolved to use the first tranche of Growth Fund monies to jointly commission a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for the Growth Point area with Liverpool City Council (Minute 234 refers).
- 10.7 The delivery of housing and the maintenance of a five-year supply of deliverable housing land are National Indicators (NI154 – net additional homes provided and NI159 – supply of ready to develop housing sites). Following negotiations with the Government, the delivery of housing is now also part of the Local Area Agreement.
- 10.8 The delivery of housing, the maintenance of a five-year supply of deliverable sites, the preparation of up-to-date Strategic Housing Market and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and joint working are also a determinant of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (Cabinet 25 September 2008, Minute 202 refers).

11 Staffing Implications

- 11.1 There are no staffing implications arising directly out of this report.

11.2 The effective implementation of many elements of the new RSS will rely upon an increase in joint working with neighbouring authorities.

12 Equal Opportunities Implications

12.1 The health and equality impact statement associated with the new RSS can be viewed at <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gonw/Planning/RegionalPlanning/?a=42496>.

13 Community Safety Implications

13.1 There are no community safety implications arising directly out of this report.

14 Local Agenda 21 Implications

14.1 The new RSS has been subject to a statutory sustainability appraisal, including strategic environmental assessment and habitats regulation assessment, which have been used to inform the content of the North West of England Plan. Copies of the documents related to these statutory appraisals and assessments can be viewed at <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gonw/Planning/RegionalPlanning/?a=42496>

15 Planning Implications

15.1 The new RSS will form part of the statutory Development Plan for Wirral alongside the Council's Unitary Development Plan and will have implications for the determination of individual planning applications and other decisions under the Planning Acts, with immediate effect.

16 Anti-Poverty Implications

16.1 Wirral is identified as an area with particularly high unemployment, to reflect the level of employment deprivation indicated in the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (paragraph 6.4). Providing employment and addressing worklessness is one of the stated priorities for the Liverpool City Region (Policy LCR1 and Policy LCR3).

17 Human Rights Implications

17.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

18 Social Inclusion Implications

18.1 Addressing social inclusion is one of the stated priorities for the Liverpool City Region (Policy LCR1).

19 Local Member Support Implications

19.1 The North West of England Plan will set the overall spatial framework for development and investment across the whole Borough over the next fifteen to twenty years. The principal spatial implications for each Ward are set out below:

(i) Inner Area – First Priority

Definition	Policy Approach	Wards Included
Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Area	Maximise economic potential, urban renaissance, social inclusion, provide sufficient new housing to meet the objectives of housing market renewal, increase the supply of affordable and market housing to address demographic needs, support economic growth and regeneration, focus environmental improvements, enhance the role of Birkenhead and support the maritime economy.	<p>Bidston & St James (E of Wallasey Bridge Road, Stanley Road and Sumner Road)</p> <p>Birkenhead and Tranmere (N of Oxton Road/ Oakbank; E of Borough Road;/ N of Elmswood Road; E of Derby Road/ N of Elm Road; S of Elm Road/ E of Church Road)</p> <p>Bromborough (N of Thorburn Rd)</p> <p>Clughton (S of Park Road South/ E of Francis Avenue and Osborne Road)</p> <p>Liscard (E of Withens Lane, Serpentine Road, Crescent Road and Water Street)</p> <p>Oxton (E of Euston Grove)</p> <p>Seacombe (E of Poulton Bridge Road including Roker Avenue)</p> <p>Rock Ferry (N of Victoria Park Road and Inglemere Road; N of Bedford Road/ E of Old Chester Road; S of Bedford Road/ E of railway)</p>

(ii) Outer Area – Second Priority

Definition	Policy Approach	Wards Included
East of the M53 Motorway, (outside Newheartlands)	Maximise the employment potential of the Wirral Waterfront Strategic Investment Area, address worklessness, expand the quality and choice of housing and maintain the role of existing centres, complimentary to other programmes.	<p>Bebington</p> <p>Bidston & St James (W of Wallasey Bridge Road, Stanley Road and Sumner Road)</p> <p>Birkenhead and Tranmere (S of Oxton Road and Oakbank/ W of Borough Road; S of Elmswood Road; W of Derby Road; S of Elm Road/ W of Church Road)</p> <p>Bromborough (S of former Dell Primary)</p> <p>Clatterbridge (E of M53)</p> <p>Clughton (N of Park Road South/ W of Francis Avenue and Osborne Road)</p> <p>Eastham</p>

Definition	Policy Approach	Wards Included
		<p>Liscard (W of Withens Lane, Serpentine Road, Crescent Road and Water Street)</p> <p>New Brighton</p> <p>Oxton (W of Euston Grove)</p> <p>Prenton</p> <p>Rock Ferry (S of Victoria Park Road and Inglemere Road/ W of Old Chester Road; W of the railway/ S of Bedford Road)</p> <p>Seacombe (W of Poulton Bridge Road excluding Roker Avenue)</p> <p>Wallasey (E of Bayswater Road inc Mockbeggar Drive)</p>

(iii) Rural Area – Lowest Priority

Definition	Policy Approach	Wards Included
West of the M53 Motorway	Concentrate housing, employment and services to meet identified local needs in key service centres with good public transport links, consistent with other regeneration programmes and policies.	<p>Clatterbridge (W of M53)</p> <p>Greasby Frankby and Irby</p> <p>Heswall</p> <p>Hoylake and Meols</p> <p>Leasowe and Moreton East</p> <p>Moreton West and Saughall Massie</p> <p>Pensby and Thingwall</p> <p>Upton</p> <p>Wallasey (W of Bayswater Road excluding Mockbeggar Drive)</p> <p>West Kirby and Thurstaston</p>

20 Background Papers

- 20.1 The text of the new Regional Spatial Strategy – The North West of England Plan (September 2008) can be viewed at <http://www.gos.gov.uk/497468/docs/248821/476846/NorthWestEnglandRSS>
- 20.2 Copies of the relevant additional supporting documentation can be viewed at <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gonw/Planning/RegionalPlanning/?a=42496>

20.3 Cabinet 14 May 2008 – Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West – Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes – Wirral Response, can be viewed at http://www.wirral.gov.uk/minute/public/cabcs080514rep1_27114.pdf

20.4 The Council’s Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development (October 2005) can be viewed at http://www.wirral.gov.uk/LGCL/100006/200074/485/content_0000039.html

RECOMMENDATIONS

That

(1) the policies of the North West of England Plan be used in development control decisions for all planning applications determined after 30 September 2008;

(2) the principles and priorities set out within the North West of England Plan be incorporated into the issues and options to be addressed by the Council’s Local Development Framework;

(3) the Council’s Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development be reviewed following the outcome of the public inquiry at Rockybank Road and that a report on the review be brought back to Cabinet before public consultation is undertaken; and

(4) a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for Wirral be prepared as part of a joint commission with Liverpool City Council to reflect the arrangements already agreed for the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.

J. Wilkie

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services

This report has been prepared by the Forward Planning Section who can be contacted on 691 8218.