

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

2 FEBRUARY 2012

SUBJECT:	<i>LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR WIRRAL – WORK PROGRAMME AND EVIDENCE BASE</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED:	<i>ALL WARDS. PETITION FOR A SITE IN LEASOWE AND MORETON EAST (PARAGRAPH 5.29 REFERS)</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>ACTING DIRECTOR OF DEPARTMENT OF REGENERATION, HOUSING AND PLANNING</i>
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	<i>REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGY – CLLR PHIL DAVIES</i>
KEY DECISION?	<i>YES</i>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report informs Members of the future programme for the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework; the findings of the latest study of the Borough's housing land supply; and reports on progress on the remaining technical evidence base studies. The report recommends that the Local Development Scheme attached to this report is approved for formal adoption by Council and that the findings of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update are made available for consultation before being included in the Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy.

1.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That Cabinet recommends to Council that the Local Development Scheme attached to this report is approved and that Council resolves to bring the Scheme into legal effect on the Monday following the date the resolution of Council is passed;
- 1.2 That the findings of the SHLAA Update are published for consultation prior to their inclusion in the Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy Development Plan Document and their approval as a material consideration for use by Planning Committee in the determination of planning applications; and
- 1.3 That the 2008-based household projections are used as the basis for calculating the Borough's five-year housing land supply in the period between the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the adoption of the Core Strategy.

2.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 To respond to the findings of the Council's Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report; provide an up-to-date programme for the preparation of Development Plan Documents; enable the most up-to-date information on housing land supply to inform the land-use policies in the emerging Local Development Framework for Wirral and decisions on individual planning applications; and enable the Council to maintain an ongoing five-year housing land supply.

3.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Cabinet on 21 July 2011 considered the responses submitted to consultation on the Council's Preferred Options for the emerging Core Strategy Development Plan Document for Wirral and resolved that additional studies be completed before a Draft Core Strategy is published and submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination (Cabinet, 21 July 2011, Minute 80 refers).
- 3.2 Cabinet considered the Council's Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report in December, which identified the latest position on the timetable for the preparation of Development Plan Documents and the need for more up-to-date information on the Borough's future housing land supply (Cabinet, 8 December 2011, Minute 224 refers).
- 3.3 The revised timetable for the production of Development Plan Documents has now been formalised into a revised Local Development Scheme for Council approval and the findings of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update are now available. An update of progress on the other technical evidence base studies is also provided below.

4 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME UPDATE

- 4.1 The Local Development Scheme is required to be published under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), to set out the timetable for the preparation and revision of Development Plan Documents, including any that may be prepared jointly with one or more other local planning authorities. The last Local Development Scheme for Wirral came into effect, following approval by the Secretary of State, on 22 February 2010 (Council, 15 February 2010, Minute 97 refers)
- 4.2 Following the enactment of the Localism Act 2011, it is no longer necessary to seek the separate approval of the Secretary of State before a Scheme can be adopted but the Council must make up-to-date information on progress available to the public. There is also a need to approve an up-to-date Local Development Scheme to support the soundness of the Joint Waste Development Plan Document which is expected to be submitted to formal public examination in February 2012.
- 4.3 The revised Local Development Scheme attached to this report has been based on the findings of the Annual Monitoring Report approved by Cabinet in December 2011. It is proposed to review progress on a quarterly basis on the Council's website, alongside a review of the risk register set out at Appendix 8 of the Scheme attached to this report.

5 STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT UPDATE

- 5.1 A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a technical background document required by national policy to consider all the available sites in the Borough that may potentially be suitable to deliver new housing development. It is an essential part of the evidence base for demonstrating that the Borough has an ongoing deliverable five-year housing land supply and has a longer term 15-year supply to deliver the number of new homes required to meet local needs in the Core Strategy.
- 5.2 National policy requires the SHLAA to look at all land which could have potential for housing. The SHLAA, therefore, effectively looks at what the future land supply for housing could look like with only limited planning restrictions in place. This allows the Council to "test" emerging policy scenarios for their likely implications, such as the

need to use greenfield sites and other sites not currently designated for new housing development. It is then left to the Council to decide on the direction of future strategy and on individual land allocations through its Local Development Framework, taking a wider range of issues into account such as strategic priorities, the need for employment land and the need to preserve local character and amenity. However, the Council's assessment of the direction of the future strategy must have regard to national policy, which is that a five year supply of readily available and developable housing land has to be provided. Proposals in the National Planning Policy Framework (Cabinet 22 September 2011, minute 124 refers) are that this will be extended to a 'rolling supply' of specific deliverable (i.e. available, in a suitable location, achievable and viable) sites sufficient to provide five years supply plus an allowance of 20% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land.

- 5.3 The first SHLAA for Wirral, prepared by Roger Tym and Partners supported by A. P. Sheehan, was based at April 2008 (the "SHLAA 2008", Cabinet, 2 September 2010, Minute 121 refers) and was subject to public consultation alongside the publication of the Council's Preferred Options for the Core Strategy in November 2010 (Cabinet, 23 September 2010, Minute 143 refers). Cabinet considered the report of consultation responses and resolved that the SHLAA should be updated to April 2011, to be carried out in-house alongside an independent achievability assessment to be undertaken by A.P Sheehan (Cabinet, 21 July 2011, Minute 80 refers).
- 5.4 The main objectives of the SHLAA Update were to:
- re-evaluate the sites included in the SHLAA 2008, to identify any changes;
 - incorporate, where appropriate, any amendments identified through consultation;
 - assess any new sites for their suitability, availability and achievability; and
 - identify the housing land supply position for the 15 year period from April 2011
- 5.5 A copy of the main SHLAA Update Report and its associated documents is available on the Council's internet Document Library but the main findings are summarised below:

Changes Since April 2008

- 5.6 A number of policy and legislative changes have been introduced since the SHLAA 2008 was undertaken.

Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (RSS)

- 5.7 The Secretary of State's Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (GONW, September 2008) and the Council's Unitary Development Plan (adopted in February 2000), currently constitute the statutory Development Plan for Wirral. In the context of housing, the RSS sets out an annual average housing target for Wirral of 500 net dwellings up to 2021 and the intention to focus new residential development to promote economic growth and regeneration in the east of the Borough.
- 5.8 The Government intends to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies through the Localism Act, which received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011. The abolition of RSS is currently awaiting the outcome of a Strategic Environmental Assessment, which is subject to consultation with a deadline for comments by 20 January 2012. Although the RSS housing requirement still forms part of the statutory development plan, it is important that the Council can provide a robust evidence base to support a locally-derived housing requirement once RSS is finally revoked.

National Policy

- 5.9 At the national level, the Coalition Government has updated Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing): to reflect a new definition of previously developed land, to exclude private residential gardens; and remove the national indicative minimum density target of 30 dwellings per hectare.
- 5.10 The Government has also recently consulted on a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), to replace the existing suite of national Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Planning Policy Statements (Cabinet 22 September 2011, Minute 124 refers). It is anticipated that the final version of the NPPF will be published in April 2012.
- 5.11 The requirement to provide for up to 15-years' development in the Development Plan; maintain a rolling five-year supply of housing sites; and consider applications favourably where a five-year supply cannot be demonstrated appears in both PPS3 and the NPPF. The draft NPPF also includes an additional allowance of 20% on the initial five-year supply, effectively requiring an immediately available housing land supply of six years.

Core Strategy

- 5.12 The Council consulted on a range of potential housing targets as part of the Preferred Options for the Core Strategy based on the RSS 'Option 1' figure advised in the Conservative Party pre-Election Green Paper Open Source Planning; housing need; housing capacity; and market deliverability (Cabinet, 23 September 2010, Minute 143 refers). Consultation feedback indicated that the majority of respondents wanted more account to be taken of the local housing needs identified in the Council's Strategic Housing Market Update which were based on CLG household projections (Cabinet, 21 July 2011, Minute 80 refers).

Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development

- 5.13 The Council has operated an Interim Planning Policy since RPG13 was issued in 2003, with amendments in October 2005, to promote urban regeneration and housing market renewal. The Policy was retained following the publication of RSS in September 2008 and a series of appeal decisions which continued to support it.
- 5.14 Despite the five-year housing land supply coming under increasing pressure, Inspectors have so far continued to support the Policy on the basis of the importance of urban regeneration in the Regional Spatial Strategy, in line with the advice in paragraph 69 of PPS3. The only recent exception has been the approval of the subdivision of a single dwelling into two dwellings which were already in use at Redstones Farm in Irby.

Liverpool City Region Overview Study

- 5.15 A Liverpool City Overview Study, based on the SHLAA 2008, concluded that Wirral, Liverpool and Halton demonstrated sufficient capacity to meet likely future housing requirements, while Sefton, Knowsley, St Helens and West Lancashire faced a position of potential undersupply beyond 2020. The potential to accommodate these shortfalls in other authorities (including Wirral) was, however, considered to be limited by recent patterns of migration, the localised nature of the majority of household moves and the pattern and extent of local housing needs (Cabinet, 21 July 2011, Minute 76 refers).

Changes in Housing Delivery

- 5.16 Between April 2003 and April 2008 Wirral recorded an annual average of 367 housing completions net of clearance. Although this was below the annual requirement of 500 net dwellings set by RSS, Wirral had exceeded the annual requirement in both 2006/07 and 2007/08, before the onset of the national recession. Since then, between 2008 and 2011, Wirral has delivered an annual average of 210 net housing completions and in 2010/11, registered 97 net completions, the lowest figure recorded since the beginning of the RSS period in 2003. Market conditions have, therefore, had a significant impact on the ability of developers to deliver new housing to the pre-recession levels envisaged in RSS.

Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Initiative

- 5.17 Newheartlands was a long term national regeneration project to tackle the causes and symptoms of housing market failure, vacancy and decline at the heart of the Merseyside conurbation. In Wirral, the boundary designated by the Government in April 2002 included Birkenhead, Tranmere, Seacombe and parts of Bidston and Liscard. The programme has been very successful in securing a number of homes for acquisition and clearance, renovating a range of existing properties and providing new high quality housing on former clearance areas.
- 5.18 Following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, HMRI funding ceased prematurely at the end of March 2011. Despite funding cuts, the objectives of housing market renewal continue to form a prominent part of the Council's Housing Strategy and the Council's ongoing Housing Investment Programme is based on the completion of previous priorities and initiatives in Birkenhead, Rock Ferry, Tranmere and Wallasey. The Council has secured HMRI Transitional Funding to the value of £2.7 million (Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee 16 January 2012 refers), which will be used to support housing market renewal priorities alongside funding from the New Homes Bonus and the Regional Housing Fund, in partnership with the Council's preferred regeneration partners, Keepmoat and Lovell.

Mersey Heartlands Growth Point

- 5.19 In July 2008, the Government confirmed 'Mersey Heartlands' as one of 21 second-round New Growth Points (NGP). Under the NGP, accelerated housing supply was to be pursued alongside housing market renewal in Merseyside's regeneration priority areas. The ambition for the Mersey Heartlands NGP was to achieve a level of housing growth that was 20 per cent greater than the dwelling targets set by the RSS during the period 2008-2017. The Council's commitment to growth within this area was shown in the outline approval of up to 15,200 new dwellings at Wirral Waters but no new housing development has yet taken place.
- 5.20 National funding for the Growth Point programme also ceased in March 2011.

Methodology

- 5.21 The SHLAA Update has been produced in accordance with the agreed SHLAA 2008 methodology, subject to consultation feedback and data updates. The SHLAA Update also considers a number of new sites. These include:
- sites submitted through consultation on the SHLAA 2008 between November 2010 and January 2011;
 - a review of housing refusals since April 2003, which were not included in the SHLAA 2008 (except that sites where the reasons for refusal were unlikely to be able to be overcome have continued to be excluded);
 - sites where planning permission for housing had lapsed prior to 1 April 2011;
 - additional sites identified through the National Land Use Database held by HCA;
 - Council-owned sites that had or were likely to be declared surplus to requirements in future years; and
 - additional vacant sites identified by officers during site visits.
- 5.22 The main SHLAA Update Report makes clear that the inclusion of a site in the SHLAA Update should not be taken as a Council endorsement of its future development and does not in any way prejudice decisions to be taken by the Council in relation to preferred directions of growth in the Core Strategy, site identification in site-specific Development Plan Documents or the determination of individual planning applications.

Site Assessment Criteria

- 5.23 In accordance with the original methodology, the sites included in the SHLAA Update have been subject to a comprehensive assessment of their 'suitability', 'availability' and 'achievability'.
- **Suitability** has been assessed by scoring each site against criteria related to recreational open space, nature and earth science conservation, employment land, flooding and Green Belt. Physical problems or 'bad neighbour' constraints have also been considered.
 - **Availability** has been assessed by scoring each site against criteria related to whether the site was owned by a willing developer, owner or public sector body, whether the site had an established low intensity or single use, or whether the site was known to have complex ownership.
 - **Achievability** has been assessed by scoring each site for economic viability based on an independent assessment of a selection of new sites by A.P. Sheehan. The achievability assessment of SHLAA 2008 sites, also undertaken by A.P. Sheehan, has remained unchanged unless new evidence has been presented to indicate otherwise.
- 5.24 The assessments of suitability, availability and achievability have been used to place each site into one of three 'Category' bands:
- **Category 1** sites are considered to be suitable for housing and **deliverable** within five years.
 - **Category 2** sites are considered to be **developable** but may have some additional constraints which mean they are more likely to be delivered within a 6-10 year period.

- **Category 3** sites are considered to be **not currently developable** and are subject to constraints which could only make them deliverable within an 11-15 year period.

5.25 **Small sites** have also been included but have not all been subject to a detailed assessment due to the high numbers involved. An assumption has, therefore, been made relating to their likely delivery, based on the assessment of a selection of new sites from within the same Settlement Area.

5.26 Sites which already had **planning permission** for housing development at April 2011 have been assessed separately as 'outstanding commitments'. A 20 per cent non-implementation rate has been applied to take account of permissions that may not be developed, in line with the approach taken in the SHLAA 2008.

5.27 The SHLAA Update has included sites in the Green Belt, in line with the approach taken in the SHLAA 2008, but these were discounted towards the end of the process because of the extent of the assessed capacity within the urban areas over 15 years.

Consideration of Petition Site

5.28 A petition of 366 names was received in April 2011, following the close of the consultation period for the SHLAA 2008, prompted by the marketing of land at Ditton Lane for residential development, which requested that the Council "designates the site as unsuitable for development in the next Local Development Framework". The site has been assessed in accordance with the SHLAA 2008 methodology and has subsequently been removed from the ongoing supply as the majority of the site falls within a functional floodplain. In order for development to be considered suitable on this site, it would need to be demonstrated that flood mitigation measures could be successfully implemented.

Assessment Findings

Table 1: Sites Assessed as Deliverable Within Five Years From April 2011

Number of Dwellings (gross)	Category 1 Sites			Site with Planning Permission (-20%)			GRAND TOTAL	% of Borough Total
	PDL ¹	GF ²	TOTAL	PDL	GF	TOTAL		
Settlement Area 1 – Wallasey	104	43	147	442	10	452	599	16.1
Settlement Area 2 – Commercial Core	63	0	63	49	0	49	112	3.0
Settlement Area 3 – Birkenhead	321	138	459	1,022	130	1,152	1,611	43.2
Settlement Area 4 – Bromborough & Eastham	209	44	253	414	6	420	673	18.0
Settlement Area 5 – Mid-Wirral	67	126	193	98	16	114	307	8.2
Settlement Area 6 – Hoylake & West Kirby	67	20	87	33	9	42	129	3.5
Settlement Area 7 – Heswall	27	36	63	25	13	38	101	2.7

¹ Previously developed land

² Greenfield land

Number of Dwellings (gross)	Category 1 Sites			Site with Planning Permission (-20%)			GRAND TOTAL	% of Borough Total
	PDL ¹	GF ²	TOTAL	PDL	GF	TOTAL		
Settlement Area 8 – Rural Areas	0	0	0	197	2	199	199	5.3
TOTAL	858	407	1,265	2,280	186	2,466	3,731	

5.29 Table 1 above includes Category 1 sites identified as deliverable within the first five years, together with planning permissions at April 2011 (discounted by 20 per cent), excluding Wirral Waters sites. It demonstrates that 84 per cent of the total five year supply is on previously developed land, above the RSS target of 80 per cent. The largest potential capacity lies within the urban area in Settlement Area 3 - Birkenhead, with Settlement Areas 1 – Wallasey and Settlement Area 4 – Bromborough and Eastham also demonstrating significant capacity.

5.30 The capacity in Table 1 includes the following:

- **188** units and **6.36** hectares of land on sites designated for employment purposes.
- **223** units and **13.27** hectares of land on sites designated as urban greenspace or currently used or designated for recreation.
- **94** units and **5.66** hectares of land on sites within a designated Conservation Area.
- **30** units and **2** hectares of land on residential garden sites.
- **559** units and **26.14** hectares of land on sites currently held back by the Council's Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development.

5.31 Removing these sites would reduce the gross supply from 3,731 to 2,907 dwellings.

5.32 Wirral Waters could provide additional dwellings between 2011 and 2016 but the latest figures are not yet available.

Table 2: Sites Assessed as Developable Within Six to Ten Years From April 2011

Number of Dwellings (gross)	Category 2 Sites		TOTAL	% of Borough Total
	PDL	GF		
Settlement Area 1 – Wallasey	150	34	184	8.3
Settlement Area 2 – Commercial Core	461	0	461	20.8
Settlement Area 3 – Birkenhead	219	88	307	13.9
Settlement Area 4 – Bromborough & Eastham	599	93	692	31.3
Settlement Area 5 – Mid-Wirral	59	141	200	9.0
Settlement Area 6 – Hoylake & West Kirby	73	60	133	6.0
Settlement Area 7 – Heswall	25	52	77	3.5

Number of Dwellings (gross)	Category 2 Sites		TOTAL	% of Borough Total
	PDL	GF		
Settlement Area 8 – Rural Areas	132	26	158	7.1
TOTAL	1,718	494	2,212	

5.33 Table 2 above includes Category 2 sites identified as developable within the first ten years, again, excluding Wirral Waters sites. It demonstrates that 78 per cent of the total 6 – 10 year supply is on previously developed land, slightly below the RSS target of 80 per cent. The largest potential capacity lies within the urban area of Settlement Area 4 – Bromborough and Eastham.

5.34 The capacity in Table 2 includes the following:

- **546** units and **24.71** hectares of land on sites designated for employment purposes.
- **205** units and **6.92** hectares of land on sites designated as urban greenspace or currently used or designated for recreation.
- **129** units and **3.73** hectares of land on sites within a designated Conservation Area.
- **48** units and **1.02** hectares of land on sites at high risk of flooding (Flood Zone 3a).
- **77** units and **4.49** hectares of land on residential garden sites.
- **165** units and **6.65** hectares of land on sites currently in use with potential for conversion but with no indication of delivery within the first five years.
- **843** units and **34.23** hectares of land on sites currently held back by the Council's Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development.

5.35 Removing these sites would reduce the gross supply from 2,212 to 671 dwellings

5.36 Wirral Waters could provide additional dwellings between 2016 and 2021 but the latest figures are not yet available.

Table 3: Sites Assessed as Not Currently Developable Within Eleven to Fifteen Years From April 2011

Number of Dwellings (gross)	Category 3 Sites		TOTAL	% of Borough Total
	PDL	GF		
Settlement Area 1 – Wallasey	52	95	147	2.8
Settlement Area 2 – Commercial Core	3,172	41	3,213	62.3
Settlement Area 3 – Birkenhead	241	131	372	7.2
Settlement Area 4 – Bromborough & Eastham	280	49	329	6.4
Settlement Area 5 – Mid-Wirral	154	784	938	18.2
Settlement Area 6 – Hoylake & West Kirby	2	25	27	0.5

Number of Dwellings (gross)	Category 3 Sites		TOTAL	% of Borough Total
	PDL	GF		
Settlement Area 7 – Heswall	28	14	42	0.8
Settlement Area 8 – Rural Areas	91	0	91	1.8
TOTAL	4,020	1,139	5,159	

5.37 Table 3 above includes Category 3 sites identified as not currently developable within the first ten years, excluding Wirral Waters sites. It demonstrates that 78 per cent of the 11 - 15 year supply is on previously developed land, slightly below the RSS target of 80 per cent. Outside Wirral Waters, the largest potential capacity lies within the Commercial Core in and around the docks hinterland.

5.38 The capacity in Table 3 includes the following:

- **3,213** units and **90.53** hectares of land on sites designated for employment purposes.
- **1,333** units and **55.35** hectares of land on sites designated as urban greenspace or currently used or designated for recreation.
- **846** units and **10.55** hectares of land on sites within a designated Conservation Area.
- **2,252** units and **65.22** hectares of land on sites at high risk of flooding (Flood Zone 3a).
- **39** units and **3.24** hectares of land on residential garden sites.
- **60** units and **1.59** hectares of land on sites currently in use with potential for conversion but with no indication of delivery within the first five years.
- **530** units and **23.4** hectares of land on sites currently held back by the Council's Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development.

5.39 Removing these sites would reduce the gross supply from 5,159 to 303 dwellings

5.40 Wirral Waters could provide additional dwellings between 2021 and 2026 but the latest figures are not yet available.

Table 4: Small Sites at April 2011

Number of Dwellings (gross)	Small Sites		TOTAL	% of Borough Total
	PDL	GF		
Settlement Area 1 – Wallasey	53	44	97	15.6
Settlement Area 2 – Commercial Core	67	0	67	10.8
Settlement Area 3 – Birkenhead	132	99	231	37.1
Settlement Area 4 – Bromborough & Eastham	4	46	50	8.0
Settlement Area 5 – Mid-Wirral	48	40	88	14.1

Number of Dwellings (gross)	Small Sites		TOTAL	% of Borough Total
	PDL	GF		
Settlement Area 6 – Hoylake & West Kirby	25	19	44	7.1
Settlement Area 7 – Heswall	19	27	46	7.4
Settlement Area 8 – Rural Areas	0	0	0	0.0
TOTAL	348	275	623	

5.41 Table 4 above includes small sites which were not subject to a detailed achievability appraisal. It demonstrates that 56 per cent of the total supply of small sites is on previously developed land, below the RSS target of 80 per cent.

5.42 The capacity in Table 4 includes the following:

- **54** units and **1.16** hectares of land on sites designated for employment purposes.
- **91** units and **2.69** hectares of land on sites designated as urban greenspace or currently used or designated for recreation.
- **20** units and **0.7** hectares of land on sites within a designated Conservation Area.
- **19** units and **0.53** hectares of land on sites at high risk of flooding (Flood Zone 3a).
- **52** units and **1.69** hectares of land on residential garden sites.
- **5** units and **0.15** hectares of land on sites currently in use with potential for conversion but with no indication of delivery within the first five years.
- **328** units and **9.71** hectares of land on sites currently held back by the Council's Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development.

5.43 Removing these sites would reduce the gross supply from 623 to 184 dwellings

Calculation of Five, Ten and Fifteen Year Housing Land Supply

5.44 Table 5 below uses the figures above to set out the Borough's five-year housing supply when measured against the current RSS requirement of 500 per year, which was produced in the context of a growing economy and was based on the higher 2003-based household projections.

Table 5: Five Year Supply 2011 – 2016 Based on RSS Requirement

	Data Item	Number of Dwellings
A	RSS Housing Requirement 2003 - 2011 (500 x 8 years)	4,000
B	Demolitions 2003 - 2011 (actual)	1,901
C	Gross Completions 2003 - 2011 (actual)	4,495
D	Net Completions 2003 - 2011 (new build plus net gain from conversions less demolitions)	2,466
E	Shortfall (backlog) of completions against target 2003 – 2011 (A - D)	1,534
F	Five year projected demolitions (200 p.a)	1,000

	Data Item	Number of Dwellings
G	5 year gross housing target 2011 - 2016 including shortfall and projected demolition replacement (500 x 5 + E + F)	5,034
H	Current five year gross supply	3,895
I	Annual requirement over 5 years (gross) (G/5)	1,007
J	Years' supply (H/I)	3.9

5.45 This analysis is based on the following assumptions:

- Projected demolitions over the five year period from 2011 (Row F) are based on the known programmes of the Council and Registered Providers of social housing and the median average of actual demolitions since 2003.
- The five year gross housing target (Row G) assumes that the shortfall against RSS between 2003 and 2011 will be met in the five year period from April 2011. If this backlog is met over a ten year period, the SHLAA demonstrates capacity equivalent to a 4.6 year supply.
- The current five year gross supply (Row H) includes Category 1 sites that were considered deliverable within the first five years, small sites calculated as being deliverable within the first five years and extant planning permissions at April 2011 (the last discounted by 20 per cent to reflect non-implementation).
- The calculation assumes that all Category 1 sites, small sites and extant planning permissions are fully developed and that the Council's Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development does not continue to apply.

5.46 Table 6 below sets out the five year housing land position when set against the latest 2008-based national household projections. The analysis is based on the same assumptions as for Table 5 above.

Table 6: Five Year Supply 2011 – 2016 Based on DCLG 2008-Based Household Projections

	Data Item	Number of Dwellings
A	Increase in Households 2008 – 2011 (average 200 pa)	600
B	Demolitions 2008 - 2011 (actual)	548
C	Gross Completions 2008 – 2011 (actual)	1,211
D	Net Completions 2008 - 2011 (new build plus net gain from conversions less demolitions)	631
E	Shortfall (backlog) of completions against target 2008 - 2011 (A – D)	-31
F	Five year projected demolitions (200 p.a)	1,000
G	5 year gross housing target 2011 - 2016 including shortfall and projected demolition replacement (2,200³ + E + F)	3,169

³ This reflects an increase of 400 (200 per annum) households between 2011 and 2013 and 1,800 (600 per annum) between 2013 and 2016

	Data Item	Number of Dwellings
H	Current five year gross supply	3,895
I	Annual requirement over 5 years (gross) (G/5)	634
J	Years' supply (H/I)	6.1

The calculation in Row G reflects projected household growth between 2011 and 2016, which increases from 200 per annum between 2008 and 2013 to 600 per annum between 2013 and 2018.

- 5.47 Table 5 demonstrates that the SHLAA Update does not identify sufficient capacity to meet the RSS requirement within the five year period from 2011, without Wirral Waters. When the RSS backlog and projected demolitions are taken into account, the SHLAA Update demonstrates a 3.9 year supply. The continuing application of the Interim Planning Policy could reduce this supply to 3.2 years. Additional units at Wirral Waters could, however, deliver an additional supply.
- 5.48 When measured against the DCLG 2008-based household projections in Table 6, the SHLAA Update demonstrates a potential surplus against requirements, at 6.1 years' supply. The continuing application of the Interim Planning Policy could reduce this supply to 5.1 years. This indicates that if the Council adopts the 2008-based household projections as its local housing requirement, sufficient capacity is likely to exist within the Borough to accommodate future household growth. Additional units at Wirral Waters could deliver an additional supply.
- 5.49 The Council has granted permission for 100 additional units since April 2011 on sites not identified in the SHLAA and is in negotiation with a number of developers to bring sites forward for additional housing development.
- 5.50 Calculations showing figures for the ten and fifteen year supply are contained within the main SHLAA Update Report in the Council's internet Document Library but demonstrate a shortfall of 1.9 years against the RSS target over ten-years (increased to 4.0 years by the continuation of the Interim Planning Policy) or a 10.8 year supply against the household projections, without Wirral Waters (reduced to 8.0 years by the continuation of the Interim Planning Policy); and a 16.4 year and 21.3 year supply over fifteen years, without Wirral Waters (reduced to 13.2 and 17.2 years dependent upon future policy decisions).

Windfall Sites

- 5.51 Although the majority of potential sites have been included in the SHLAA Update, it is still reasonable to assume that some unidentified sites will come forward. In the SHLAA 2008, the consultants estimated that unidentified sites could be expected to deliver a further 416 dwellings over the period 2013 to 2026. An additional allowance for windfalls was not, however, included in the SHLAA supply figures as national policy discourages a reliance on unidentified supply (PPS3, 2010, paragraph 59 refers).
- 5.52 Previously unidentified sites have, in practice, been a significant source of new planning permissions for housing in Wirral. For example, since 2008, 316 units have been granted planning permission on sites which were not identified in the SHLAA

2008. The lifting of the Interim Planning Policy could also serve to release additional sites, not yet identified in the SHLAA Update. This demonstrates that windfalls could still form a significant part of Wirral's ongoing housing land supply, again, subject to market conditions. However, in order to comply with PPS3, windfall sites have not been included in the final supply figures quoted above.

- 5.53 It is not currently possible under existing national policy to consider reducing vacancy within the existing stock or using the number of properties for sale to contribute towards the assessment of housing requirements or the five or fifteen year supply.

Overall Conclusions on the Findings of the SHLAA Update

- 5.54 The SHLAA Update analysis above highlights a shortfall in housing land supply when measured against the RSS requirement over the five and ten year periods from 2011, without Wirral Waters. Across the fifteen year period, the SHLAA Update demonstrates a potential surplus against the RSS requirement, reflecting the significant capacity of sites that are not currently developable, which are included in Category 3. In order to meet the RSS requirement over the five and ten year periods, a number of sites from Category 2 and Category 3 may need to be brought forward sooner. This includes a number of sites currently allocated for employment uses, designated as urban greenspace or currently in use for recreation. Alternatively, additional sites may need to be identified. This process would need to be greatly accelerated, if the Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development continued to be applied unless sufficient housing completions could be delivered at Wirral Waters over the next five to ten years.
- 5.55 When measured against the 2008-based household projections, the SHLAA Update demonstrates that Wirral's identified capacity might be able to accommodate projected household growth within the five, ten and fifteen year periods from 2011, without Wirral Waters, if the Interim Planning Policy was no longer applied. The household projections cannot, however, lawfully be applied while the RSS is still in place.
- 5.56 While the Government is committed to abolishing the RSS, the timetable for its removal is still uncertain and may be subject to a future judicial review. This means that the Council may need to plan on the basis of RSS remaining in place for the foreseeable future. This may also have implications for the future content of the Core Strategy, if RSS is not abolished before the Draft Core Strategy is published and submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination. In the interim, until a five year supply can be re-established, planning applications for housing may need to be considered favourably in line with paragraph 69 of PPS3.
- 5.57 On this basis, it would be premature to withdraw the Interim Planning Policy, at this stage, while RSS and its spatial priorities still form part of the statutory Development Plan for Wirral and the need to regenerate the older urban areas is still apparent and a key part of the Council's ongoing housing strategy.
- 5.58 It is, however, important to note that predicting when each site is likely to come forward for development can only be based on the best evidence available at the time. The placing of a site into one of the three Category bands is therefore only intended to give an indication of the likely deliverability and potential timing of a site's development.
- 5.59 The inclusion of a site in Category 1 or 2 should not be taken to represent a Council endorsement of its future development, as the categorisation process does not fully take account of factors that would be considered when selecting a site for allocation or

determining a planning application, for example, under paragraph 69 of PPS3. Equally, it should not be concluded that a site assigned to Category 2 or 3 could not come forward earlier or cannot be allocated for development, if it can be demonstrated that the constraints identified can be mitigated or overcome.

- 5.60 Due to the economic climate, a number of sites have been assessed as suitable and available but are not considered deliverable in the current market. If the economic situation improves, it is reasonable to assume that some of these sites could come forward sooner. It is therefore important that the SHLAA is continually monitored to reflect changes in the housing market. National guidance recommends an annual update through the Council's Annual Monitoring Report.

6. PROGRESS ON OTHER EVIDENCE BASE STUDIES

- 6.1 BE Group were appointed in November 2011, to provide updated labour supply and demand forecasts (Cabinet, 21 July 2011, Minute 80 refers). Work has been delayed by the availability of revised economic forecast data from The Mersey Partnership (TMP), which should now be completed by the end of January 2012, enabling the update to the Council's Employment Land and Premises Study to be completed by the end of February 2012.
- 6.2 The Council's retained retail consultants GVA Grimley were instructed to update the quantitative analysis of the Borough's future retail capacity in October 2011 (Cabinet, 21 July 2011, Minute 80 refers). A draft report has now been received and the findings will be reported to Cabinet once the final report has been confirmed.
- 6.3 The Water Cycle Study being undertaken by Scott Wilson (Cabinet, 14 October 2010, Minute 176 refers) is at draft stage and is currently subject to consultation with utilities providers and the Environment Agency. The draft report is now expected to be finalised by the end February 2012.
- 6.4 The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Districts commissioned Merseyside EAS (MEAS) to prepare an Ecological Framework in late 2008, as a mechanism to minimise risk to the Districts in meeting Regional Spatial Strategy policy expectations. The main aims of the Framework have been to:
- inform Local Development Frameworks and other key plans
 - provide an integrated functional framework of ecological services
 - provide the ecological component of a LCR Green infrastructure Framework
 - provide a key delivery tool for regeneration, climate change and biodiversity
 - provide an enhanced sub-regional framework for the delivery of regional targets
 - future-proof the Districts against the Coalition Government's new approach towards ecological networks
- 6.5 The Framework identifies a series of Core Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) within each of the six Districts based on existing international, national and local designated sites, Priority Habitats identified under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats. Each CBA is surrounded by a 50m wide Search Area for Potential Habitat Expansion (SAPHE) which is intended to highlight the areas with greatest potential for habitat creation to protect and enhance the CBA. The SAPHE is in turn surrounded by a 50m 'connectivity zone' which is intended to protect and increase the linkages between the CBAs. The final components of the Framework are linear features: in Wirral the

railway and motorway corridors (including the Wirral Way) and water courses have been mapped to date but linkages could also include other features such as hedgerows and ditches. Protection for these areas comes under Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and Planning Policy Statement 9. As such, local authorities are required to make provisions for the management and maintenance of these networks and to protect them from development.

- 6.6 The work completed by MEAS to date comprises three consultation reports (two on methodology, one on wider consultation); a User Guide; District Profiles; GIS layers; Metadata Report; and a Strategic Overview – Assets and Opportunities document.
- 6.7 There are no new statutory requirements arising from the Framework, which in effect brings together the wide range of protected sites, plants and animals into a more coherent whole. It also identifies where improvements would best be located and the District Profiles provide a resource to inform choice. The Framework takes forward the existing nature conservation designations, legislative requirements and duties and does not introduce any new elements or designations. In Wirral's case it will form part of the evidence base alongside the Wirral Biodiversity Audit (commissioned by the Council in 2008 and reported to Members in 2009) and the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy work. The mapping in particular will require further refinement, which will need to be taken forward at district level.
- 6.8 The revised Wirral Open Space Assessment (Cabinet, 21 July 2011, Minute 80), which is now being prepared in-house, is near to completion and is expected to be reported alongside the Draft Core Strategy in July 2012.
- 6.9 The tender for the Wirral Green Infrastructure Strategy (Cabinet, 13 January 2011, Minute 283) is still to be advertised, following the completion of preparatory data analysis in-house to minimise future consultancy costs.
- 6.10 A separate evidence base is now also being prepared in-house to determine the infrastructure requirements for each of the Settlement Areas identified in the Core Strategy (8 December 2011, Minute 225 refers). The work is expected to be reported to Cabinet alongside the Draft Core Strategy in July 2012.
- 6.11 The contract for transport modelling has not yet been let (Cabinet 21 July 2011, Minute 80 refers), pending confirmation of the availability of monies from the Council's capital programme and the finalisation of the SHLAA Update and the revised Employment Land and Premises Study.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The delivery of the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme attached to this report is subject to a separate risk assessment, at Appendix 8 of the Scheme, which will be subject to quarterly review and published on the Council's website. A number of essential background studies have been delayed by the need to undertake additional work in-house rather than under contract to a third party.
- 7.2 A failure to provide and take account of the evidence in the SHLAA Update could result in the rejection of the Core Strategy for Wirral at any future public examination

by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State and in costs being awarded against the Council for unreasonable behaviour at planning appeals.

- 7.3 The analysis set out above is highly sensitive to market conditions which may improve or worsen over the periods being considered, despite the involvement of an independent industry expert. Some of the calculations are also highly dependent on the delivery of large numbers of similar types of housing as part of a single development scheme at Wirral Waters, which may or may not be supported by the market within the periods being considered.
- 7.4 RSS is subject to proposed abolition but to an uncertain timetable. The national household projections are also subject to regular review and the publication of the preliminary results from the national 2011 Census could have significant implications for any future projections, which may be published when the Core Strategy is being considered at public examination. Housing and population data is regularly monitored and reported on at least an annual basis, with reports to Cabinet as and when required and any future changes will need to be addressed as each stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy is reached.

8.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 An up-to-date timetable for the production of Development Plan Documents is a statutory requirement and is required to support the soundness of the Joint Waste Development Plan Document at public examination. Options related to the speed at which individual documents are prepared are subject to the need to satisfy statutory requirements and the availability of resources, including support for other responsibilities including development management.
- 8.2 The SHLAA is an essential technical background document which sets out the Council's projected housing land supply over the next 15 years to inform development plan preparation and decisions on individual planning applications. Decisions on the policy response to the findings of the SHLAA Update and other evidence base studies will be considered as part of the ongoing preparation of the Draft Core Strategy Development Plan Document, which will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet later in the year. The main options likely to be available to the Council are already set out within the body of this report.
- 8.3 Withdrawing the Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development has also been considered but has been discounted at this stage while RSS remains in place because of the Council's continuing regeneration commitments and because the draft Core Strategy (which is close to being finalised) will continue to focus on urban regeneration.

9.0 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 There is no legal requirement to undertake public consultation on the content of the Local Development Scheme. The timetable included in the Scheme is based on the findings of the Council's Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report and an estimate of the time needed to complete the work necessary to secure a sound Development Plan Document.

- 9.2 The sites included in the SHLAA Update are based on responses to consultation undertaken between November 2010 and January 2011 alongside the publication of the Council's Preferred Options for a Core Strategy for Wirral, in line with the standards contained within the Council's Statement of Community Involvement adopted in December 2006. It is recommended that the findings of the SHLAA Update documents are made subject to public consultation, including key housing stakeholders, before inclusion in the Draft Core Strategy Development Plan Document.
- 9.3 The Liverpool City Region Ecological Framework has been prepared in consultation with the relevant sub-regional stakeholders.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 10.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report. The Interim Planning Policy has, however, supported the Council's strategies for regeneration in areas of greatest need.

11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 11.1 A.P.Sheehan has undertaken the independent viability appraisal of the SHLAA Update, at a total cost of £5,100 plus VAT against a potential budget of £6,000. BE Group are expected to undertake the update to the Employment Land and Premises Study at a total cost of £3,000 against a potential budget of £6,000 and GVA Grimley are expected to undertake the update of retail capacity at a total cost of £4,413 against a potential budget of £5,000 (Cabinet, 21 July 2011, Minute 80 refers).
- 11.2 The Liverpool City Region Ecological Framework was prepared at no additional cost to the Council, as part of the existing core contract with the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service, the Council's specialist environmental advisors (Cabinet, 8 December 2011, Minute 223 refers).

12.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Following consultation with the public and/or stakeholders, the SHLAA Update and other evidence base studies will need to be adopted by the Council for inclusion in the Local Development Framework and as a material consideration in future planning decisions.

13.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required as the Local Development Scheme only sets out the timetable for future work and the findings from the SHLAA Update and other evidence base studies will form part of the background to the policy choices to be included in the Council's Local Development Framework, which will itself be subject to a future EIA as part of the preparation of the Core Strategy and Joint Waste Development Plan Document.

14.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The implications for carbon reduction are not directly addressed within the SHLAA Update or other evidence base studies. Although the spatial distribution and more

modern design of new housing could have carbon reduction implications, this will be dealt with through the policies and proposals to be contained within the Draft Core Strategy for Wirral and the Joint Waste Development Plan Document. The Local Development Scheme will only have carbon reduction implications in so far as the policies contained within the documents proposed will promote carbon reduction.

15.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

15.1 The SHLAA Update and other evidence base studies will form an essential part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Development Framework for Wirral. Once adopted, the SHLAA Update and other evidence base studies will be used to inform the spatial strategy to be contained within the Core Strategy for Wirral; as a starting point for the consideration of sites to bring forward as part of a future Site Specific Land Allocations Development Plan Document; and could be a material consideration in the determination of individual planning applications.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Hannah Whitfield**
Senior Planning Officer
 telephone: (0151) 691 8192
 email: hannahwhitfield@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Amended Local Development Scheme (February 2012)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Council – Local Development Framework - Approval of Amended Local Development Scheme (Minute 97)	15 February 2010
Cabinet – Local Development Framework for Wirral – Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (Minute 121)	2 September 2010
Cabinet - Local Development Framework for Wirral – Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Minute 80)	21 July 2011
Cabinet – Local Development Framework – Annual Monitoring Report (Minute 224)	8 December 2011