



By E-mail

Mr Ian Coleman
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Please contact: Jane Gowing
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Dear Ian

Planning strategically across local boundaries; duty to co-operate

I am writing to set out Sefton's current position with regard to planning for future homes and economic development, whilst exploring with you opportunities under the new duty to co-operate across local authority boundaries.

In Sefton, we are currently preparing a Core Strategy / Local Plan that will guide the location of new development in the years ahead. A difficulty that we face in preparing a Plan is that we can only meet Sefton's identified housing and economic development needs by encroaching into the Merseyside Green Belt. This has proven to be extremely controversial across Sefton's communities, where development in the Green Belt is very strongly opposed. In order to progress our Local Plan we are keen to explore whether these needs, as currently assessed, could potentially be met on land in neighbouring authorities. This could help to ensure that housing and economic development is located as sustainably as possible.

You will be aware that the Localism Act 2011 places a statutory 'duty to co-operate' on all local authorities preparing a Local Plan for their area. Additionally, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that Local Plans demonstrate "effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities". In Merseyside we have an established joined up process of working on strategic planning matters – the Waste DPD being the most recent example – and I am sure you will agree that this new duty is an extension of current good practice.

Sefton Council has not yet made a decision about which option to pursue in its Local Plan. Last year we completed an 'options' consultation which revealed significant opposition within our local communities to the release of Green Belt land for new development. Of the circa 2,500 responses received to the consultation the overwhelming majority objected to any development in the Green Belt. We continue to progress with our Local Plan and are in the process of updating key employment, housing and agricultural land studies over the coming months. We will also be commissioning a consequences study of the various 'options' available to us for the Local Plan. This will need to include information from your

own Borough to review the social, economic and environmental consequences of these options both within Sefton and beyond our local authority boundary. In this regard we are also requesting your co-operation as we scope out and progress this study to ensure that it is comprehensive and robust. These studies will inform our 'preferred option' consultation later in the year.

Due to the significant local concern about any development in Green Belt – combined with the need to protect Green Belt and agricultural land – it is considered appropriate to explore opportunities with neighbouring Local Planning Authorities, in connection with meeting the identified needs of Sefton across local authority boundaries. In this regard we have sent this letter to Liverpool, West Lancs, Knowsley and Wirral Local Authorities.

Specifically I am seeking your Council's views about the ability to identify land for development within your Local Authority area to meet housing and/or economic development needs arising in Sefton. I would be grateful if your Council would consider this matter formally at executive level.

I am sure you will appreciate that any joint arrangement between Sefton and your authority would need to be reflected in our respective Local Plans. Accordingly, we would need to explore at an early stage whether this is possible and if so the necessary mechanisms for achieving this in practice, reflecting the way housing markets operate across Merseyside. It is also likely that any approach we adopt would need to follow on from the 2011 Liverpool City Region 'Housing and Economic Development Evidence Base Overview Study', which states at paragraph 1.28 that the *"political, physical, delivery and fiscal implications of sharing housing requirements and redistributing household demand"* would need to be addressed.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further with you and I look forward to receiving your Council's formal response in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Carney". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Margaret Carney
Chief Executive

CC. Head of Planning