



COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES

CABINET

Monday, 27 February 2017

CORE STRATEGY LOCAL PLAN -
REPORT OF FURTHER
CONSULTATION ON HOUSING NEED
AND LAND SUPPLY

Councillor Phil Davies, Leader of the Council - Strategic Economic Development, Finance and Devolution, said:

“Last week the Government announced its long awaited Housing White Paper. The headlines revealed plans to build 1,000,000 new homes by 2020.

“While this White Paper recognises the failure to build sufficient homes in the past has directly led to the current housing crisis, the policy does little to address the root causes of homelessness or the growing affordability and availability gaps especially for younger people and the needs of an ageing population.

“The Government's Top-Down House Building Target also puts pressure on our Green Belt. To meet the target, each local authority has to submit a Local Plan identifying how many and where new homes will be built. Wirral's housing needs assessment has been set at a minimum of 900 new homes every year for the next 15 years - 13,500 in total.

“The assessment also tells us we do not have enough land in Wirral currently allocated for housing to meet this target.

“The Council therefore must review the options available to it.

“We will review land currently identified for employment and explore regenerating other previously undeveloped urban sites; look at increasing housing densities; bringing empty properties back into use; and making landowners and developers such as Peel - owners of Wirral Waters - commence building the homes they have extant planning permission for.

“It is a requirement of the statutory Local Plan process that all options are reviewed including the Green Belt to meet these house building targets.

“Failing to explore all options, including Green Belt, or not submitting a Local Plan by March 2018 carries potential sanctions from Government.

“Not submitting a Local Plan also prevents local authorities from exercising proper planning control and leaves the Green Belt unprotected from speculative bids from builders and developers.

“Let me be clear, this Council will seek to meet its obligations and provide the homes needed to meet our economic growth ambitions; improve the quality of housing on offer for residents; and meet the needs of our most vulnerable people to enable them to live independently.

“We will achieve this by identifying all possible options for building new homes on existing sites and development locations. This administration is committed to not building on Wirral’s Green Belt.

“I have written to the Secretary of State asking him to reconsider his policies and instead provide local authorities with the resources to manage house building in the interest of residents not Government targets.

“Public consultation will commence in March 2017 and I encourage everyone to contribute ideas on these important issues which will affect us all.”

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out the results of consultation with the public and other stakeholders on the scale of the future need for housing and on the land that would be available to accommodate it.

As the results of consultation have not identified any significant additional development opportunities to meet the likely identified need for new housing, over and above the sites already included in the Council’s Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, this report recommends that officers are authorised to undertake and consult upon a wider review of potential development options, that would not at this stage commit the Council to any future land releases but would enable the Council to more precisely determine the environmental and other constraints that may apply to any future development sites, including land in the Green Belt designated in the Council’s existing Unitary Development Plan.

Further consultation on a wider range of potential development options would also enable the Council to demonstrate that the full range of available alternatives had been properly considered, in line with the requirements of national policy and legislation, before any final decision is taken on the content of the Borough’s Core Strategy Local Plan.

The decision to assess a wider range of potential development options is a procedural requirement and is not a key decision, as any key decision would not be

taken until after the necessary information has been prepared and consulted upon, through the consideration of a further report to Cabinet at a later date.

The recommendations, if approved, could support the delivery of the Wirral Plan pledge for good quality housing which meets the needs of residents; and Wirral Plan Housing Strategy objectives to build more homes to meet our economic growth ambitions and improve the quality of Wirral's housing offer for our residents.

The recommendations could also support the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and an increase in income through New Homes Bonus and Council Tax.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the results of further consultation on the Borough's housing needs and land supply are noted; and**
- (2) That the information arising from the consultation set out in the Appendices to this report is used to inform the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for April 2017; and**
- (3) That the Objectively Assessed Need for housing and employment is not determined until the Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA) has been completed and approved; and**
- (4) That the future designation of existing employment land is not determined until the Employment Land and Premises Study Update has been completed and approved; and**
- (5) That the future designation of existing open spaces is not determined until the Playing Pitch Strategy has been completed and approved; and**
- (6) That the Assistant Director for Environmental Services is authorised to consult the public and other stakeholders on a wider review of potential development options; and**
- (7) That the results of consultation on that wider review are reported to Cabinet before the content of the Draft Core Strategy Local Plan is finalised for submission to the Secretary of State.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To comply with the legal and procedural requirements necessary to complete the preparation and adoption of an up-to-date Core Strategy Local Plan for Wirral, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 National policy requires the Council to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing. Where it cannot do so, it risks losing appeals against the refusal of planning applications for housing, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against national policy as a whole.
- 2.2 The Council is also required to identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 in its Local Plan. Where it cannot do so and particularly if it also cannot identify a suitable five-year supply, it risks having its Local Plan declared 'unsound' by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State and will not be allowed to adopt its Local Plan unless it is altered to do so.
- 2.3 Not preparing an up-to-date Local Plan would mean that the Council would have to continue to rely on the Unitary Development Plan adopted in February 2000.
- 2.4 The national presumption in favour of sustainable development will be held to apply where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date (NPPF paragraph 14). Relevant policies will not be considered up-to-date if the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (NPPF, paragraph 49). In the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan or a five-year housing land supply, decisions on planning applications will have to be made in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, with policies in the Unitary Development Plan and Neighbourhood Development Plans prepared by the local community only carrying weight according to their consistency with the Framework.
- 2.5 Not preparing an up-to-date Local Plan may also incur financial penalties and the intervention of the Secretary of State.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Cabinet on 18 July 2016 (Minute 31 refers) resolved that further consultation should be undertaken on the Borough's housing needs and land supply, as part of the continued preparation of the Council's Core Strategy Local Plan.
- 3.2 Consultation took place over six weeks between 10 August and 23 September 2016 and 656 comments were received from 82 respondents.

Further details of the consultation undertaken and the comments received can be found in the Appendices to this report.

- 3.3 Consultation took place on two issues – on the need for new housing, set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update prepared by consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) (SHMA, May 2016); and on the land that would be available to accommodate it, set out in the Council's latest Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for April 2016 (SHLAA).

Housing Need

- 3.4 This is the first time that the Council has had to decide on its own housing requirement figure since the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy, which was intended to focus growth into the core of the conurbations of Liverpool and Manchester.
- 3.5 National policy now requires the Council to identify the objectively assessed need (OAN) for housing in its own area by preparing a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), to identify the scale and mix of housing which the local population is likely to need over the period that the Local Plan is intended to remain in force (NPPF, paragraph 159).
- 3.6 The calculation of OAN must not take policy considerations into account and plan makers should not apply constraints to the overall assessment of need, such as any limitations imposed by the supply of land for new development, historic under performance, viability, infrastructure or environmental constraints (NPPG, Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 2a-004-20140306).
- 3.7 Only once the OAN has been identified, can the Council then apply other considerations, such as environmental capacity, viability and growth ambitions, before arriving at the final housing requirement figure, which will be adopted through the Local Plan following public examination by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.
- 3.8 National policy requires authorities to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, paragraph 47).
- 3.9 Recent case law indicates that it is not sufficient to simply determine the maximum housing land supply available and constrain the housing requirement to that figure and that a distinct assessment must be made of whether specific policies dictate or justify constraint.

Objectively Assessed Needs for Wirral (OAN)

- 3.10 The SHMA prepared by NLP set out the recommended OAN for Wirral and how it was calculated, based on a number of scenarios designed to illustrate the main trends and pressures on the Borough, in terms of recent changes in population and market signals.

- 3.11 The OAN has two elements - the new homes needed for the local population; and the additional homes that may be needed to support economic growth, in terms of the number of working age people that would be needed to support a given number of jobs in the local economy.

Element 1 - The number of new homes needed for the local population – 15,750 additional new dwellings between 2014 and 2032 or an annual average of 875

- 3.12 The first element of OAN is calculated from the Government's national population and household projections and local plans are normally required to meet this element of objectively assessed need in full.
- 3.13 The SHMA showed that current local trends in the population, if they remain unaltered, will lead to an increasingly elderly population; a significant reduction in the number of people of working age; and a significant reduction in the number of jobs that could be supported by the local economy.
- 3.14 The calculations include an element of 'catch-up', to take account of economic circumstances which have recently affected the ability of people to form a new household and takes into account the unexpected increase in local population recorded in the 2011 Census, which has made previous estimates and projections unreliable. The calculations also include an uplift for market signals, to reflect local trends in prices, rents and affordability (by 5%) and for the Borough's need for affordable housing (by a further 10%), to reflect local incomes.
- 3.15 The final recommended figure of 875 per annum is significantly ahead of the previous requirement of 500 net new dwellings in the former Regional Spatial Strategy and is significantly ahead of recent rates of net housing completions in Wirral, which are currently no more than 500 per annum.
- 3.16 The most recent consultation on housing needs and land supply showed a general acceptance of the calculations set out in the SHMA, albeit with a variety of dissent over some of the details. A number of respondents were, however, concerned that the figures had not been based on the now more recent national 2014-based projections and about how they would relate to the wider City Region.
- 3.17 A new, more up-to-date analysis, which will address both these points, has already been commissioned as part of the Liverpool City Region SHELMA (see section 4.0 below).

Element 2 - the number of additional homes needed to support economic growth – 22,230 additional new dwellings between 2014 and 2032 or an annual average of 1,235

- 3.18 The second element of OAN is calculated from the number of jobs that are likely to be needed to allow for local economic growth.

- 3.19 The calculations reflect the age of migrants (mainly older people moving into the Borough from Liverpool and younger people moving out of the Borough to other areas for education and to find work) as well as the significant number of residents that travel daily out of the Borough to work in surrounding areas.
- 3.20 The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth (NPPF, paragraph 19). While local plans are normally expected to at least accommodate the latest reasonable baseline projection for future economic growth, in practice, it is up to the Council to decide whether this baseline figure should be adjusted upwards to meet any other policy, social or economic objectives.
- 3.21 Table 1 shows the levels of employment growth that were considered by the SHMA and their impact on the number of new homes that may need to be provided:

Table 1 – Employment Growth Scenarios (Wirral SHMA, May 2016)

SHMA Scenario	Change in Jobs Supported by 2032	Increase in Population by 2032	New Homes (Annual Average)	Total New Homes 2014 to 2032
Ai. Population-Based OAN	-2,085	+10,140	+757	+13,622
E. Oxford Economics (2014 baseline)	-5,500	+1,486	+188	+5,385
F. LEP 'policy-on' Job Growth (2014)	+8,800	+37,441	+1,304	+23,467
I. Experian baseline (December 2015)	+7,730	+34,439	+1,233	+22,191
G. Zero Job Growth	0	+14,912	+790	+14,213

- 3.22 Simply maintaining the number of jobs in the local economy, at the same level as existing (Scenario G – Zero Job Growth, above), would require both an above trend increase in the local population and a higher number of new homes to be provided.
- 3.23 The Wirral Growth Plan seeks to create and safeguard 5,000 new jobs by 2020.
- 3.24 The latest Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy (July 2016) now seeks to increase the number of jobs within the sub-region by 100,000 by 2040, of which 9,000 could be expected to be in Wirral, equivalent to up to 6,480 additional jobs to 2032.
- 3.25 A number of consultation responses on the SHMA showed scepticism about the amount of economic growth being considered for Wirral and also showed a concern about the likely impact of higher levels of migration into Wirral on the plans and aspirations of adjoining local authorities.
- 3.26 A new, more up-to-date analysis has already been commissioned as part of the Liverpool City Region SHELMA, to reflect the latest Liverpool City Region

Growth Strategy and address any relevant cross-boundary issues (see section 4.0 below).

Land Supply

- 3.27 The SHLAA (April 2016) showed that land for up to 8,900 new dwellings was likely to be available for development for housing within existing built-up areas within the next 15 years:

Table 2 – Existing Capacity of Identified Housing Sites (April 2016)

Source of Supply	Estimated Capacity (dwellings)	Cumulative Capacity (dwellings)
Land with planning permission	2,221	-
SHLAA Sites that could be developed with 5 years	1,249	3,470
SHLAA Sites that are only likely to become available with 6 to 10 years	1,443	4,913
SHLAA Sites that could also become available with 11 to 15 years	2,959	7,872
Land at Wirral Waters (within the plan period)	1,000	8,872

- 3.28 Calculations for the Council's statutory annual monitoring report show that the land that could be developed within the first five years (AMR December 2016, Appendix 3 refers) would be equivalent to a 2.9-year supply based on the lower level population-based OAN (SHMA Element 1) or a 2.0-year supply based on the higher level employment-based OAN (SHMA Element 2).
- 3.29 Over the whole fifteen-year plan period, even if all of the potential capacity identified in the SHLAA 2016, including a modest level of development at Wirral Waters, can be delivered, based on the latest information provided by the developer, there would still be a significant shortfall in the supply of future housing land in the Borough against the calculated OAN under both Elements.
- 3.30 Previously undeveloped land in the Green Belt has so far been excluded from these calculations.
- 3.31 Respondents to the most recent consultation on housing needs and land supply were specifically invited to identify any further sites that they thought could be used to provide additional housing to meet the needs identified in the SHMA. The results, set out in the Appendices to this report, have not identified any significant additional development opportunities to those already identified in the SHLAA within existing built-up areas.
- 3.32 The Council will now, therefore, need to urgently review the land supply options that are to be included within the Wirral Local Plan.

Land Supply Options

- 3.33 The Cabinet Report on 18 July 2016 set out seven main options for increasing the supply of housing land, which could be pursued together or apart.
- 3.34 A number of consultation responses indicated a general reluctance to see the further loss of employment sites or open space and the majority of comments supported the use of previously developed land. One respondent also believed that the scope for mixed uses, for example in town centres, was as yet unproven.
- 3.35 With regard to the Green Belt, opinion was almost equally divided between local residents and community groups, who wanted the Green Belt to remain unchanged; and developers, landowners and their agents, who believed that an immediate review of the Green Belt was now needed.
- 3.36 Table 3 below shows the potential capacity of the SHLAA sites included in Table 2 that are currently used or designated as employment sites or as previously undeveloped open space and the estimated scale of their potential contribution to each five year period.

Table 3 – Capacity of SHLAA Sites by Type (April 2016)

Source	Years 1 to 5 (dwellings)	Years 6 to 10 (dwellings)	Years 11 to 15 (dwellings)
Employment sites	78	287	1,332
Open space sites	264	446	433
Total	342	733	1,765
Percentage of five-year band	27%	51%	60%
Other previously developed sites	907	710	1,194
Total estimated capacity (excluding Wirral Waters)	1,249	1,443	2,959

Employment sites

- 3.37 While national policy indicates that authorities should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose (NPPF, paragraph 22), there is a limit on the number of sites that can be lost without harming the Borough's future employment prospects, particularly as the most recent Employment Land and Premises Study (2012) indicated that there could be a shortfall of suitable available land by the end of the plan period.
- 3.38 The Borough's future employment land needs are currently being re-assessed as part of the Liverpool City Region SHELMA and a review of the Borough's own Employment Land and Premises Study was commissioned in January 2017 (see sections 4.0 and 5.0 below).

Open space and other previously undeveloped urban land

- 3.39 The proportion of homes with planning permission on previously undeveloped land has already increased from 3% in March 2010 to 16% in April 2016.
- 3.40 The Council would be obliged to reconsider the re-designation of currently protected sites and/or significantly reduce the existing standard of recreation and open space provision, if any significant additional housing capacity was to be generated from this source. No proposal to undertake such a review has yet been approved.

Increasing densities

- 3.41 While the emerging Core Strategy Local Plan already seeks to promote higher densities of development around existing centres and along major transport corridors, to maximise the potential capacity of suitable available sites, any further increases are likely to have a significant impact on the character of existing urban areas which are not already protected by existing density controls or heritage-related designations.

Other local authorities

- 3.42 The surrounding local authorities of Sefton, Liverpool, Cheshire West and Chester, Knowsley and West Lancashire have each indicated that they would all be unable to provide for any of Wirral's identified needs.

Wirral Waters

- 3.43 The Council will need to be able to demonstrate that there is a reasonable prospect of the site actually coming forward, in terms of completed new dwellings to meet the Borough's identified housing needs, if it is to be included in calculations of the Borough's future land supply.
- 3.44 On the basis of the Council's existing Local Plan Viability Study Baseline Report, a maximum build-out rate of around 50 homes per year is assumed on larger sites. Recent consultation also indicates that house-builders would not currently seek to build more than 100 houses each year, in any one location, to avoid market saturation.
- 3.45 The Government has however recently announced a new £18m Capacity Fund, to speed up house building on large sites and has added Wirral to the national list of Housing Zones, which may further enhance the number of units that may be able to be delivered at Wirral Waters during the plan period.
- 3.46 A final decision on the amount of development at Wirral Waters that will be able to contribute to meeting the Borough's housing needs will ultimately need to be considered by the Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State, based on evidence related to the planning history, the record of

delivery and development viability, closer to the time of the independent examination of the Local Plan.

Green Belt

- 3.47 The only other remaining potential source of supply is land within the Borough's existing Green Belt, which should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan (NPPF, paragraph 83).
- 3.48 The Green Belt in Wirral was last defined by the Council in the Unitary Development Plan adopted in February 2000 and includes the majority of the open countryside that surrounds the main existing urban settlements within the Borough, covering approximately 45% of the Borough's land area.
- 3.49 The Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy, approved by Council in October 2012 (Minute 60 refers) already provides for a potential review of the Green Belt, if alternative sites sufficient to provide an ongoing land supply could not be identified by 2018 (Policy CS20 – Housing Contingencies, page 62 refers).
- 3.50 In Wirral's case, where the existing land supply is already significantly below objectively assessed needs (OAN), the Council would still be obliged to examine land within the Green Belt, if only to demonstrate that no other reasonable option was available when the proposed Local Plan is examined by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.
- 3.51 To do this, the Council would need to undertake and consult on an initial review, to investigate whether there would be any sites that could potentially be suitable for release from the Green Belt, in terms of the purposes of including land in the Green Belt set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The review will need to assess all the land in the Green Belt, including the sites that have already been submitted for consideration by landowners and developers.
- 3.52 The review, following consultation with relevant statutory agencies, utilities and other public service providers, would also allow the Council to determine how each site could potentially contribute to sustainable development and to identify the nature and extent of any wider constraints that could also determine whether any development should or should not take place.

Conclusion

- 3.53 Given these findings and the results of the most recent consultation on the Borough's housing needs and land supply, it is therefore recommended that the Assistant Director for Environmental Services is now authorised to undertake a wider review of potential development options and that no decision is taken on the future housing land supply to be included in the Core Strategy Local Plan until the results of further public and stakeholder consultation have been reported to Cabinet.

4.0 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION SHELMA

- 4.1 A City Region-wide Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA) was jointly commissioned by City Region Partners in March 2016, to further inform district Local Plans and the Statutory Spatial Framework to be prepared by the City Region Mayor to be elected in May 2017.
- 4.2 The SHELMA will review the housing and functional market areas across the City Region; update the objectively assessed needs (OAN) for the whole of the City Region, based on the Government's latest 2014-based population and household projections; and identify the future need for employment land, based on the LEP's latest Growth Strategy projections.
- 4.3 The SHELMA will also allow objectively assessed needs to be identified and calculated on a consistent basis and demonstrate that cross-boundary housing and employment issues have been fully taken into account, in order to satisfy the districts' legal Duty to Co-operate.
- 4.4 A draft SHELMA is due to be presented to the Combined Authority's Housing and Spatial Planning Board for approval for wider stakeholder consultation. It is, therefore, recommended that the OAN for housing and employment for Wirral is not determined until the final SHELMA has been completed and approved.

5.0 WIRRAL EMPLOYMENT LAND AND PREMISES STUDY UPDATE

- 5.1 The Employment Land and Premises Study Update, which was commissioned in January 2017, will re-assess the adequacy of the Borough's existing supply of employment land and premises and, alongside the findings of Liverpool City Region SHELMA, will identify the scope for any further release of employment sites for housing.
- 5.2 It is, therefore, recommended that the future designation of existing employment land in Wirral is not determined until the Employment Land and Premises Study Update has been completed and approved, currently expected to be in March 2017.

6.0 WIRRAL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY UPDATE

- 6.1 A number of respondents indicated that the more up-to-date findings of the Playing Pitch Strategy should also be included.
- 6.2 The Wirral Playing Pitch Strategy Update, which is waiting to be reported, is expected to show high levels of demand and use for all types of sport across all areas of the Borough. It is therefore recommended that the future designation of existing open spaces in Wirral is not determined until the Playing Pitch Strategy has been completed and approved.

7.0 STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT APRIL 2017

- 7.1 The site-specific comments submitted to the SHLAA April 2016, including any new, deleted and amended sites; and the findings of the LCR SHELMA, the Employment Land and Premises Study Update and the Playing Pitch Strategy Update; will need to be addressed in the SHLAA Update for April 2017.
- 7.2 Paragraph 5.11 of the SHLAA Methodology (Stage 4 – Assessment Review) already provides for the SHLAA assessment to be reviewed, where insufficient sites have been identified to meet objectively assessed need within the urban area, to reconsider the development potential of each site and to assess whether any identified constraints could be overcome more quickly; or to consider whether it would be appropriate to meet any shortfall through other means, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, through proposals to be contained within the Core Strategy Local Plan.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The timetable for the preparation of the Core Strategy Local Plan will need to be amended to reflect the findings of this report.
- 8.2 Assuming that any additional consultation could be undertaken alongside the completion of the other associated evidence-base documents, mentioned above, with the findings included in a revised Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan by September 2017, the Local Plan could be submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination in early 2018.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Consultation on the SHMA (May 2016) and SHLAA (April 2016) cost £2,500, which was paid from the Environmental Services, Forward Planning budget.
- 9.2 The preparation of and consultation on a wider review of potential development options, including land within the Green Belt, can at this stage be undertaken using existing resources from the Environmental Services, Forward Planning budget. The identification of specific sites may, however, at a later stage, require further technical studies to be undertaken, for example, related to transport and infrastructure requirements and environmental assessments, which may require additional funding to be identified at a later date.
- 9.3 Additional house-building could support the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and could support an increase in income through Council Tax and New Homes Bonus, subject to exceeding the annual threshold for the award of New Homes Bonus.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Core Strategy Local Plan for Wirral must be prepared in line with the process set out in national legislation and can only be adopted by the Council

if it is found to be legally compliant and sound by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State after public examination.

- 10.2 To be sound, a local plan must be: positively prepared, to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements; justified, in terms of being the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives; effective, in terms of being deliverable and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and be consistent with national policy, by delivering sustainable development in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, paragraph 182).
- 10.3 To be legally compliant, the local plan must be prepared to fully comply with national legislation and regulations, including the Duty to Co-operate.
- 10.4 The Council will not be able to successfully submit a Core Strategy Local Plan to public examination without basing its housing requirement on up-to-date evidence of objectively assessed need or without being able to demonstrate a credible five-year housing land supply and the broad locations for future housing land supply over the rest of the fifteen-year plan period to 2032, in line with the requirements of national policy.
- 10.5 The Council has a legal Duty to Co-operate with named public bodies including adjoining local authorities and national agencies. A failure to comply with the Duty to Co-operate can be fatal to the legal compliance of the Local Plan and could require the Core Strategy to be withdrawn.
- 10.6 The Council must also comply with its own statutory Statement of Community Involvement, last adopted in March 2014.
- 10.7 The approval of the final Draft Core Strategy Local Plan will require a resolution of Council before it can be published and submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination.

11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 11.1 The Council's Core Strategy Local Plan is prepared by the Council's Forward Planning Service, supported by other teams responsible for housing, regeneration, transport, economic development and public service delivery.
- 11.2 New housing development currently attracts New Homes Bonus at a rate linked to the Council Tax banding of each new dwelling constructed or empty property brought back into use once the number of new dwellings has exceeded a baseline target of 0.4% of dwelling stock in Band D equivalents, with a £350 premium for every new affordable dwelling provided.
- 11.3 New housing will also have implications for other Council services, including transport, education, social services and the Wirral Growth Plan, which are still to be determined through consultation.

12.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 12.1 Not modifying the Core Strategy Local Plan to address the issues identified in the SHMA and SHLAA could lead to the Core Strategy being withdrawn, with abortive costs and/or unnecessary time and expense being incurred at a future public examination.
- 12.2 A failure to comply with the requirements of national policy, for example by not making adequate provision for viable new development to meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change or to comply with the Duty to Co-operate, can be fatal to the legal compliance and soundness of the Core Strategy.
- 12.3 There may be a need to revise the final number of new homes to be provided, either before or during the public examination, to take account of any new or emerging evidence, including the implications of any more up-to-date population and household projections and the findings of the emerging Liverpool City Region SHELMA.
- 12.4 A failure to have a Local Plan in place by March 2018 could lead to intervention by the Secretary of State under new powers introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016, including potential financial penalties, which could include the withdrawal of some or all, of the Council's annual award of New Homes Bonus.
- 12.5 Payments under the New Homes Bonus are also under continual review and could be amended, in terms of the amount and duration of payments for each new home completed.
- 12.6 The latest information indicates that the Government will move towards five-year payments in 2017/18 (compared to six-year payments at present) and then to four-year payments from 2018/19; and that only new homes in excess of 0.4% of the previous year's total housing stock will now qualify, equivalent in Wirral, in 2017/18, to 600 dwellings or above. The national average growth in Band D equivalent properties for all local authorities in 2015/16 was 0.94%

13.0 ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION

- 13.1 The SHMA (May 2016) and SHLAA (April 2016) were made subject to public consultation for six weeks between 10 August and 23 September 2016 and drew 656 comments from 82 respondents. Further details of the consultation undertaken and the comments received can be found in the Appendices to this report.
- 13.2 A wider review of potential development options, including land within the Green Belt, would need to be completed in consultation with the public and other stakeholders, in line with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (March 2014).

- 13.3 The Statement of Community Involvement would require a minimum six-week period of consultation, including the need to notify the neighbours of any site specific proposals (SCI, Table 1, page 13; and paragraphs 3.52 and 3.56, page 16 refer).
- 13.4 Consultation would take the form of a series of documents - both on-line and in paper copies placed for inspection in public libraries - including maps of the sites involved; the methods of analysis used; and a summary of the Council's initial findings and conclusions, for public comment before any final decision is taken.
- 13.5 The results of any additional consultation will be reported back to Cabinet before any findings are included in the final Draft Core Strategy Local Plan.

14.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The Core Strategy has been subject to ongoing Equality Impact Assessment.
- 14.2 Results of previous Equality Impact Assessments prepared at each stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan-0>
- 14.3 While the delivery of housing to meet identified housing needs can have positive implications for all groups, consultation at this stage will only relate to the numbers of new homes and the amount of land required, rather than the impact on any specific or particular group, which will be the subject of a separate further report when the necessary final information has been prepared.
- 14.4 A revised Equality Impact Assessment will therefore be presented alongside the final proposals to be included in the final Core Strategy Local Plan.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Summary of Consultation Findings
Appendix 2 – Report of Consultation
Appendix 3 – Plans of New Sites Submitted
Appendix 4 – Plans of Amended Sites Submitted
Appendix 5 – Plans of Other New Sites Submitted

REFERENCE MATERIAL

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update (NLP, May 2016) can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan/further-0>

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA, April 2016) can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-4>

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) can be viewed at <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/>

The Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy Local Plan (December 2012) can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan-0>

The Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI, March 2014) can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/community-involvement-local-planning/statement>

The announcement of the Wirral Housing Zone can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-18-million-fund-to-accelerate-house-building>

The Government's latest statement on the New Homes Bonus can be viewed at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/577904/NHB_Consultation_Response_Doc.pdf

The Council's latest Annual Monitoring Report (December 2016) can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/development-monitoring/annual-monitoring-1>

The Government's Housing White Paper (February 2017) can now be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-ambitious-plan-to-build-the-homes-britain-needs>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet - Core Strategy Local Plan - Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (Minute 31)	18 July 2016
Delegated Report - Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment	24 November 2015