

ITEM No. 15

REPORT TO: PLANNING COMMITTEE
CABINET

DATE: 16 MAY 2007
17 MAY 2007

SUBJECT: SEFTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: PREPARATION
OF THE CORE STRATEGY

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

REPORT OF: ANDY WALLIS, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC REGENERATION
DIRECTOR

CONTACT OFFICER: STEVE MATTHEWS - 934 3559

**EXEMPT/
CONFIDENTIAL:** NO

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

To explain what the Core Strategy is, to say how we intend to prepare it (including setting up a 'sounding board' or working group of key members), and to note that this report marks the formal start of the process of preparing the Core Strategy.

REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:

To meet the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Regulations in relation to the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Planning Committee

1. Note that this report marks the start of the process of preparing the Core Strategy
2. Note the financial, staff and other resources required to prepare the Core Strategy and approve the use of unallocated Planning Delivery Grant to fund this programme
3. Agree to the Planning Spokespersons being part of a working group to guide the process of preparing the Core Strategy
4. Approve the following recommendations to Cabinet

Cabinet

1. Note that this report marks the start of the process of preparing the Core Strategy
2. Note the financial, staff and other resources required to prepare the Core Strategy and approve the use of unallocated Planning Delivery Grant to fund this programme
3. Agree that the Cabinet members for Regeneration, Environmental and Communities be nominated to join the working group as set out in para 7.1 of the report

KEY DECISION: No

FORWARD PLAN: N/A

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: Following the expiry of the call-in period for the minutes of the Cabinet meeting

ITEM NO. 15

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

None, the preparation of the Core Strategy is a statutory requirement

IMPLICATIONS:

Budget/Policy Framework: Supports the implementation of Corporate Plan Strategic Objective 7

Financial:

See paragraphs 6.7 & 6.8 of this report.

An earlier report to Cabinet (22 March 07) on the Local Development Scheme gave an estimate of costs for the production of a number of documents. This report updates those estimates in relation to the preparation of the Core Strategy which will be the most costly to produce.

The total cost over the three years 2007/08–2009/10 is estimated at approximately £225,000 as set out at para 6.7, most of which will fall within 2007-08. It is proposed that these costs would be largely funded from existing revenue budgets in the form of the unallocated balance of previous Planning Delivery Grant awards.

£35,000 out of the provisional estimate of £50-60,000 (at current prices) for public examination costs, identified in the 22 March report, will be likely to fall within the year 2010 - 11.

<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>	2007/ 2008 £	2008/ 2009 £	2009/ 2010 £	2010/ 2011 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

Legal: N/A

Risk Assessment: The key risk is not being able to keep to the timetable for the Core Strategy as set out in the Local Development Scheme. One of the consequences is losing Planning Delivery Grant. This risk will be minimised by adopting a rigorous project management approach.

Asset Management: N/A

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS

None

ITEM NO. 15

CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community	✓		
2	Creating Safe Communities	✓		
3	Jobs and Prosperity	✓		
4	Improving Health and Well-Being	✓		
5	Environmental Sustainability	✓		
6	Creating Inclusive Communities	✓		
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	✓		
8	Children and Young People	✓		

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Planning Together - Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Spatial Planning: a practical guide (DCLG) January 2007

ITEM NO. 15

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Members will now be aware of the major changes to the development plan system which is now known as the Local Development Framework (LDF). This will gradually replace the Unitary Development Plan.
- 1.2 In March Members approved the Local Development Scheme (LDS) – a three year project plan setting out the various documents which we intend to prepare. In addition to the Core Strategy, the LDS includes a series of shorter documents addressing the needs of specific areas (e.g. development in the Housing Market Renewal priority neighbourhoods) or topics (e.g. urban greenspace). A diagram showing the relationship between these documents is appended at **Annex A**.
- 1.3 A major difference in the new system is that it covers more than land-use planning. It deals with a whole variety of issues which affect our communities and the places we live in e.g. health, employment, housing, safety. The term “spatial planning” is used to describe this wider scope.

2. Why is the Core Strategy important?

- 2.1 It is the key document in the new system and its ‘soundness’ will be subject to close scrutiny as demonstrated by recent decisions by the Planning Inspectorate. Amongst other things it will be expected to show a very clear relationship to the Sustainable Community Strategy approved by the Local Strategic Partnership. It is meant to set out the key elements of the planning framework for the Borough looking ahead over a period of 15-20 years. It is a strategic level document which will gradually provide the overview for all the documents in an authority’s Local Development Framework.
- 2.2 It is at this level that difficult decisions and choices need to be made e.g.
 - ◇ do any settlements in the Borough need to expand to meet the need for new homes and businesses over this time period?
 - ◇ how should new development make sure that it reduces, not adds to, the effects of climate change?

3. What will the Core Strategy cover?

- 3.1 The Core Strategy needs to relate clearly to documents at a number of levels. It needs to reflect national policy guidance, it should ‘conform with’ the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy, and it will take account of Merseyside-wide documents such as the Liverpool City Region Development Plan and the Merseyside Economic Strategy and Action Plan.
- 3.2. It also must relate closely to the Sustainable Community Strategy. In fact government guidance stresses that the LDF Core Strategy is one of the ways in which the Community Strategy is to be implemented – the Core Strategy should set out the implications of the Community Strategy for different parts of the Borough. In January 2007 the Government produced a guidance document for LSPs– *Planning Together* – to explain the significance of this relationship.
- 3.3 Like the Community strategy, the Core Strategy must include a vision for the Borough. In particular, it should consider the key issues the Borough is currently facing or could anticipate over the next 15-20 years. Two of these are mentioned in paragraph 2.2. Others might include:

ITEM NO. 15

- ◇ where will we provide the new homes required in accordance with the Regional Spatial Strategy, and what policies do we need to ensure a balance between market demand and affordability?
 - ◇ what kinds of new employment do we need to provide for over this period?
 - ◇ what land needs to be allocated for this purpose, having regard to the economic and housing market linkages with our neighbouring authorities?
 - ◇ should we continue to focus regeneration on the same areas as we do at the moment?
 - ◇ will any changes be needed to the boundaries of the Green Belt and our policies for the use and management of the open land within it?
 - ◇ how much new shopping development will be needed, and should it be concentrated in existing centres or is there scope for further shops outside town centres?
 - ◇ how should we respond locally to the challenge of climate change including the increased risk of flooding ?
 - ◇ what new transport and other infrastructure is required to support development and regeneration, and how can we make sure people can get to local services by a variety of means of transport?
 - ◇ in particular how can we best accommodate the likely continued growth of the Port?
 - ◇ what policies do we need to develop with our local partners to contribute to healthier lifestyles and community safety?
 - ◇ what new policies are needed to safeguard the quality of our coastal and countryside environment?
- 3.4 The Core Strategy should set out how, at the strategic level, issues such as this will be addressed, which partners need to be involved, where the funding will come from, and make clear what progress is anticipated within given timescales.

4. How does this approach differ from the Unitary Development Plan?

- 4.1 Many of these questions may seem similar to those covered in our Unitary Development Plan (UDP). But the Government require us to adopt a different approach to preparing documents under the LDF. We are encouraged to be much more closely with a wide range of partners in order to make better (more 'sustainable') communities.
- 4.2 This approach is based on knowing the needs of the local community and others with an interest in the Borough. It demands that we assemble sound evidence as the basis of any action we propose. It depends on different partners working together to resolve often complex issues. And it relies on these partners contributing funds from different sources to make sure things happen.
- 4.3 Issues are meant to be tackled in a different way from that often used in the UDP. For example, a typical policy approach to health issues in the UDP might have been to allocate a site for new health facilities. The new approach requires a greater understanding of what is causing the health problems (poor housing? air pollution? lack of accessible green spaces?). Then a strategy should be proposed, in consultation with health professionals, other partners and the wider community, to address these. This might comprise the following:
- ◇ HMR could tackle the poor housing
 - ◇ a range of schemes could be proposed to reduce poor air quality
 - ◇ a green spaces strategy could seek to provide more accessible open space.

ITEM NO. 15

This approach requires a much closer working relationship with other agencies, including a clear understanding of who is going to fund the required action, and agreeing timescales with key partners.

- 4.4 The document is examined in a different way too. Gone is the traditional Local Public Inquiry where the Inspector hears all objections. The Core Strategy will be examined against nine 'tests of soundness' (attached at **Annex B**). This may result in the Inspector examining issues to which no-one has raised an objection. This examination is rigorous and challenging and some authorities (including Stafford and Lichfield Councils) have already been advised that their Core Strategy is 'unsound', and others authorities have withdrawn submitted strategies. This requires them to make a significant review of all their preparatory work at great time and cost. It is therefore critical that we get it right first time.

5. Timescale

- 5.1 The timescale set out in the Local Development Scheme for preparing the Core Strategy is as follows:
- ◇ Feb–April 2008: Consultation on 'Issues and options'
 - ◇ Oct–Nov 2008: Consultation on 'Preferred options'
 - ◇ October 2009: Core Strategy is submitted to Secretary of State for examination
 - ◇ June 2010: Examination
 - ◇ December 2010: Adoption
- 5.2 At first sight this may appear to be a very generous timescale. However, a number of major studies is needed to make sure that the evidence is strong enough on key matters such as the potential for new housing within the urban area, or the amount of available employment land. In reality, the timetable is tight because of the many steps we need to take to ensure that the strategy and policies are soundly based.
- 5.3 There are also strict requirements for two other features of the new planning system:
- ◇ a sustainability appraisal must be carried out at each stage of the process to make sure the Core Strategy promotes 'sustainable communities'
 - ◇ significant consultation is expected to be carried out at each stage of preparing the Strategy, but particularly at the early stages, so people have the most opportunity to make their views known before plans begin to firm up.
- 5.4 Failure to meet the timescales we include in our Local Development Scheme means that the authority receives less Planning Delivery Grant. There is therefore a financial incentive to keep to our targets.
- 5.5 There will also be an opportunity to link some of these consultation and evidence-gathering activities to similar work required for the review of the Community Strategy, and this will be pursued in consultation with the Sefton Borough Partnership.

6. What resources do we need?

- 6.1 In order to meet all the requirements of the planning system within the timescales we are committed to, we will need to ensure appropriate resources

ITEM NO. 15

in a number of different areas. The costs are set out in a table at the end of this section.

Staff

- 6.2 Some of our LDF team are on temporary contracts which we will need to extend. We may also need to employ consultants with specialist skills to assist with consultation or with sustainability appraisal. This is in addition to engaging consultants to help carry out the studies listed in the following paragraph. We may also need to engage temporary staff to assist with the intensive fieldwork required for the urban housing potential study.

Information

- 6.3 We need to up-to-date information on a variety of issues. This is known as the 'evidence base'. Areas include:
- (a) employment – how much land is available in the Borough for employment
 - (b) housing – what is the scope for further housing within the built-up area
 - (c) retailing – how much new shopping provision do we need and in what parts of the Borough?
 - (d) flood risk – we are required to carry out a flood risk assessment to agree areas suitable for new building
 - (e) green space – a study is already well under way looking at what we have already and to make sure all communities are well served.

Further information on this is contained in **Annex C**.

- 6.4 Specific studies need to be carried out for (a) – (c) within the next 12-15 months. Ideally (a) and (b) would be carried out jointly by all the Merseyside authorities but this is not proving possible as some authorities have already started work or have different priorities. However, it may be possible to work with one or two of the adjoining authorities.

Publishing documents

- 6.5 Presenting proposals in the right form and in a more timely manner will be a key feature of the new system. To satisfy this requirement, we are investigating a new approach to publishing documents. This specially-designed software creates a template structure for all stages of the preparation process, which is web-enabled and facilitates speedier document production and on-line consultation. This would help to meet e-Government requirements.
- 6.6 Although further investigation is required before a commitment can be made, the costs of this software are likely to be just under £40,000 initially and about £8,000 each year to receive updates and technical support. Initial assessment suggests this could be a worthwhile investment given that the Core Strategy is one of 11 documents we are preparing over the next three years, each of which has either two or three formal drafts before the final version. (Merseyside EAS which is responsible for preparing the Joint Waste Plan under the new planning system already uses this approach).

Financial implications

- 6.7 The financial implications have already been broadly covered by a report to Cabinet on 22 March 2007. The previous paragraphs in this section add more detail to the information in that report, and relevant costs are identified in the following table. It is anticipated that these would be met from the unallocated balance of previous Planning Delivery Grant awards.

ITEM NO. 15

	Cost £ '000
Studies (see Annex C)	125
Staff – extension to existing contract, + temporary support to assist with urban housing study	30
Publishing and consultation software	40
Consultation (see para 5.3)	15
Sustainability Appraisal (see para 5.3)	15
Total cost	225

6.8 In addition, around £35,000 out of the provisional estimate of £50-60,000 (at current prices) for public examination costs, identified in the 22 March report, will be likely to fall within the year 2010 -11.

7. Involving members

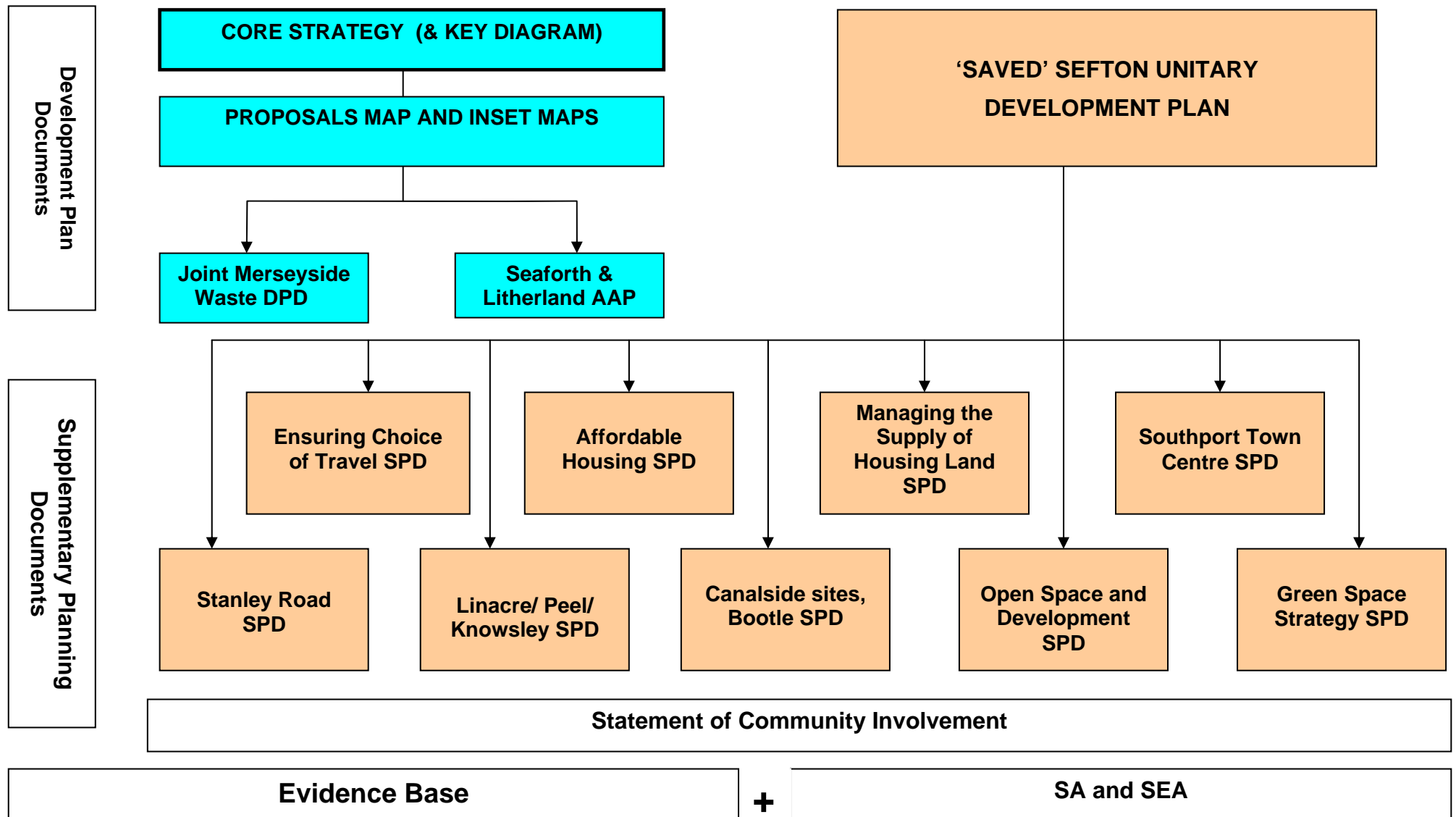
7.1 As will be noted from section 3 of this report, the issues to be considered by the Core Strategy are complex. In keeping with practice established in other authorities it is suggested that key Members and representatives of the Sefton Borough Partnership be involved from an early stage as a sounding board to discuss key issues. It is therefore proposed to set up an informal 'working group comprising the three Planning spokespersons, and Cabinet members for Communities, Environmental and Regeneration. It is also recommended that the Borough Partnership be invited to nominate two of its membership. This group would meet with officers and provide informal views. Cabinet (or Council) would still have to make the formal decisions.

7.2 The Core Strategy can make a major contribution to achieving the Council and Borough Partnership's objectives, so we will be investigating other ways of raising its profile and enabling others to make a contribution. These might include:

- ◇ workshops with members
- ◇ workshops with SBP members

in order to explain how the new planning system works and how people can contribute effectively to the Core Strategy.

Diagram 1 - Relationships between Local Development Documents



The nine “tests of soundness”

Extract from Planning Policy Statement (PPS)12: setting out the tests of soundness relating to development plan documents.

“The presumption will be that the development plan document is sound unless it is shown to be otherwise as a result of evidence considered at the examination. The criteria for assessing whether a development plan document is sound will apply individually and collectively to policies in the development plan document. A development plan document will be sound if it meets the following tests:

Procedural

- i** it has been prepared in accordance with the local development scheme;
- ii** it has been prepared in compliance with the statement of community involvement, or with the minimum requirements set out in the Regulations where no statement of community involvement exists;
- iii** the plan and its policies have been subjected to sustainability appraisal;

Conformity

- iv** it is a spatial plan which is consistent with national planning policy and in general conformity with the regional spatial strategy for the region or, in London, the spatial development strategy and it has properly had regard to any other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area or to adjoining areas;
- v** it has had regard to the authority’s community strategy;

Coherence, consistency and effectiveness

- vi** the strategies/policies/allocations in the plan are coherent and consistent within and between development plan documents prepared by the authority and by neighbouring authorities, where cross boundary issues are relevant;
- vii** the strategies/policies/allocations represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives, and they are founded on a robust and credible evidence base;
- viii** there are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring; and
- ix** the plan is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances. Where the development plan document relates to housing, local planning authorities should produce housing trajectories which will demonstrate how the plan will deliver the policies relating to housing provision. This will be important in clarifying the delivery mechanisms of the development plan document which will be part of the test of whether it is sound.”

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004

ITEM NO. 15

Annex C

Evidence base – costs of studies

Study	Purpose	Partners	Budget (anticipated)	Whether consultants. using Lead member of staff + others who will be involved	Expected date of commissioning	Expected date of conclusion
Green space strategy	To draft new standards for green space and to bring a strategic approach to management and enhancement of green space resource	Mersey Forest, PCT, EAS, other Depts	Additional consultation required. Type/cost not yet known.	No consultants. SRM + AOC, Katrine Heath, technical support	In progress	Consultation on draft SPD Sept-Oct 07
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	To provide up to date analysis of flood risk based on latest predictions about climate change	Environment Agency		Consultants? AOC, MD. Tech Services Andrea O'Connor, Michael	Not yet known	Not yet known
Housing Needs Survey 2007/Housing Market Assessment	To establish the up to date quantitative affordable and special housing needs within Sefton and its local housing market areas	Local RSLs and developers	£50K	Fordham Research	July 2007	October 2007
Retail Strategy Review 2007 and Health Checks for Bootle and Southport	To update the retail capacity and needs of Sefton and undertake updated Health checks of Bootle and Southport.	N/a	£15K	White Young Green	October 2007	End February 2008

ITEM NO. 15

District, Local Centres and Shopping Parades Study	To update the 2004 study on the health of Sefton's district, local and shopping parades, consistent with the advice PPS3	N/a	£12K	White Young Green	April 2008	July 2008
Employment Land and Premises Study	To assess the Borough's supply and demand of land and premises for employment, consistent with the advice in the 'Employment Land Reviews: Guidance Note' (2004)	Possibly undertake with neighbouring authorities i.e. Knowsley and West Lancashire	£25 to 30k	Likely that we will undertake the supply study in house and appoint consultants to assess demand.	Started with in house supply study. Further stages dependent on brief which is being prepared	End February 2008
Urban Housing Capacity Study	To update the deliverable urban housing capacity of the Borough	Possibly undertake with neighbouring authorities i.e. Knowsley and West Lancashire	£30K	Likely that we will undertake the supply study in house and appoint consultants to assess its adequacy.	Dependent on brief which is being prepared	End February 2008