

Towards a Spatial Development Strategy for the Liverpool City Region up to 2040 Engagement, November 2023, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the LCRCA?

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) is led by Mayor Steve Rotheram and brings together the city region's six local authorities – Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral. It is a formally constituted strategic authority with powers over transport, economic development and regeneration.

What is an SDS?

The Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) is a statutory land-use planning document. It will set out a framework for building and development in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) looking ahead for at least the next 15 years.

The strategy will be the first of its kind for the LCR covering the local authority areas of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool City, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral, known as the 'constituent' local authorities.

The SDS must only deal with planning matters that are of strategic importance to the LCR. These may not affect all areas, but will have significance for the wider interests of the city region. Key strategic planning matters include:

- Housing
- Economy and employment
- Town centres
- Infrastructure
- Natural and historic environment

The LCR SDS will therefore be high level, leaving more detailed, locally specific policies to be covered in Local Plans prepared by the local authorities, reflecting their local circumstances.

The SDS must also set out how spatial development aspects of other LCRCA policies and proposals will be dealt with. This will allow the SDS to support and deliver a range of key Mayoral Combined Authority objectives and priorities, such as growing the economy, employment and skills, housing, transport, innovation, the environment and culture as part of an integrated, joined-up approach.

What is this document that you are engaging on now?

'Towards a Spatial Development Strategy for the Liverpool City Region' is a document representing the next stage of the SDS's development. It seeks to build on both feedback received from earlier stages of engagement, and the evidence base prepared to date. Comments received on this document will help to inform the development of the SDS as it moves towards the formal, regulatory stage, known as 'public participation'.

Why is the CA producing an SDS?

Devolution means that Liverpool City Region Mayor Steve Rotheram has strategic planning powers to help accelerate economic growth throughout the region. A central

requirement of the Devolution deal is a commitment that the Combined Authority prepares a SDS outlining our long-term ambitions for the shape of our area.

Producing an SDS allows the LCR to develop its own distinctive planning strategy in response to the issues and opportunities present here – in keeping with the principles of devolution.

What are the benefits of an SDS?

There are many benefits of an SDS. Firstly, it sets the strategic priorities for the city region and sets the broad scale and distribution of growth over the plan period up to 2040. This means that infrastructure can be planned across the same geography, irrespective of administrative boundaries and the benefits and impacts on existing and new residents can be assessed on the same scale, recognising that most people do not just live and work within their local authority boundary.

Secondly, the SDS can help deliver sustainable development by enabling us to tackle high level cross-boundary planning challenges, such as climate change, deprivation and health inequalities more effectively and maximise economic growth and environmental management and enhancement opportunities by planning at the sub-regional scale.

Thirdly, by demonstrating that the City Region partners can work together to deliver a strategic-scale SDS, we show ourselves and government that the CA is the appropriate body for strategic planning matters to accelerate economic growth and develop our own distinctive planning strategy in response to the issues and opportunities present here. Therefore, through further devolution, greater planning powers should be devolved to local decision makers.

Do other city regions have SDSs?

Greater London is currently the only other area in the country that has a published Spatial Development Strategy – known as ‘The London Plan’.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority has been working since 2014 to deliver a Spatial Framework for its nine boroughs. The Places for Everyone is a different type of strategic planning document from the LCR SDS and is at an advanced stage being at its Examination stage.

It is possible other areas may produce Spatial Development Strategies in future under new legislation (Levelling-up and Regeneration Act, October 2023).

How does the SDS relate to other LCRCAs policies, strategies and the Mayor’s ambitions?

Devolution allows the Metro Mayor and Combined Authority to address the issues that are most relevant to the LCR and its people through a range of approaches and measures. The SDS forms part of a joined-up approach with other LCRCAs policies, strategies and initiatives and help in their delivery as part of a comprehensive, holistic approach to delivering positive change across the city region. This approach, and a summary of the various other LCRCAs polices, strategies and initiatives, is covered in chapter 2 of the SDS ‘A Joined-Up Approach’.

How does this SDS relate to Local and Neighbourhood Plans?

When it is adopted, the SDS will form part of the 'Development Plan' for the city region along with Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. This means the SDS and the policies within, will need to be considered when planning applications are being determined.

The SDS is a strategic level plan and it, and its evidence base, can be used to shape planning policy at the local and neighbourhood levels. Local Plans will need to be in general conformity with the SDS and Neighbourhood Plans will need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and SDS. As a strategic plan, the SDS does not cover everything that a Local Plan would. The six local authorities within the LCRCA will continue to produce their own Local Plans, setting out more detailed policies including both strategic and non-strategic policies, as appropriate, reflecting local circumstances.

When adopted, what does the SDS mean in practice for planning applications?

The SDS is a statutory planning document. This means that when published it will form part of the 'Development Plan' across the city region along with Local Plans (and other Development Plan Documents) and any Neighbourhood Plans.

As planning applications must be determined in accordance with the 'Development Plan', (unless there are sound planning reasons (other material considerations) which would indicate otherwise), this means that the SDS's policies will, where relevant, need be taken into account when planning decisions are taken all over the city region.

Under legislation relating to the Combined Authority's planning functions, certain planning applications made to local authorities that qualify as applications of 'potential strategic importance (PSI)' will be referred to the Combined Authority in order for their compliance with SDS policies to be assessed. Depending on circumstances, it will also be possible for the Combined Authority to 'call in' applications for determination. Further details on the process by which these functions are to be exercised will be set out closer to the SDS's finalisation.

How will the SDS help us achieve net zero?

Spatial planning can play a big part in helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions (including carbon dioxide) from sources such as transport, energy generation and in the construction and operation of the buildings we use. It can also help ensure carbon dioxide is captured or 'sequestered' through green infrastructure such as trees, peatland and other natural environmental features.

The achievement of net zero carbon is a central objective of the SDS with a range of measures to secure reductions in carbon emissions set out across multiple policies - particularly Policy LCR DP1 - Planning for Climate Change. The SDS will work alongside other Liverpool City Region Combined Authority strategies, plans and priority projects such as the 5 Year Climate Action Plan as part of a joined-up approach in the wider achievement of net zero.

How will the SDS create and support more jobs?

Spatial planning plays a key role in the provision of land and sites for a wide range of employment generating uses. The SDS sets a requirement for the minimum amount of

employment land to be planned for in the city region looking ahead to 2040. By planning ahead for the right amount of employment land, in the right locations, this provides certainty for business and employers to invest in facilities and premises, and in turn help support and create employment and training opportunities.

More generally, as the SDS concerns the development of all aspects of the built environment such as homes, commercial and industrial buildings and infrastructure, it can offer certainty to the development and construction sector, which in turn can secure investment and generate jobs.

How can the SDS improve health and wellbeing?

Health and wellbeing across the city region population is influenced by the social determinants of health. These include access to green, open space, air and environmental policy, access to public transport and the opportunity for active travel, and good quality housing. Through a range of approaches and measures, the SDS can make sure that new development is in the right place to encourage more walkable and liveable neighbourhoods, increase access to more affordable, healthier foods, walking and cycling, more social interaction and better access to high quality built and natural environments.

What about infrastructure?

The SDS is supported by a Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP). The SIP identifies current, funded, planned, and aspirational strategic infrastructure that will be required to support the SDS priorities and growth ambitions up to 2040, whilst also examining future infrastructure requirements up to 2045. The SIP will be a live document that will be used to plan for the delivery of strategic infrastructure during the SDS plan period, as well as to guide Combined Authority policy, investment, and planning decisions. The SIP can be viewed here: www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/sdsengagement

What has happened so far, to get to where we are? How is the SDS being prepared?

The Metro Mayor and Combined Authority are committed to ensuring local people have opportunity to genuinely influence policy and decision making. It is important that the SDS is prepared and shaped with input from the people, communities and businesses who it will affect.

Early stages of public engagement on the SDS, as part of the 'LCR Listens - Our Places' programme comprising of two phases of engagement, provided valuable feedback on the key strategic planning challenges facing the city region and the opportunities to address them. The first phase of engagement was held from October 16th to January 14th, 2020, and was followed by Stage 2 from November 10th to February 1st, 2021. Details of engagement carried out so far are available here: www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/sdsengagement

I've commented previously on earlier stages of the SDS - how have my comments been taken into account?

We understand how important it is for us to be open and transparent about how your comments and suggestions are used, particularly for engaging meaningfully to hear feedback from local people. As a result, we've shown how your comments have shaped our policies. Reports summarising the previous engagements and responses can be

found at: www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/sdsengagement (stage 2 engagement - look for the 'We Asked, You Said, We Did document') and www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/sds (stage 1 engagement).

Does the SDS set a housing requirement for the City Region and individual local authorities? How many homes need to be built?

The SDS sets a minimum number of homes (83,600) to be planned for across the LCR between 2021-2040. The minimum annual requirement across the city region is 4,400 homes. The findings of the Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) (2023) which assesses future housing need across the LCR, taking into account population and household projections, affordable housing needs and forecast economic growth, has informed this requirement.

The SDS also sets a minimum housing requirement for each of the six LCR local authorities, this has been informed by the findings of the HEDNA and the existing local authority's Local Plan evidence. The HEDNA which has been prepared as evidence base for the SDS is available on the LCRCAs website: www.liverpoolcityregion.gov.uk/sdsengagement

Why do we need to build so many houses?

Central government identifies the process that must be followed in setting housing requirements. The identified levels of housing need are based on a range of factors, including population, household projections, and affordability of housing. The LCRCAs also needs to ensure that it provides sufficient new homes to support the number of jobs that will be created across the City Region over the SDS period.

It should be noted that the housing supply (land) required to meet the housing requirement set in the SDS over the period 2021-2040 includes a large number of homes and sites that have already been 'planned for', for example through existing planning permissions or through allocations for housing in existing Liverpool City Region Local Plans.

What is the Government's standard methodology?

The Government's Standard Method for determining local housing need provides the minimum number of homes that should be planned for each year in every local planning authority. It does not provide a housing requirement figure; this is the role of the plan-making process and is informed by land availability, site deliverability and environmental constraints. Further information on the Standard Method is available here: www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economicdevelopment-needs-assessments

How will affordable housing be delivered?

The LCRCAs wants to make sure that all our residents have access to affordable housing. The SDS provides a supportive framework for the delivery of affordable housing including low-cost home ownership, based on models such as shared ownership; and a proportion of properties for rent managed by registered providers. Specific affordable housing requirements will continue to be set by the LCR Local Plans.

Does the SDS set an employment requirement for City Region and individual local authorities? How many new employment sites need to be built?

The SDS sets a minimum employment land requirement from 2021-2040 across the LCR for general industrial uses of 521 hectares of land, and for office and research and development uses of 281,600 sqm from 2021 up to 2040.

The findings of the Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) (2023) which assesses future employment land needs across the LCR, has informed this requirement.

The SDS also sets a minimum employment land requirement for each of the six LCR local authorities, this has been informed by the findings of the HEDNA and the existing local authority's Local Plan evidence. The HEDNA which has been prepared as evidence base for the SDS is available on the LCRCAs website: www.liverpoolcity-region.gov.uk/sdsengagement

Why do we need new employment land?

As with housing, national planning policy requires we meet our need for economic development. The SDS does this through requiring the provision of employment land for new businesses moving into the City Region and to enable existing businesses to grow. The calculation for the land requirement is set out in the Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) (2023) which is available on the LCRCAs website: www.liverpoolcity-region.gov.uk/sdsengagement

Where will future development go? Which sites are identified in the SDS?

Liverpool City Centre, the Inner Urban Area and the Wider Urban Area will be the strategic priority for development (see SDS Policy LCR SS1 for more information).

Informed by the housing and employment land supply set out in existing Local Plans and their supporting evidence base, the SDS identifies strategic housing and employment sites. Please see the Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Study (SHELS) (2023) for more information: www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/sdsengagement

What will the impact of the SDS be on traffic in the LCR?

Policies within the SDS seek to ensure that new development would not result in unacceptable impacts from traffic. As set out in the LCR SDS Strategic Infrastructure Plan - Initial Engagement Draft (October 2023), a key element of the emerging SDS is the need to deliver the strategic infrastructure to support new development.

Our draft Fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4) is being prepared alongside the SDS. It will help us address local transport issues in the LCR by providing policies, a delivery programme and a framework for future investment decisions.

The local traffic impacts of the strategic housing and employment sites identified in the SDS will continue to be tested through the LCR Local Plans and at the planning application stage.

The need for a Strategic Transport Impact Assessment of the SDS to test the impacts of the SDS on the LCR's strategic road and public transport networks and infrastructure will be considered as the SDS progresses.

How does the SDS address flood risk?

The SDS contains policies which seek to ensure that development plans and proposals plan positively to ensure an integrated approach to water management to improve water quality, water resources and reduce the risk of flooding,

A LCR Part A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been prepared to provide key, up-to-date, information and evidence concerning flood risk and its management at the City Region scale to inform the SDS. The SFRA can be viewed here:

www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/sdsengagement

The SFRA will continue to be updated as appropriate as the SDS progresses.

How will the SDS contribute to delivering social value outcomes?

Social value is a measure of the importance that people place on the social and environmental changes that they experience as part of their lives. Through the SDS, the LCRCA seeks to achieve the most social value throughout the development's lifecycle to make the city region a better place to live and work. This could include, for example, ensuring that local people receive employment and training opportunities.

RealWorth, a social value specialist who has advised the LCRCA Spatial Planning team throughout the SDS preparation period, has produced a Social Value Background Paper to inform the preparation of the SDS. It shows how social value has been used to support the spatial priorities and development principles within the SDS. You can view the Social Value Background Paper here: www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/sdsengagement

Does the recent Royal Assent of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act have any implications for the SDS?

Many of the key provisions introduced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (October 2023) require second legislation (Regulations) to be brought forward to set the detail of their practical operation. The Combined Authority will keep the outcomes of the changes introduced by the Act under review with future stages of SDS preparation reflecting them as relevant.

Will the SDS be amending Green Belt boundaries?

The proposed policy approach set out in Policy LCR SS1 - Liverpool City Region Spatial Strategy of the emerging SDS (Towards a Spatial Development Strategy for the Liverpool City Region up to 2040, November 2023) is to protect the Liverpool City Region's Green Belt in accordance with national and local planning policy. The current extent of the Green Belt in the city region and its detailed boundaries are defined in the adopted Local Plans. Therefore, any future amendments to Green Belt boundaries in the LCR would need to be proposed through the Local Plans of the six LCR local authorities.

Can I submit a site for development ?

As part of the preparation process of the SDS, the Combined Authority is undertaking a call for strategic sites. The Call for Strategic Sites is being undertaken because the SDS will identify strategic areas or broad locations for growth and infrastructure provision at the City Region scale.

The call for strategic sites is an opportunity for local communities, individuals, landowners, developers, and stakeholders to suggest potential strategic sites and broad locations within the LCR that could be suitable for development up to 2040. The call for strategic sites is focusing on sites for large-scale housing, employment and green infrastructure opportunities.

The SDS will not specify particular sites where development should take place. The allocation of specific development sites for particular uses will continue to be undertaken through the LCR Local Plans.

For more information please see our Call for Sites guidance note which is available here: www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/sdsengagement

Where can I look at the evidence that supports the SDS?

The SDS evidence base can be viewed at www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/sdsengagement

What happens next?

Following engagement on the 'Towards a Spatial Development Strategy for the Liverpool City Region' all responses received will be reviewed and considered to help the Combined Authority refine policies ahead of its next stage.

The next consultation stage - referred to as the 'Public Participation' - will be a formal, regulatory stage. It will involve the Combined Authority inviting written 'representations' to be made on a draft version of the SDS.

Where necessary, further evidence and assessments will be prepared to inform policy approaches. Further details will be made available ahead of this stage.

Following the 'Public Participation' stage, the SDS and its evidence base, and the responses received during the consultation will be examined by a team of Planning Inspectors to make sure it is fit for purpose.

Who will make the final decision on the SDS?

The SDS must be prepared in accordance with specific legislation and regulations, meet various legal requirements and be examined by independent government appointed inspectors. The inspectors will determine if it is fit for purpose or 'sound' and has been prepared according to the legal requirements. The Combined Authority will then need to make the formal decision to adopt the SDS. This is only an indicative timetable but it is envisaged that the SDS Examination in Public will take place in 2025.

I want to apply for an extension to my house. Does this SDS apply to me?

The SDS contains 'strategic' or 'high level' planning policies that do not tend to cover more detailed matters. Details or local planning requirements concerning household

extensions will be primarily covered in policies (or other guidance) prepared by the relevant local planning authority (i.e. the local council).

Household development may fall within 'permitted development' rights in some cases. If specific limitations and conditions are met, it allows you to extend your home without the need for planning permission.

The government provides detailed advice on compliance with these requirements, illustrated examples, and further clarifications of the terminology used in the 'Permitted development rights for householders: technical guidance'.

Please visit your local council's website for more information and help on their planning pages. Helpful information can also be found here www.planningportal.co.uk

I don't use email or the internet, how can I get involved?

If you don't use email or the internet, there are still ways to get involved. The SDS is available to view here at the Combined Authority's offices at Mann Island, L3 1BP. You can also request a printed copy of the SDS by calling the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's call centre on 0151 330 1005. We will then arrange for a printed copy to be delivered to your address, and you will be able to post your written response to the SDS engagement. Please use this option only if you are unable to access the engagement digitally to reduce the use of paper for the environment.

If you have any further questions or queries about the SDS please contact the LCR Spatial Planning Team at SDS@liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk or on 0151 330 1005.

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