

Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy Integrated Impact Assessment (Interim Report)



Non-technical Summary

October 2023



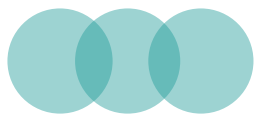
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Introduction

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority are preparing a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), which will set out a land use plan for the Liverpool City Region up to 2040.

The SDS sets a target for the amount of housing and employment land across the City Region, and a broad distribution strategy. It also includes a range of strategic policies to help guide development, with the aim of promoting high quality development that benefits communities and reduces inequalities, supports sustainable economic growth, addresses climate change and protects and enhances the environment.

The area covered by the SDS is the Liverpool City Region, which consists of six local authorities: Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral (see adjacent map).

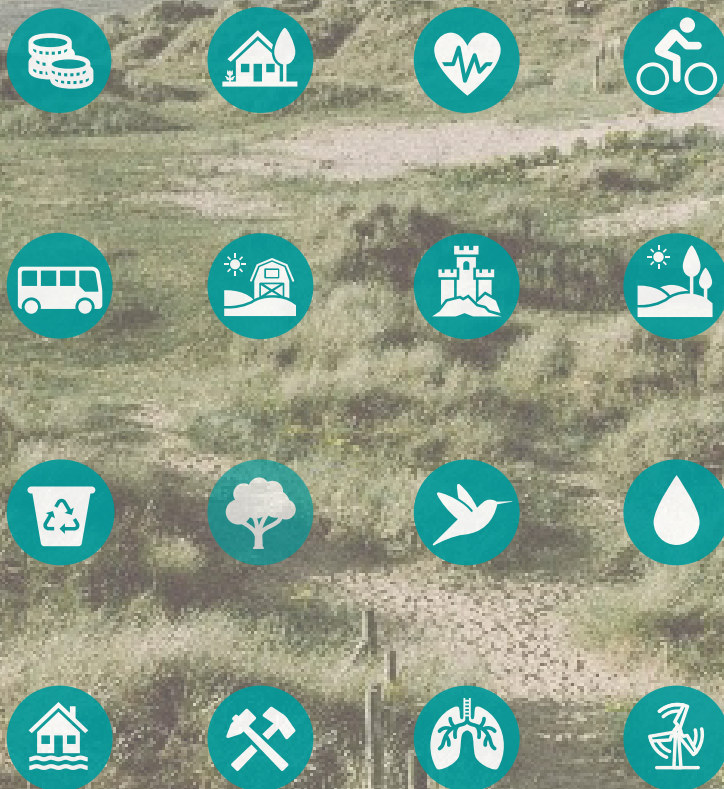
There is a requirement to undertake a range of impact assessments as part of the plan-making process. This includes sustainability appraisal (SA), health impact assessment (HIA) equalities impact assessment (EqIA) and an 'assessment of community safety'. These individual tools are brought together into a single process called 'Integrated Impact Assessment' (IIA), and this is being used to appraise the SDS.



The SDS is still in the process of being developed. This stage - 'Towards A Spatial Development Strategy for the Liverpool City Region to 2040' - is supported by an interim stage of assessment in the IIA. An interim IIA Report has been prepared which sets out the appraisal findings in relation to a series of spatial options and draft policies. This is a non-technical summary of the Interim IIA Report.



Scoping



Integrated Impact Assessment Themes

- Community resilience
- Zero carbon City Region
- Health and wellbeing / mental health
- Sustainable housing
- Inclusive economy
- Sustainable transport
- Equality and diversity
- Biodiversity
- Clear air
- Water resources
- Land and soil
- Landscape and townscape
- Historic environment
- Circular economy
- Minerals

Scoping

Scoping summary

The scoping stage of IIA involves gathering information about the plan area to help identify key issues that should be considered in the assessment process. This includes data and information about environmental, social and economic conditions and trends, and a review of other relevant plans, programmes and projects. As a result of the scoping stage, a range of key issues have been identified for the Integrated Impact Assessment of the SDS, these are summarised below.

Community resilience



Flooding presents a risk to communities, and this is likely to increase with climate change.

Zero carbon City Region



There are ambitions to become a zero carbon City Region by 2030. However, levels of CO2 emissions are still comparable to the national average and the City Region needs to increase its balance of low carbon energy supply.

Health and wellbeing / mental health



Supporting healthy lifestyles, promoting access to green infrastructure, and tackling health inequality are key policy drivers.

There is a need to plan for an ageing population.

There are high amounts of deprivation and health inequalities, particularly in urban areas.

Sustainable housing



There is a clear need to provide quality, affordable and sustainable homes to meet the needs of different communities.

There is a large difference in house prices between different communities and affordability remains an issue in certain locations.

Inclusive economy



There are ambitions to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Levels of skills and education are low in some locations.

There are significant infrastructure and investment schemes in the pipeline that should help to improve connectivity and boost the economy of the LCR.

Sustainable transport



Achieving an increase in walking, cycling and public transport usage are key objectives.

Emissions from transportation remain problematic.

Growth could lead to traffic and congestion issues.



Scoping

Equality and diversity



The city region has lower levels of ethnic minority populations than the North West and national figures. However, areas within Liverpool and other urban areas across the region have high concentrations of minority groups.

In comparison to regional and national levels, the City Region has a higher rate of people who are classified as being limited a lot by a long-term limiting illness or disability.

Health deprivation, levels of employment and income deprivation are key issues.

Biodiversity



There is a need to reverse the declines that have been experienced in biodiversity and to achieve 'net gain'.

The LCR contains a range of internationally important biodiversity assets which are vulnerable to human activity. Coastal and tidal habitats are of particular importance and are affected by a range of activities.

It is important to enhance the resilience of ecosystems to climate change.

Clean air



There are several Air Quality Management Areas located within urban areas of the region including the entirety of the City of Liverpool.

There are vulnerable communities across the City Region that are more likely to experience the negative effects of air quality.

Water resources



There are high quality water environments along the coastal parts of the City Region which need to be protected whilst taking advantage of these assets for tourism and human enjoyment.

The quality of watercourses across the region is mixed, but the majority are either moderate or good in terms of ecological status.

Land and soil



Despite high levels of development on previously developed land, increasing amounts of greenfield / agricultural land is being proposed for release in current or emerging Local Plans.

Landscape and townscape



There is a need to protect and enhance landscape and townscape character.



Scoping

Historic Environment



The City Region has a rich wealth of heritage, with high concentrations of listed assets in Liverpool City itself.

The protection and enhancement of the historic environment is important to the City Region's economy, sense of community and wellbeing.

Circular economy

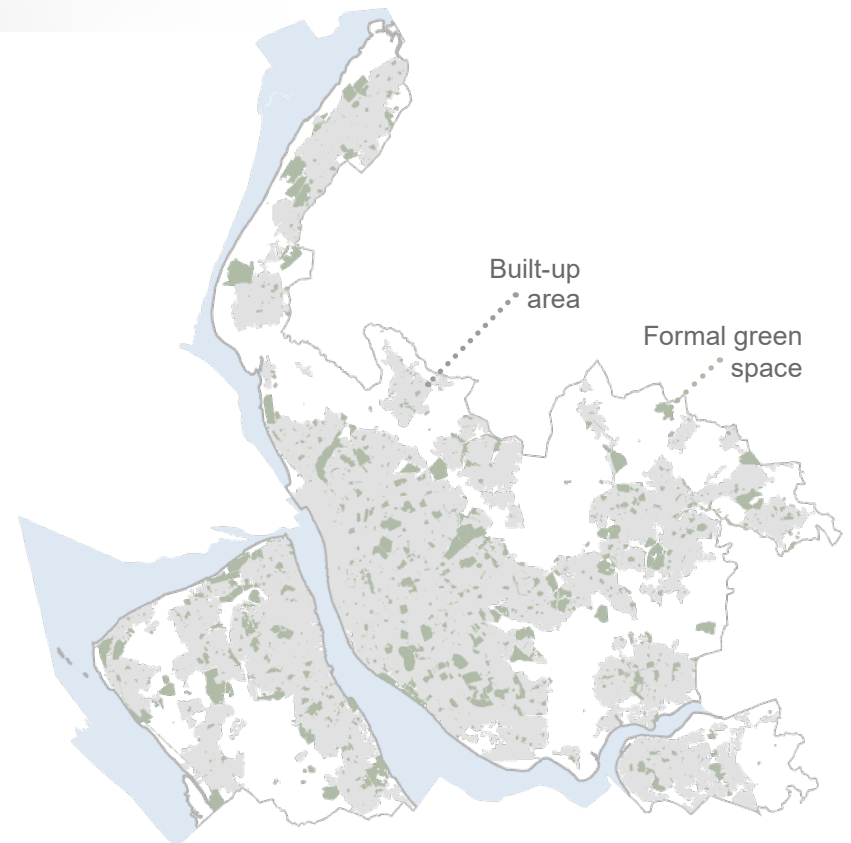


Liverpool City Region produces significantly less waste per household than regional and national equivalents, with Liverpool producing the least.

Minerals



There are some limited resources that need to be safeguarded to help ensure a steady supply of minerals.



Scoping

Integrated Impact Assessment Framework

The key issues are used to identify a suitable framework for appraising the SDS. The framework consists of a series of objectives and supporting criteria, which forms the basis for assessing the SDS. The objectives are listed below.

Community Resilience



Ensure places are designed to allow public health and safety measures to be employed effectively.

Zero carbon City Region



Facilitate and contribute to the move towards a zero carbon Liverpool City Region; whilst improving social equity of access to energy.

Health and wellbeing



Support healthy lifestyles for all community groups, whilst seeking to close 'inequality gaps' and improve resilience to health issues.

Mental health



Improve mental health and wellbeing, particularly in areas of greatest need.

Sustainable housing



Ensure that everyone has access to suitable, safe and secure housing

accommodation in sustainable locations.

Inclusive economy



Achieve a sustainable and inclusive economy in the city region that builds upon current strengths and the opportunities offered by investment and innovation.

Sustainable transport



Improve accessibility and transport networks, whilst reducing the negative impacts of vehicular travel and supporting a greater shift to active and sustainable modes of travel.

Equality and diversity



Ensure that everybody has equity and justice and that diversity is embraced; allowing all people to fulfil their potential in life.

Biodiversity



Avoid unacceptable impacts upon species and habitats; whilst ensuring the strengthening of ecological networks and an overall net gain in biodiversity value.

Clear air



Achieve cleaner air across the City Region, whilst protecting the environment and people from the effects of poor air quality.



Scoping

Water resources



Ensure the sustainable management of water resources, helping to protect and enhance value with regards to the environment, human health and economic growth.

Land and soil



Promote the effective use of land and soil; ensuring that the best and most versatile agricultural land resources are preserved and used effectively by prioritising brownfield development and the remediation of contaminated land.

Landscape and townscape



Protect and enhance the character of landscapes and urban open space; ensuring their multifunctional use and enjoyment by all.

Historic Environment



Protect, maintain, conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets, and cultural heritage.

Circular economy



Minimise waste generation and support the circular economy by implementing the waste hierarchy.

Minerals



Ensure a steady and stable supply of minerals whilst promoting their efficient use and sustainable methods of extraction.



Reasonable Alternatives and Appraisals

Identifying options

An important part of the IIA process is the identification of options for meeting the objectives of the plan. It is not necessary to test options for every aspect of a plan, only those that are of strategic importance and present real 'choices'. In the case of the SDS, the key choices relate to the amount and distribution of housing and employment land, and these have been the focus in terms of considering options.



Housing strategy (stage one)

A two-stage process has been undertaken with regards to housing options. At the first stage three housing growth scenarios were identified, along with a range of approaches to distribution. The initial distribution options took a broader look at how housing could be distributed across the City Region, provided that they met the objectives of the SDS. This resulted in the following options being identified and appraised at three different scales of growth.

Distribution options

- 1. Continuation of current growth patterns;**
- 2. Inclusive growth that focuses on addressing inequalities** a key feature of this approach is directing growth only to areas in need of investment and which experience multiple deprivation;
- 3. Central Core and Town Centre Focus** a key feature of this approach is recognising the significance of Liverpool City Centre as the economic driver at the heart of the City Region;
- 4. Sustainable transport focus** greater emphasis would be placed on reducing car dependency and increasing usage of sustainable transport;
- 5. Economic focus (green industrial revolution)** greater emphasis would be placed ensuring accessibility to identified employment opportunities and less dispersal of growth; and
- 6. Dispersal of growth** spreading the potential for provision for housing and jobs, and the supporting infrastructure improvements across a wider area.

Housing strategy (stage one)

Appraisal findings

At lower levels of growth, the significance of effects is limited to minor and moderate effects regardless of distribution. Most of the effects are positive though and relate to the benefits that increased housing and infrastructure upgrades will have upon the economy and communities.

There are similarities between distribution options 2-5, as they contain overlapping locations in terms of accessibility, deprivation, key centres and economic growth.

The dispersed option generates less positive effects on health, wellbeing and equality and is also more likely to have negative effects on landscape, soil/land and sustainable transport. At higher scales of growth, these effects become more pronounced and it is clear that this approach is less favourable compared to all of the other options (with the exception of housing delivery).

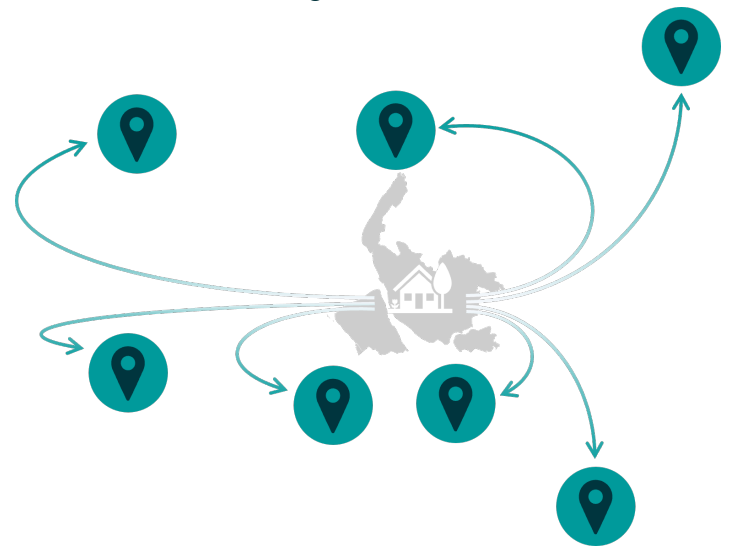
At higher scales of growth, the potential for positive outcomes for communities and economic growth increase, but the potential for negative effects also increases. In particular, a heavy focus on City and Town centres is more likely to lead to air quality concerns.

Approaches to growth which promote compact forms of development in accessible locations are more likely to achieve carbon emission reductions. An increase in planned growth is also considered more likely to support a reduction in per capita emissions through investment in higher quality building stock and low carbon energy schemes.

The potential for mixed effects exists in terms of the historic environment regardless of distribution. On one hand, the productive use of buildings and heritage-led regeneration should have positive effects, but inappropriate growth and cumulative pressures could lead to some negative effects on the character of settlements. In particular, a heavy focus on Liverpool City and other denser urban areas could bring effects of greater significance (both positive and negative).

There are limited effects on mineral resources regardless of the scale of growth. The key factor is distribution, with a release of greenfield / Green Belt land (associated with dispersal) leading to minor negative effects.

It is unlikely that there would be significant effects on flood risk and resilience, regardless of the scale of growth or distribution.



Housing strategy (stage two)

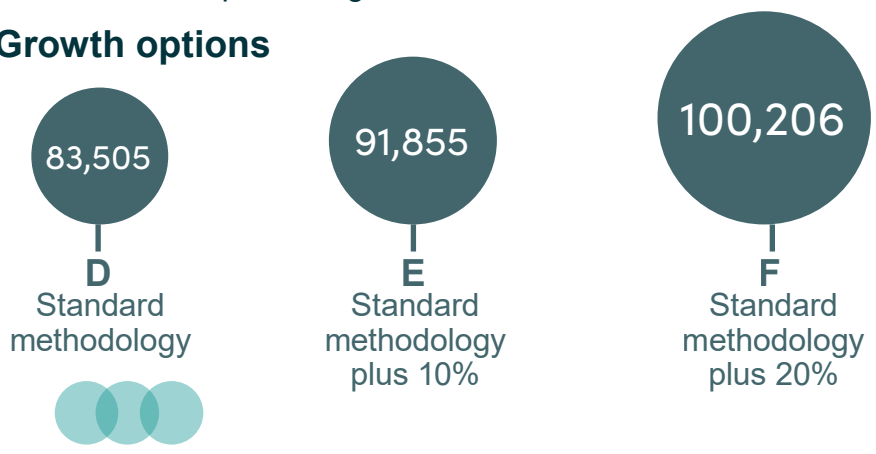
Housing strategy (stage two)

Following the appraisal of the initial options, there were updates to evidence about housing need and supply. In response, a refined set of spatial housing options were established and appraised (both in terms of the amount and distribution of homes). The options at this stage were influenced by previous appraisal findings, and therefore the distribution of growth was more refined. The focus at this stage was on what proportion of growth could be distributed amongst the urban areas with good accessibility. Three distribution options were identified as reasonable alongside three updated growth scenarios based upon the findings of the Housing and Employment Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA).

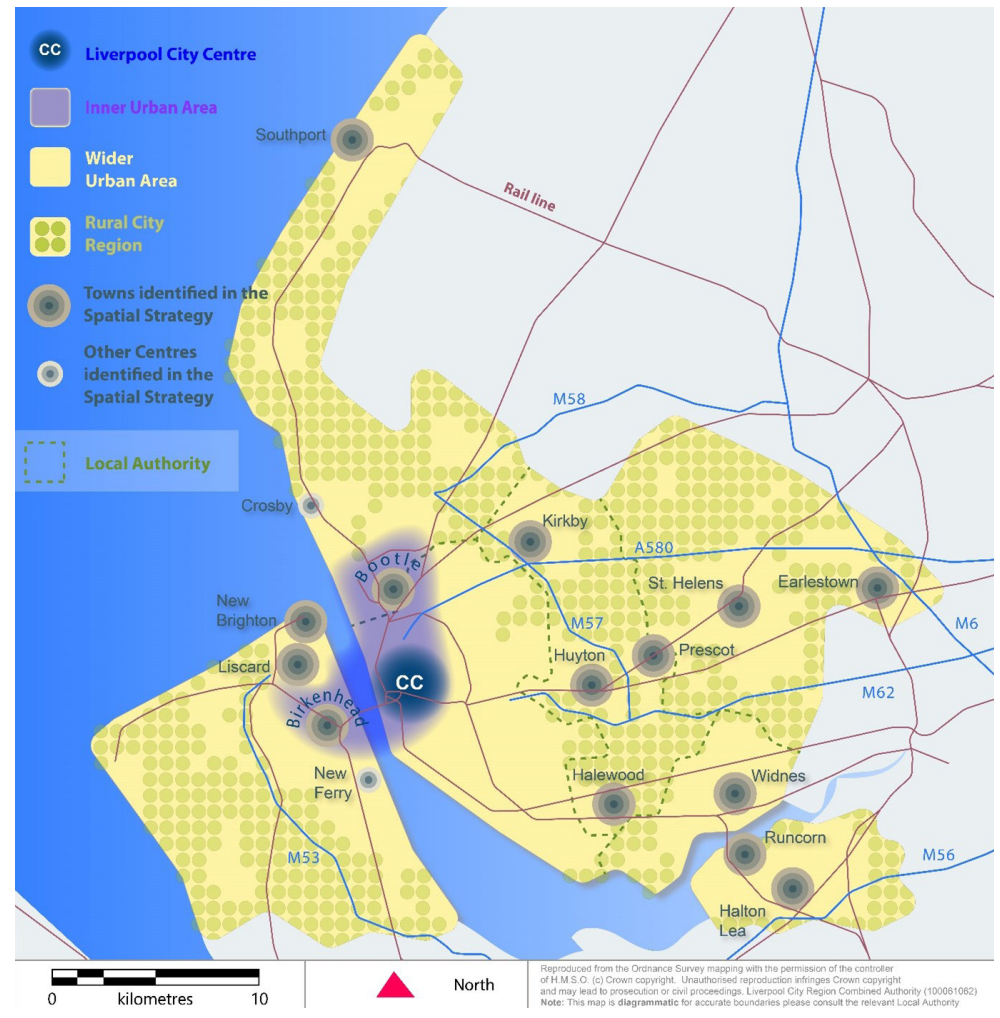
Distribution options

1. Continuation of existing patterns of growth
2. Increased focus on the Liverpool City and Inner Urban Areas
3. Greater spread of growth to the Wider Urban Area.

Growth options



The options were described in terms of the percentage of growth that would be directed to different spatial components of the City Region such as Liverpool City Centre, the Inner Urban Area, Named Towns and the Wider Urban Area (see figure below).



Housing strategy (stage two)

Appraisal findings

For Scenario D, all the options are likely to bring minor positive effects on social factors by bringing additional housing and investment, but at a level that is unlikely to overwhelm existing infrastructure. Conversely, the scale of growth is not substantial enough to lead to more significant positive effects.

Given the focus of each option on the urban areas, it is unlikely that negative effects will arise for most of the IIA topics, particularly those relating to the environment.

Potential minor negative effects are only identified for two topics: air quality and biodiversity.

The main difference between the options at this scale of growth is housing, with option D2 performing less well compared to D1 and D3. This is because the residual growth is more focused towards Liverpool City and the Inner Urban Area, and this could limit choice somewhat.

As the scale of residual growth increases for scenarios E and F, the options are likely to generate effects of greater significance and there is slightly more to differentiate between the distribution options.

With increased residual growth, positive effects of greater significance arise with regards to social factors including health and wellbeing, mental health, sustainable housing and equality and diversity. This mainly relates to an increased delivery of housing and the benefits this is likely to bring for a range of communities (particularly those in greater

need). There are some slight differences between the distribution options in terms of where the benefits would be felt the most.

The potential for negative effects on health also increase with the scale of growth, mainly in relation to the impacts that construction, urbanisation, and increased development could bring in terms of mental health and wellbeing.

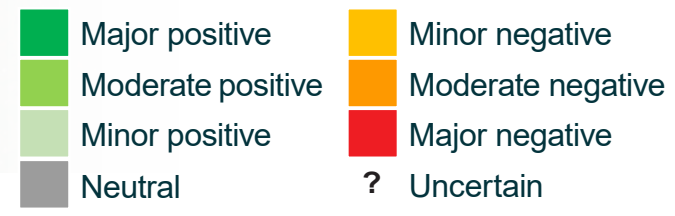
As the scale of growth increases, the likelihood that greenfield land will be required increases. This brings greater negative effects on land and soil for the options that disperse growth more widely, which also has knock-on effects in terms of waste generation /movement, and the use of minerals.

With regards to landscape, townscape and the historic environment, the options focusing more heavily on Liverpool City and the Inner Urban Area are considered likely to have better opportunities to support heritage-led regeneration. Conversely, the potential for negative effects on heritage (alongside positives) is also higher with urban densification. A dispersed approach brings with it greater potential for negative effects on landscape though.

With a greater amount of growth being dispersed, each of the options bring better potential to support transport infrastructure improvements. However, there is also a greater likelihood of congestion and increased car trips.



Housing strategy (stage two)



	D1	D2	D3	E1	E2	E3	F1	F2	F3
Community resilience	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Neutral	Moderate positive	Minor negative
Zero carbon City Region	Uncertain		Uncertain	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Minor positive	Moderate positive	Minor negative	Minor positive
Health and equality	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Major positive	Major positive	Major positive
Mental health	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Moderate negative	Moderate negative	Moderate positive
Sustainable housing	Minor positive	Neutral	Minor positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Minor positive	Major positive	Minor positive	Major positive
Inclusive economy	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Minor positive	Major positive	Major positive	Major positive
Sustainable transport	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Moderate negative	Moderate negative	Major positive
Equality and diversity	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Moderate negative	Moderate negative	Minor positive
Biodiversity	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Moderate negative	Moderate negative	Moderate negative
Clean air	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Moderate negative	Moderate negative	Moderate negative
Water resources	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative
Land and soil	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Minor negative	Neutral	Minor negative	Moderate negative	Neutral	Moderate negative
Landscape / townscape	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Neutral	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative
Historic environment	Minor positive	Minor positive	Minor positive	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Minor positive	Moderate positive	Moderate negative	Moderate positive
Circular economy	Neutral	Minor positive	Neutral	Minor negative	Neutral	Minor negative	Minor negative	Neutral	Moderate negative
Minerals	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative	Minor negative

Employment options

The LCRCA consider that the existing supply of land identified in Local Plans is sufficient to cater for general employment land needs throughout the SDS Plan period (alongside other sources of supply).

Furthermore, there does not appear to be a need to identify further land at the current time for strategic B8 development across the City Region over and above those sites already in the planning pipeline. As such, no reasonable alternatives have been identified or tested at this time through the IIA process.



Draft Strategy appraisal

Appraisal of draft policies

The SDS document sets out a range of policy principles and preferences that set out the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's emerging approach to addressing key issues across the plan area.

The policies have been considered individually and a conclusion has been reached on the likely effects of the plan when read 'as a whole' (i.e. the policies in combination).

Community Resilience

  Minor positive effects

The spatial approach to development should limit the amount of greenfield land release, which is positive in terms of resilience to flood risk and climate change. In combination with a range of policies that seek to enhance green and blue infrastructure this is likely to have minor positive effects.

Zero carbon City Region

  Minor positive effects

Through a focus on zero carbon living minor positive effects are predicted, primarily from measures seeking to improve resource efficiency, reuse land and buildings, reduce transport related emissions and promote carbon sequestration.

Health and wellbeing

  Minor positive effects

There are specific policies that seek to manage and enhance health and tackle inequalities. In addition, there is a strategic focus on regeneration and inclusive economic growth. Though some negative effects could arise as a result of air quality and pressure on services, these are likely to be minor and temporary, and so overall, minor positive effects are predicted.

Mental health

  Minor positive effects

A range of policies will support good mental health and wellbeing, ranging from; housing provision, a focus on regeneration, the need to consider health and social value, and improved environmental quality. However, some negative effects could arise as a result of continued urbanisation, and so overall, minor positive effects are predicted.

Sustainable housing

  Minor positive effects

The Plan seeks to meet identified needs across the City Region and promotes a strategy that will allow for a range of locations and types of housing to be delivered. However, the residual growth being planned for is relatively low and so only minor positive effects are predicted.



Draft Strategy appraisal

Inclusive economy

  Moderate positive effects (*with uncertainties*)

The SDS supports economic growth in several sectors and seeks to create the conditions for investment. As a result, moderate positive effects are predicted. However, there are some uncertainties given that the residual level of planned growth is relatively low.

Sustainable transport

  Minor positive effects

There is a focus on achieving modal shift, minimising carbon emissions and creating sustainable locations for economic and housing growth. Though there could be some increases in traffic and congestion, these are outweighed by the benefits and therefore minor positive effects are predicted overall.

Equality and diversity

  Moderate positive effects

The SDS directs growth to areas in need of regeneration and includes policies that require new development to generate social value and opportunity. Therefore, moderate positive effects are predicted.

Biodiversity

    Minor negative effects (*neutral and positive longer term effects*)

Overall, mixed effects are predicted. Minor negative effects could arise as a result of continued recreational pressure on wildlife sites, increased tourism and water based activities. However, plan policies are likely to limit these effects, and promote enhancements in biodiversity. The scale of additional planned growth is relatively limited, and therefore in the longer term, the effects are more likely to be neutral or positive.

Clear air

    Minor negative effects (*neutral and positive longer term effects*)

There could be an increase in traffic, which in the short term (at least) could lead to minor negative effects on air quality. However, the SDS is proactive in promoting an improvement in air quality, and in the longer term effects ought to be neutral/positive.

Water resources

  Neutral effects

Whilst elements of the SDS could give rise to negative effects, on water, there are policy protection and enhancement measures in place that should ensure that overall effects are neutral.



Draft Strategy appraisal

Land and soil

  Moderate positive effects

Moderate positive effects are predicted upon land and soil resources as there is a strong focus on urban regeneration and the strategy avoids soil and greenfield land release.

Landscape and townscape

   Moderate positive and minor negative effects

There are clear benefits in terms of protection for countryside landscapes, and improvement of townscapes, which are moderate positive effects. However, there could potentially be some locations where townscape is negatively affected, which are minor negative effects.

Historic Environment

   Moderate positive and minor negative effects

The strategy is likely to lead to moderate positive effects by supporting regeneration and the productive / sensitive use of heritage assets. Alongside this, there is potential for minor negative effects with continued development and activity around ports and increased densities of new buildings.

Circular economy

  Minor positive effects

The spatial strategy is unlikely to lead to a significant amount of additional waste generation given that the planned residual growth is not substantial, and the pattern of growth should help to promote efficient waste management practices. Furthermore, there is a focus on regeneration and reuse of materials. These are minor positive effects.

Minerals

  Minor positive effects

The SDS is unlikely to lead to growth in areas that contain mineral resources, and several policies seek to preserve mineral resources, which constitute minor positive effects.



Mitigation and Monitoring

Next steps and monitoring

This Interim IIA Report is available for consultation alongside the 'Towards a Spatial Strategy' document from the 24th November 2023, to the 16th February 2024.

The LCRCA will consider feedback received through consultation, the findings and recommendations within the IIA and further evidence before developing the SDS further and presenting a 'draft Plan' for further consultation.

Once the SDS has been finalised, further IIA work will be undertaken, and a suitable monitoring framework will be established to track any identified significant effects.



Recommendations

Consider the requirement for all brownfield development to result in a net decrease in surface water run-off. This could lead to:

- Improved resilience to flood risk and climate change.
- Maintenance and improvement of water quality.

Encourage and support the development of onshore power facilities for the shipping industry. This could lead to:

- Reduced carbon emissions associated with increased tourism and economic activity at the ports.
- Improved air quality.

It will be important that regeneration led developments in deprived and minority communities are inclusive, accessible to all communities and do not lead to displacement. This could lead to:

- Reduced potential for inequalities to widen as a result of development.
- Improved health and wellbeing, mental health and community relations.

The Plan needs to ensure that the necessary infrastructure to support modal shift is in place in tandem with /before any significant growth in new homes and employment.

Ensure that regeneration and renewal schemes do not lead to displacement and that ‘planning gain’ benefits communities of need. These could lead to:

- Mitigation for temporary negative effects such as congestion, pressure on public services and infrastructure.
- Reduced likelihood of negative effects arising on health, wellbeing and community resilience, especially for deprived communities.

Consider mapping strategic biodiversity opportunity areas where biodiversity net gain could be targeted at a strategic level. This could lead to:

- Improved likelihood of achieving environmental net gain.
- Improved resilience of habitats and species to climate change.





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