

Liverpool City Region Spatial Planning Statement of Common Ground

July 2019

Draft for approval



Liverpool
City Council



METROMAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Sefton Council 



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Version 2.0 – last updated 5th July 2019. This Statement of Common Ground will be available on the websites of the 6 Liverpool City Region local authorities, West Lancashire Borough Council and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Introduction and Executive Summary

This document presents a ‘Statement of Common Ground’ (SoCG) between the local authorities of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St.Helens, Sefton, West Lancashire and Wirral, along with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. For the purposes of this document, these are referred to collectively as the ‘LCR authorities’.

It has been prepared jointly in response to the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) requirement for strategic policy-making authorities to document agreement and cooperation on cross boundary strategic planning matters¹. It also forms part of the evidence required by local planning authorities to demonstrate compliance with the Duty to Cooperate.

The approach taken follows national Planning Practice Guidance² and builds on an earlier draft prepared by officers as part of a national Planning Advisory Service (PAS) pilot project. The learning experiences from the pilot have subsequently informed PAS best practice advice on SoCG production³.

The statement covers the areas of the aforementioned seven local authorities who, along with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority are the principal signatories. Chapter 3 explains why the authorities consider this to be the most practical geography for the statement to cover, building as it does on a range of existing evidence as well as established working arrangements in the city region.

This statement covers a wide range of spatial planning matters, including housing delivery, employment land, the Green Belt, transport planning, digital inclusion, health and wellbeing, and environmental and green infrastructure. These are explained in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Where there is already an agreed position between the authorities this is referenced, in other cases it explains where the authorities will need to continue working together to arrive at a common position. Points of common ground – either already established, or setting out areas where the LCR authorities will work together to deal with cross-boundary strategic matters – are highlighted in boxes in Chapter 4.

Chapters 5 and 6 explain how the statement will be adopted by the signatory authorities and kept up to date.

Adopting this statement does not reduce the signatory authorities’ recognition of the need to continue to cooperate and work closely on planning matters with other neighbouring

¹ Paragraph 27, National Planning Policy Framework (Updated Feb 2019). Available [here](#) on MHCLG website.

² Planning Practice Guidance (Chapter on Maintaining Effective Cooperation) available [here](#) on MHCLG website.

³ PAS Statement of Common Ground Draft Advice & Template available [here](#) on PAS website

local authorities and other bodies. In particular, Halton, St.Helens, Wirral and West Lancashire councils are likely to need to prepare separate Statements of Common Ground with Cheshire West and Chester, Warrington and Wigan councils (as appropriate) to cover more locally specific cross boundary matters, for example related to housing, economic development and transport.

Other bodies may be invited to be additional signatories to future reviews of this Statement of Common Ground as necessary. These may include, as appropriate, the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership, neighbouring councils including Cheshire West and Chester, Warrington, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Lancashire County Council; and other agencies and organisations such as the Environment Agency, Homes England, Highways England, Liverpool John Lennon Airport, Natural England, Network Rail, the Port of Liverpool, Transport for the North and Transport for Wales.

1 Parties Involved

Principal Signatories

- Halton Borough Council
- Knowsley Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
- Sefton Council
- St.Helens Council
- West Lancashire Borough Council
- Wirral Council

2 Signatories

Organisation: Halton Borough Council

Name:

Position:

Signed:

Date:

Organisation: Knowsley Council

Name:

Position:

Signed:

Date:

Organisation: Liverpool City Council

Name:

Position:

Signed:

Date:

Organisation: Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

Name:

Position:

Signed:

Date:

Organisation: Sefton Council

Name:

Position:

Signed:

Date:

Organisation: St.Helens Council

Name:

Position:

Signed:

Date:

Organisation: West Lancashire Borough Council

Name:

Position:

Signed:

Date:

Organisation: Wirral Council

Name:

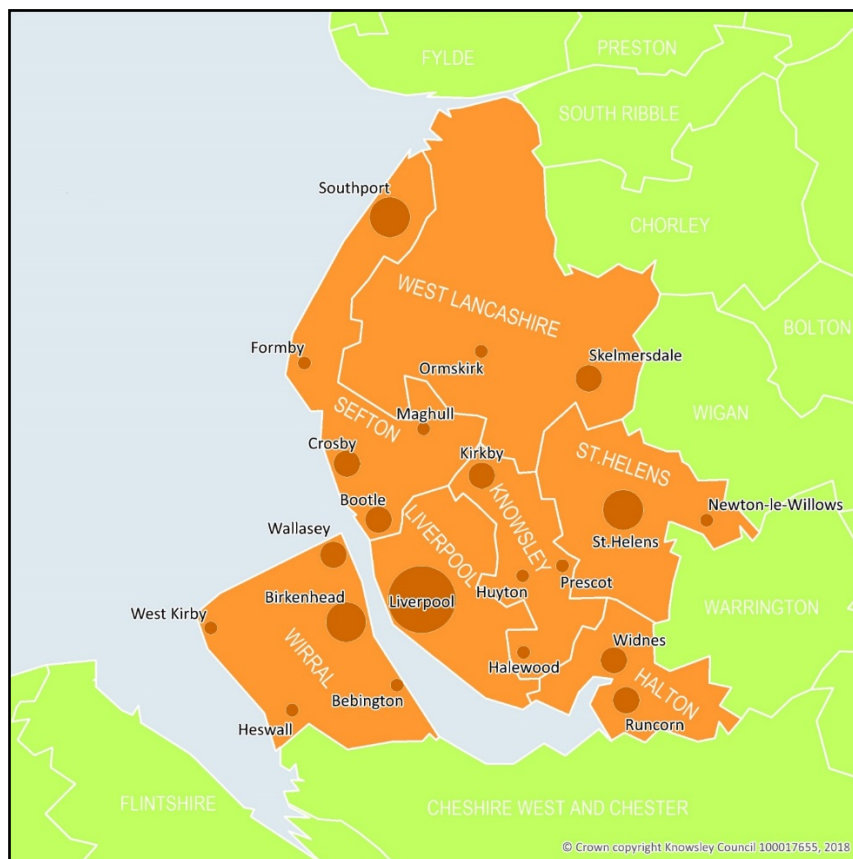
Position:

Signed:

Date:

3 Strategic Geography

Figure 1: Area covered by Statement of Common Ground



3.1 Recent work carried out for the city region’s Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA)⁴ identified two strategic housing market areas – one taking in the ‘mid Mersey’ area of Halton, St. Helens and Warrington, the other ‘central LCR’ market covering Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, West Lancashire and Wirral – and identified a single functional economic area centred on Liverpool and additionally taking in Halton, Knowsley, St. Helens, Sefton, West Lancashire and Wirral.

3.2 The seven local authority areas within this functional economic area have a long history of cooperating on spatial planning and related matters. In 2014 the establishment of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority brought the five former Merseyside County Council authorities of Knowsley, Liverpool, St. Helens, Sefton and Wirral, along with Halton, into a joint entity with a range of functions and responsibilities covering themes including employment and skills, culture and tourism, transport, economic development, and housing and planning. This formalised the working arrangements between the local authorities developed over

⁴ SHELMA available [here](#) on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority website.

the previous decade which had seen collaboration on spatial planning matters such as research and policy for the North West's Regional Spatial Strategy, the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (adopted in 2013) and preparing a housing strategy for the city region (completed in 2007).

- 3.3 Recognising existing strong connections to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, West Lancashire became an associate member in late 2014. The Regional Spatial Strategy placed West Lancashire in the Liverpool City Region, which reflects the area's inclusion in a strategic housing and functional economic market area (as described above) and the active role that West Lancashire takes in joint spatial planning work, attending and supporting the Liverpool City Region's Chief Planners Group⁵ and associated work.
- 3.4 In view of the above, the signatory authorities consider that it is sensible to align the Statement of Common Ground with the functional economic area described above; as well as covering an area validated in a recent evidence study, it also offers the advantage of fitting with existing practical spatial planning working arrangements in the city region.

⁵ As well as representatives of the seven local authorities, the Chief Planners Group also includes representation on behalf of the LCR Combined Authority and Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service.

4 Strategic Planning Matters

Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy

- 4.1 Through the Devolution Deal the Liverpool City Region Mayor is responsible for the preparation of a Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) covering Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St.Helens and Wirral. West Lancashire is not a full member of the Combined Authority but is currently preparing a new Local Plan to very similar timescales as the SDS. As such, all the LCR authorities and West Lancashire will seek to ensure the two documents align and take account of one another in their proposals for development.
- 4.2 The timetable for the production of the SDS is not confirmed although it is the intention of the Combined Authority to produce the SDS by 2020. This is recognised as a tight timetable for the work required but the Combined Authority will endeavour to deliver the SDS by this date.
- 4.3 The policy coverage of the SDS has not been established to date, however the LCR Scrutiny Panel review of the SDS recommended that it only covers high level strategic issues and leaves detailed policies to the Local Plans of each constituent local authority. The Combined Authority intends to undertake initial consultation to inform the scope of the SDS's policies and work collaboratively with the constituent local authorities on policy preparation.

1.

This Statement of Common Ground will inform the policy matters to be covered by the first Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) prepared by the Combined Authority. The LCR authorities agree to work collaboratively on SDS policy preparation.

Housing

Housing delivery and unmet need

- 4.4 Table 1 shows the housing needed and planned for each local authority area and for the seven authorities as a whole (including the Government's standard methodology figure for Local Housing Need as set out in Planning Practice Guidance, the Objectively Assessed Need figure taken from the 2017 SHELMA, and planned requirement figures from each authorities' most recent adopted or consultation development plan).

Table 1: Local authority level and combined housing numbers (per annum) March 2019

	MHCLG LHN ⁶	SHELMA OAN	Emerging / Adopted Local Plan requirement	Plan status	Year	Plan period
Halton	285	326	466	Reg. 18 Consultation	2018	2014-2037
Knowsley	275	280	450	Adopted	2016	2010-2028
Liverpool	1,615	1,739	1,739	Reg. 23 Consideration of representations	2018	2013-2033
St.Helens	468	416	486	Reg. 19 Publication	2019	2020-2035
Sefton	654	594	640	Adopted ⁷	2017	2012-2030
West Lancashire	198	241	324	Adopted ⁸	2013	2012-2027
Wirral	803	730	626	Reg. 19 Consultation ⁹	2012	2012-2028
Total	4,298	4,326	4,731			

4.5 At the time of preparing this SoCG, the Government’s standard methodology for calculating ‘Local Housing Need’ (LHN) is under review. However, the Government has published guidance on what calculation to use in the meantime, and this has been utilised above, using the 2014-based household projections and the latest data inputs for affordability uplift to this calculation. As such, the numbers that the standard methodology produces are subject to change. The city region authorities will aim to prepare local plans which individually meet the LHN figure as a minimum

⁶ Local Housing Need figures supplied March 2019 calculated using standard method detailed in Planning Practice Guidance (Chapter on Housing and economic needs assessment, Feb 2019) available [here](#) on MHCLG website.

⁷ Sefton’s adopted Local Plan sets out a staged annual requirement of 500 dwellings per year between 2012 and 2017, increasing to 694 per year for the remainder of the plan period to 2030 – the effective annual average is therefore 640.

⁸ West Lancashire is preparing a Local Plan Review.

⁹ Wirral is currently proposing to republish its draft local plan under regulation 18 in January 2020.

with the SHELMA needs assessment providing evidence to support an alternative higher figure for some authorities. The authorities (collectively) are currently planning for new housing at a level which exceeds the combined need identified both in the SHELMA and by the LHN assessment, and this situation will continue at least until the first local authority development plan period ends in 2027.

- 4.6 At an individual authority level, currently six of the seven authorities have set, or are proposing, local plan housing requirements which at least meet or exceed their need identified in the SHELMA; Wirral is proposing to republish its draft local plan in January 2020 under regulation 18, to meet the higher figure for LHN under the Government's standard method, in line with the action plan submitted to the Secretary of State in April 2019. The authorities are therefore of the view that there is no unmet housing need arising either at local authority level or from the city region as a whole which needs to be redistributed at the present time. Warrington, which with Halton and St.Helens makes up the mid-Mersey housing market area, intend to exceed its LHN figure in its emerging local plan.
- 4.7 The first end-date of the plans already adopted or currently being prepared is West Lancashire's in 2027; they (and the other authorities' emerging plans) are now looking to the period beyond 2028. It is possible therefore that longer term issues of unmet need will emerge – this will become clearer as local authorities assemble the evidence base for their own plans. The authorities will therefore keep unmet housing need under review, and will address the issue in future SoCGs as it arises through local plan preparation.

2.

The LCR authorities agree that future Local Plan housing requirements will either equal or exceed the identified Local Housing Need, with the 2017 Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment informing an alternative approach for any higher figure for some authorities.

The LCR authorities agree that there is no unmet housing need to be redistributed among or beyond the seven local authorities during current local plan periods (as outlined in Table 1 above).

The LCR authorities will keep this issue under review as the individual councils prepare updated development plans. Where local authorities' local plan evidence indicates that they will not be able to accommodate their entire OAN, the processes for agreeing the distribution of this unmet need will be set out in future updates of this statement.

Employment Land

Strategic B8 sites

- 4.8 The key identified employment land issue for the LCR is the need for strategic B8 sites. The Liverpool City Region SHELMA indicated that the city region authorities need to identify sites with a combined capacity of at least 397 hectares to be developed for large scale Class B8 (storage or distribution) before 2037. This need is driven substantially by transformational growth at the Port of Liverpool, and other inward investment opportunities. To be suitable for this type of use sites must have very specific characteristics; in particular they must be large and well-located with respect to the links via the motorway and / or rail networks to the rest of the country. The sites must also be flat, readily available and easily serviced, and able to draw on available labour using public transport networks. The best sites will also have rail access.
- 4.9 The LCR authorities have commissioned work to identify potential areas and sites to accommodate this demand. This report is due in mid-2019. Further work arising from this, including agreed approaches to apportion future site supply between the 7 local authorities, will be addressed in later versions of the Statement of Common Ground.

3.

The LCR authorities agree that they will work collaboratively to identify the minimum proportions of the need for strategic B8 uses which should be accommodated within each local authority.

Green Belt

- 4.10 The Green Belt across the Liverpool City Region was first established by historic development plans, in particular the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan, adopted in 1983. To maximise the scope for regeneration, the Merseyside Green Belt boundary was tightly drawn around existing urban areas. In recent years, however, the capacity of existing urban areas (over many parts of the City Region) to meet evidenced development needs (both for housing and employment uses) has become severely constrained. This situation was identified in the Liverpool City Region Housing and Economic Development Evidence Base Overview Study 2011 and in other evidence produced by individual local authorities. As a result, Knowsley, Sefton and West Lancashire Councils have undertaken reviews of Green Belt boundaries which have formed key evidence for adopted Local Plan documents. St. Helens and Halton Councils have undertaken draft Green Belt reviews to inform their emerging Local Plans and Wirral Council consulted on the findings of an initial review of the Green Belt in autumn 2018. It will be necessary

for the LCR local authorities to continue to consider this matter by responding to development needs and pressures as considered appropriate locally.

4.

The LCR authorities agree to continue involving each other closely when considering the case for localised changes to the Green Belt. If they decide in future that it is necessary to conduct a joint strategic review of the Green Belt in the LCR, the reasons and agreed approach will be set out in a future SoCG.

Retail Hierarchy in the City Region

4.11 Liverpool City Centre is one of the two leading centres in the North West of England and is fundamental to the economic growth of the City Region. It forms a strategic hub with significant comparison retail floorspace, leisure, cultural and tourist facilities and is the highest level of centre within the sub-regional hierarchy of centres. Birkenhead (Wirral), Southport (Sefton), St.Helens and Widnes (Halton) form a second tier of centres, which complement the role of Liverpool City Centre. Each local authority also has other town, district and local centres which have an essential role in meeting localised needs within their area.

4.12 In some cases, the catchment areas of the centres (for retail and other 'town centre' uses) extend into neighbouring local authority areas. For example, Liverpool City Centre meets some of the comparison shopping and leisure needs of the whole City Region. Southport serves North Sefton and much of West Lancashire. The catchment area of St.Helens extends into parts of Halton, Knowsley and Wigan whilst the catchment area of Widnes includes parts of Knowsley and St.Helens. The catchment for Wirral includes parts of Cheshire West and Chester. Some of the shopping and leisure needs of LCR residents are met outside the City Region.

5.

The LCR authorities agree that there is a need to promote regeneration and successful place making in each centre in the City Region within the context of the current retail hierarchy. The LCR authorities will maintain this approach through appropriate cooperation in plan making and in decisions on planning applications.

Planning for Transport

4.13 Transport and land-use have always been inextricably linked; planning transport links and connectivity - as an integral part of development and regeneration - can lead to healthier, happier and more economically productive places where people have a genuine choice about how they get around. As such, there are a number of key considerations with respect to transport that will be key to the effectiveness of the SoCG.

Rail

- 4.14 The Liverpool City Region (represented by the Combined Authority and Merseytravel) is heavily engaged with Transport for the North (TfN) in all aspects of its work in order to ensure that the City Region's priorities and growth sectors are represented, including securing a commitment from the Government to link the City Region to High Speed 2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail.
- 4.15 TfN published their Strategic Transport Plan in February 2019¹⁰ setting out proposed transport improvements across Northern England including Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). NPR presents a key way of achieving transformed passenger connectivity between northern cities and is also seen as completing and complementing High Speed 2 (HS2) by creating additional capacity for freight and local passenger services.
- 4.16 The Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy¹¹ has been developed with the aim of ensuring that the rail network meets Liverpool City Region's needs over the next 30 years and beyond. It presents a clear vision for the development of the network, and articulates the important role rail plays in the economic development of Liverpool City Region and its hinterland, to maximise its contribution to the wider UK economy, and act as a catalyst for growth. Updated in 2017¹², it provides a route map to deliver increased connectivity, capacity and frequencies, together with reduced journey times and simplified ticketing across Liverpool City Region and the North of England generally, to enable people and freight to move more efficiently. It addresses the more localised connectivity challenges and opportunities, the most significant of which is Liverpool Central Station. Central Station is critical to unlocking the economic development of Liverpool City Centre as well as public transport commuter growth across the city region and supporting key economic sectors such as the Knowledge Economy and Visitor Economy.

6.

The LCR authorities agree to work collaboratively, including in their respective Local Plans as appropriate, to support delivery of the key initiatives set out in the TfN Strategic Transport Plan including Northern Powerhouse Rail.

The LCR authorities agree that a key priority is to consider a number of options with respect to Central Station capacity enhancements, and identify the preferred solution to be taken forward.

¹⁰ Transport for the North's Strategic Transport Plan is available [here](#) on TfN's website.

¹¹ *Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy* available [here](#) on Merseytravel website.

¹² Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy Update October 2017 is available [here](#) on Merseytravel website.

Noting the importance of rail infrastructure, the LCR authorities will continue to develop a number of other large-scale cross boundary schemes with city region-wide impact.

Roads

4.17 In order to set investment in the Strategic Road Network (SRN) the government publishes a multi-year 'Road investment strategy' (RIS). The second RIS (RIS2)¹³ will cover the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/25. As the first step in the process for setting RIS2, Highways England (HE) has published its Strategic Road Network initial report and supporting documents¹⁴. In its response to the proposals, the LCR put forward a case for improving strategic access to Liverpool John Lennon Airport, since it has nearly 5 million passengers per annum and rising and sits relatively close to a number of major freight sites.

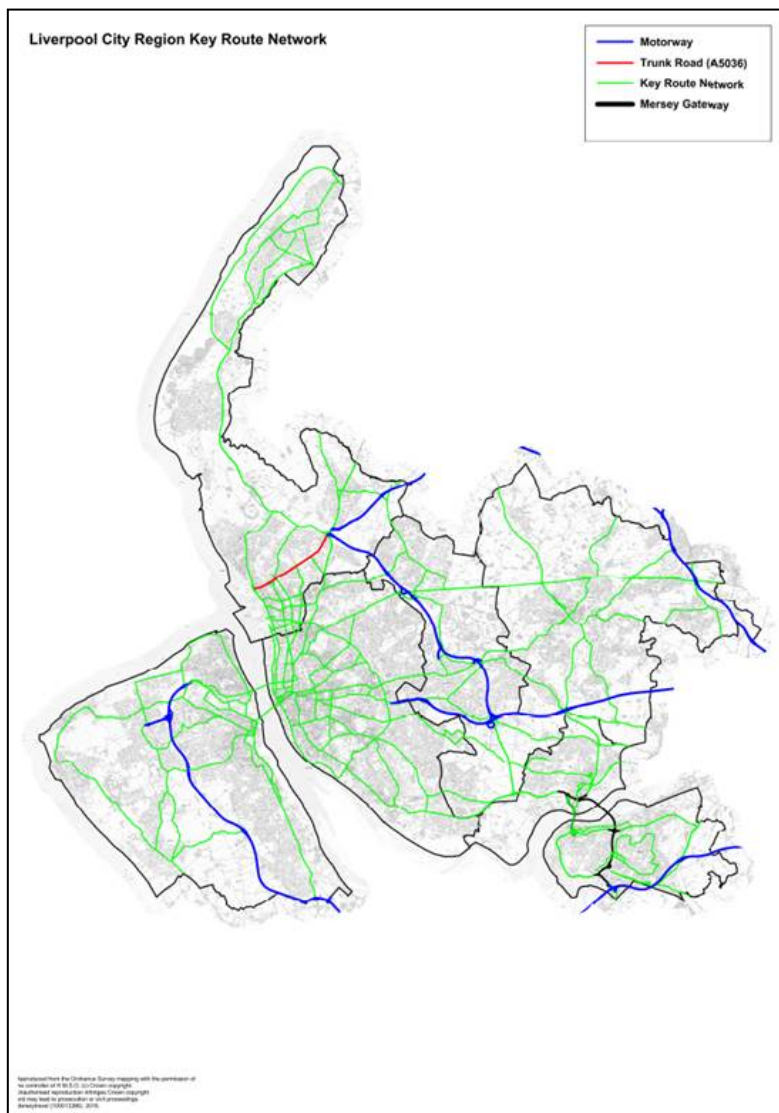
4.18 As part of the Transport Investment Strategy published in 2017, the Government committed to creating a Major Road Network (MRN)¹⁵, and draft proposals were issued for consultation, outlining how a new MRN would help the Government deliver a number of objectives, including unlocking land for new housing development, whilst supporting wider economic growth and rebalancing the economy. The creation of an MRN will allow for dedicated funding from the National Roads Fund to be used to improve this middle tier of the busiest and most economically important local authority 'A' roads. As such, Liverpool City Region has proposed a number of roads for inclusion, in order to maximise the housing and economic opportunities afforded through the development of the Major Road Network and the associated funding stream.

¹³ *Road investment strategy: post-2020* documents available [here](#) on UK government website.

¹⁴ *Highways England's Strategic Road Network Initial Report* available [here](#) on UK government website

¹⁵ *Proposals for the creation of a Major Road Network* consultation documents are available [here](#) on UK government website. An interactive map showing the indicative Major Road Network and Strategic Road Network is also available [here](#) on Department for Transport's website.

Figure 2: Liverpool City Region Key Route Network



4.19 The definition of a Key Route Network (KRN) of strategically significant roads across the Liverpool City Region was agreed by the Combined Authority in April 2016. This stemmed from ‘enabling’ powers that were made available to the Combined Authority and commitments within the Liverpool City Region’s Devolution Deal. It seeks to move towards a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to the management of the city region’s most important local roads. The KRN model provides a means to better integrate land use planning and transport decision-making at a strategic level. In relation to West Lancashire, Lancashire County Council are in the process of confirming their own KRN, and will ensure it matches with the LCR KRN where roads cross the boundary between Lancashire and the LCR Combined Authority area. The Draft Transport Strategy from the Cheshire and Warrington LEP (2018) suggests that the focus there will be on the Strategic Road Network, the TfN Main Road Network, complemented by other local improvements.

7.

The LCR authorities agree to work collaboratively with other relevant bodies to identify and address required improvements to the Strategic Road Network and Major Route Network.

Additionally, the Liverpool City Region partners have agreed an LCR Key Route Network to support new housing and employment development across the Liverpool City Region and unlock growth, and the Lancashire Key Route Network will be consistent with this in relation to their network in West Lancashire.

Cycling and Walking

- 4.20 The LCR Rights of Way Improvement Plan details how improvements made to the public rights of way network can provide a better experience for walkers, cyclists and all users of public rights of way, based on the needs of local people and visitors.
- 4.21 A LCR Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is under preparation to provide a long term approach to developing comprehensive walking and cycling networks. It is intended that the LCWIP will provide: a network plan for walking and cycling that identifies preferred routes and core zones for further development; a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment; and a report setting out the underlying analysis and narrative to support the network and identified improvements. The emerging LCWIP has identified 31 cycling and walking corridors with local partners and the Department of Transport (DfT) to form a strategic route network across the City Region.

8.

The LCR authorities agree to work collaboratively to implement the LCR Rights of Way Improvement Plan and LCR Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan when finalised.

Port of Liverpool

- 4.22 The Port of Liverpool is one of the UK's top five container ports, operating within Sefton, Liverpool and Wirral. The largest volume and density of large warehousing (over 97,000 ft²/ 9,000m²) of any UK region is located within a 70 mile radius of Liverpool. As such, Liverpool's location at the heart of the UK offers a distinct advantage, with over 65% of the population of the UK and Ireland living within a 150 mile radius of the city. Liverpool already is the leading transatlantic port for the UK and handles 45% of North American trade.
- 4.23 The Port is a major short sea shipping hub for the Irish Sea area and has deep sea container shipping services connecting Liverpool to global destinations. Additionally, the Manchester Ship Canal carries around 8 million tonnes of cargo a year, removing freight from overcrowded roads and rail, and is the UK's largest inland seaway. Peel Ports currently operate a container ship shuttle service from the Port

of Liverpool to Manchester along the Ship Canal, which is the most environmentally-friendly bulk logistics solution in the UK, making an important contribution to the UK's carbon footprint reduction targets by delivering waterborne goods right to the heart of the country.

4.24 The Draft Port Master Plan¹⁶ outlines the growth aspirations for the Port of Liverpool and Manchester Ship Canal. Port forecasts have indicated that rail traffic from the port has the potential to grow from 12 trains per day per direction up to 38, and work is underway to provide this capacity.

4.25 The current road access to the Port is constrained due to traffic congestion at peak times and will need to be improved during the plan period. The area adjacent to the main entrance to the Port suffers from poor air quality. It is recognised that major road improvements to facilitate port access will be required in the long term.

4.26 A scheme has been included in the national Road Investment Strategy, and Highways England is developing proposals to improve access to the Port of Liverpool and address traffic congestion in the area. A new dual carriageway route through the Rimrose Valley was announced as the preferred option in 2017. The proposals will be considered directly by the Planning Inspectorate through the Development Consent Order process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, and the proposals are currently at the pre-application stage. The judicial review of the consultation process requested by Sefton Council has been dismissed and Highways England is continuing to develop its preferred option.

9.

The LCR authorities support measures to support the growth of the Port and its aspirations set out in the Port Master Plan through investment in infrastructure, education, training and skills and the environment.

The LCR authorities will continue to work together to address capacity issues on the A5036 Dunnings Bridge Road corridor linking the port to the motorway network.

The LCR authorities agree that there are junction bottlenecks along the A580 (which is a prime corridor for development of new logistics sites to support the Port of Liverpool), and will continue to work together to address these issues.

Liverpool John Lennon Airport

4.27 Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA), one of the fastest growing airports in the UK in terms of passengers, has limited freight traffic at present. It generates £250m GVA per annum for the LCR (with the capability for this to increase to £625 million). The

¹⁶ *Mersey Ports Master Plan* available [here](#) on Peel Ports' website.

Airport Master Plan¹⁷ sets out aspirations to increase passenger numbers to 7.8m passengers per annum by 2030 and 11m by 2050. Its catchment area covers the Liverpool City Region, North Wales, Lancashire, the Midlands, Yorkshire and Scotland. Improving surface access to enable seamless journeys will help make LJLA more attractive to new routes and drive upwards its economic contribution to the area, not least in increasing levels of inbound tourists. It is noted that the A562 has capacity issues and junction bottlenecks that may hold back economic growth potential in this area.

10.

The LCR authorities acknowledge the strategic importance of Liverpool John Lennon Airport and its important contribution to the local economy, and will support the Airport through investment in infrastructure improvements, including the Eastern Access Transport Corridor, education, training and skills.

Digital Inclusion

- 4.28 The LCRCA is actively progressing the intention to create a resilient full fibre network interlinking the 6 LCR Local Authority areas, in order to accelerate the development of comprehensive local access networks to deliver ultrafast connectivity for homes and businesses, unlock major investment, and stimulate tech clusters plus growth across all sectors.
- 4.29 This will involve building on key existing assets, notably the GTT transatlantic internet fibreoptic cable landing near Southport, the STFC¹⁸ Hartree Centre and IBM's high performance computing and artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities at Daresbury, the major science, education, health and culture facilities in Knowledge Quarter, 5G testbed in Liverpool, plus the LCR's four Global Digital Exemplar NHS trusts.
- 4.30 In addition to taking a holistic approach to developing digital infrastructure across other LCR policies (energy, planning, housing, skills and transport), a defining feature of our approach is the desire to "dig once", i.e. maximise opportunities to install ducting and fibre when the round is already open for other purposes (e.g. Key Route Network upgrades or installation of extensive new cycle routes).

¹⁷ Liverpool John Lennon Airport Master Plan to 2050 available [here](#) on Liverpool Airport website.

¹⁸ Details available [here](#) on Hartree Centre website

11.

The LCR authorities agree that the city region must develop its own investment plans to accelerate investment and deployment in shared infrastructure to maximise development of digital and tech businesses, to support rapid public sector transformation and provide improved digital connectivity for residential properties and businesses .

Utilities

4.31 The seven authorities will continue to work with infrastructure providers regarding provision of infrastructure, including National Grid, Distribution Network Operators (e.g. Manweb Scottish Power, Cadent) and United Utilities through regular liaison. With United Utilities this includes regular meetings regarding water supply, water resources and resilience and waste water services.

12.

The LCR authorities agree to identify areas where improvements to utilities infrastructure are needed to support schemes of city region significance, and will broadly set out working arrangements to deal with cross-boundary issues.

Renewables

4.32 The seven local authorities, together with Warrington, jointly prepared the Renewable Energy Capacity Study in 2011¹⁹. This study focussed on wind energy, and looked only at wind speeds and high-level constraints with a view to identifying areas suitable for multiple turbine installations. Since then, there is a new national emphasis on the importance of identifying areas suitable for commercial scale renewable and low carbon energy in plans. There is an opportunity for joint working between the Liverpool City Region authorities, to generate a new evidence base regarding renewable energy, including wind. The Liverpool City Region already has a growing cluster of offshore wind energy assets and expertise and in 2012 was designated by the Government as one of six Centres for Offshore Renewable Engineering (CORE) in England, and therefore there is great potential for growth in the renewables sector.

Mersey Tidal Power

4.33 The River Mersey has the second largest tidal range in the UK and one of the largest in Europe. Renewable power sources such as wind, solar and biomass have quickly established themselves as a principle energy source. Due to the growth of these renewable energy sources, along with gas and nuclear, low carbon energy now

¹⁹ Liverpool City Region Renewable Energy Capacity Study available [here](#) (part one) and [here](#) (part two) on Knowsley Council website.

makes a major contribution to the UK energy mix. New technologies such as offshore wind and energy storage have grown exponentially and presented the UK and areas leading in their development such as LCR substantial investment levels and new economic opportunities in their supply chains.

4.34 However, the potential of tidal energy in the UK and specifically the Liverpool City Region is untapped despite the major benefits both in terms of energy and the economy. In developing the business case and a preferred solution the Mersey Tidal Power Project will have to recognise and adequately mitigate any impacts upon environmental protection, shipping movements, freight and logistics and the maritime sector.

13.

The LCR authorities will work together to generate a new evidence base regarding renewable energy, including wind.

The LCR CA will continue to develop the business case and preferred solution for the Mersey Tidal Power project.

Health and Wellbeing

4.35 It is increasingly accepted that the planning process has a significant part to play in creating healthy places and in promoting healthy life choices. It can also reduce environmental inequalities which affect health, wellbeing and quality of life. The Liverpool City Region partners recognise that development offers opportunities to influence these environmental determinants and improve health and wellbeing and quality of life for those living and working in and visiting the City Region, by:

- improving access to a choice of homes and jobs;
- improving infrastructure and access to healthier, sustainable modes of travel including public transport, walking and cycling;
- improving air quality and reducing pollution and carbon emissions;
- providing green infrastructure and opportunities for walking, cycling, outdoor recreation and sport which will help to improve physical and mental health and well-being;
- applying appropriate design standards to promote health and wellbeing; and
- providing safe waste storage and recycling opportunities.

4.36 Hospital and health service trusts operate across the local authority boundaries in the City Region and beyond. For example, Mersey Care NHS Trust provides specialist services including mental health and addiction services across Liverpool, Sefton and northern Knowsley, medium secure services for Cheshire and Merseyside, and national high secure services at Ashworth Hospital, Maghull in Sefton. The City Region authorities work with Clinical Commissioning Groups, hospital and health

Trusts regarding health needs, future housing and other development and land disposal or acquisition programmes of these trusts.

14.

The LCR authorities will continue to work with partners to take opportunities for development to improve health, wellbeing and quality of life across the City Region.

The LCR authorities will continue to work with Clinical Commissioning Groups, hospital and health trusts regarding health needs, future housing and other development and the estate management programmes of these trusts.

Environmental and Green Infrastructure

4.37 Parts of the City Region have an outstanding environment and green infrastructure network which help to make the City Region distinctive, and which are valued by local residents, businesses and visitors. These natural and green infrastructure networks extend at a landscape or catchment scale across local authority boundaries. They include the internationally important nature sites on the Sefton Coast and Wirral Coast, the Mersey Estuary, inland ancient woodlands and an urban green infrastructure network including urban parks and strategic green links such as the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, Bridgewater Canal, Trans Pennine Trail and the emerging National Coast Path which consolidates the existing Coast paths in the City Region.

4.38 The seven local authorities recognise the need for a strategic approach to the City Region's natural assets and green infrastructure. They continue to work together and with a wide range of partners and funding sources to protect, enhance and where possible extend these networks and make the most of the many opportunities and benefits they offer. Nature Connected, the Local Nature Partnership, is the on-going forum for some of this work. Partners include the Environment Agency, Natural England, Mersey Forest, the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside, United Utilities, Atlantic Gateway and the Peel Group and other businesses and community organisations.

4.39 The LCR Ecological Network is a joint evidence base developed in 2015 by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) as the foundation for a common policy approach to natural assets across the City Region. It identifies a LCR Nature Improvement Area (NIA) with individual NIA Focus Areas, many of which are cross-boundary, for example the Sefton Coast NIA, the Black Brook and Sankey Valley Corridor NIA.

4.40 Neighbouring areas of Lancashire (including West Lancashire), Greater Manchester and Cheshire are currently preparing Ecological Networks, which will allow a more integrated approach between the City Region and adjacent local authorities.

15.

The LCR authorities will continue to work with a range of partners to protect, enhance and where possible extend the strategic natural assets of the City Region.

Protecting internationally-important habitats

4.41 The Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA) of the development plans of the LCR authorities including West Lancashire identified direct impacts and especially the ‘in combination’ impact of housing and tourism-related development in increasing recreation pressure on the internationally important nature sites on the Sefton and Wirral Coasts.

4.42 The LCR authorities (within the Combined Authority, so not including West Lancashire), MEAS and Natural England have commissioned a Recreation Mitigation Strategy (RMS) for the LCR coast to provide guidance on how the City Region can avoid or mitigate likely significant effects from these developments. An interim policy approach for Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents is being co-ordinated across the local authorities pending the collection of additional baseline surveys and the completion of this RMS.

16.

The LCR authorities agree to work towards a co-ordinated interim policy approach for mitigating impacts on the LCR coast, pending completion of the Recreation Mitigation Strategy in 2020. The LCR authorities and other partners will work towards implementation and delivery of the strategy across the City Region.

Northern Forest and Mersey Forest

4.43 Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton and St. Helens councils, together with Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington councils, the Forestry Commission, Natural England and the Environment Agency are part of the long-standing The Mersey Forest partnership. The Mersey Forest continues to deliver an ambitious strategy benefitting the economy and businesses, natural environment, health and wellbeing and the local community of Merseyside and North Cheshire.

4.44 Recently The Mersey Forest team has been working with colleagues from the Woodland Trust and the other Community Forests in the north of England to prepare the plan for the Northern Forest. This is a 25 year vision to plant 50 million trees across the North of England, stretching from Liverpool to Hull; delivering up to £2.2bn of GVA in an area which is home to 13 million people.

4.45 The Mersey Forest has also facilitated and coordinated a common commitment to green infrastructure across the City Region, across the local authorities and a range of businesses, local organisations and other partners.

17.

The LCR authorities will continue to work with partners to make the most of the opportunities and benefits offered by the Mersey Forest and Northern Forest.

Flood and coastal erosion risk management

4.46 Joint working between lead local planning and flood authorities, Coast protection authorities, the Environment Agency and United Utilities and other partners across the City Region and beyond includes strategic, cross-boundary schemes across river catchments. This will continue into the future.

18.

The LCR authorities will continue to work with partners in relation to strategic management of flood risk across river catchments and in relation to other sources of flooding where appropriate.

Air quality

4.47 The Government's UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations (July 2017)²⁰ recognised that air quality has an important effect on public health, the economy, and the environment. Vehicle emissions linked to volumes of traffic movement are an increasingly important cross-boundary issue for the City Region. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is still contributing to pollution levels that continue to be damaging to public health; and older people, children, people with pre-existing lung and heart conditions, and people on lower incomes may be most at risk. A LCR study on air quality has been commissioned to explore what measures need to be delivered and an Air Quality Task Force was established by the Combined Authority at the end of 2018.

19.

The LCR authorities and other partners will work together to address cross-boundary air quality issues and to deliver mitigation and measures to deliver air quality improvements across the City Region.

²⁰ The Air Quality Plan for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in UK (2017) is available [here](#) on DEFRA's website.

Waste and Minerals

4.48 The Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan was adopted in July 2013. It covers the local authorities of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St. Helens, Sefton and Wirral and sets out a strategy for dealing with waste management planning through to 2027. It aims to facilitate the development of a network of sustainable and modern waste management facilities which enable Merseyside and Halton to be as sustainable and self-sufficient as possible in terms of waste management. West Lancashire is covered by documents forming the Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, prepared by Lancashire County Council as waste planning authority for that area.

4.49 City Region authorities participate in the NW Aggregates Working Party and subscribe to the national Managed Aggregate Supply System through market monitoring and production of an annual Local Aggregates Assessment (LAA). The LAA is produced jointly with other authorities to reflect an aggregates sub-region defined by Government to include Merseyside, Warrington and Greater Manchester. Matters related to minerals reserves and land banks are monitored and reported annually at this sub-regional level through the LAA. This is the principal component of the evidence base to inform the future role of the City Region authorities in facilitating the appropriate supply of aggregate minerals.

20.

The LCR authorities agree that the Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan continues to provide a suitable vision for the management of waste up to 2027 and that the need for any changes to this Plan will be addressed on an on-going basis as required by relevant legislation.

The LCR authorities will maintain their commitment to the Managed Aggregate Supply System through continued representation in the North West Aggregates Working Party, will continue to work with MEAS and each other on minerals issues and will consult with Lancashire County Council as Minerals Planning Authority.

5 Governance and Management

Governance

- 5.1 This Statement of Common Ground has been prepared by the seven local authorities – Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St.Helens, Sefton, West Lancashire and Wirral – and by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (which covers six of the local authorities – West Lancashire is an associate member).
- 5.2 There is an established mechanism for agreeing City Region-wide documents, and the Statement of Common Ground has followed this procedure. It has been agreed at the Liverpool City Region Housing and Spatial Planning Advisory Group (comprising the Portfolio Holders from each of the 6 constituent local authorities and other stakeholders), and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (on which Mayor / Leaders of the 6 constituent local authorities and the Liverpool City Region Mayor have voting rights) which has adopted the LCR Statement of Common Ground.
- 5.3 Once adopted by the LCR Combined Authority each of the 7 authorities will then adopt the document through the relevant mechanism. West Lancashire’s status as an associate member of the Combined Authority means that decisions on joint planning work are made by that council’s cabinet.
- 5.4 The LCR Statement of Common Ground will be made publicly available on the local authorities’ and Combined Authority’s websites.

Management

- 5.5 The practical work of preparing the final Statement of Common Ground, and subsequently keeping it up-to-date, will be coordinated by the Combined Authority’s Lead Officer for Spatial Planning, the local authorities’ representatives on the Chief Planners Group, and the supporting staff network across the city region.

6 Timetable for Review and Update

- 6.1 The LCR Statement of Common Ground is a live document and will be regularly reviewed and updated. The timing for review will be determined by the preparation timetables of each authority's Local Plan (as set out Table 2 below) or, if relevant, when new or updated evidence becomes available. As a minimum, the LCR authorities will consider on an annual basis if a review is considered necessary.
- 6.2 Future versions of the statement will be agreed by the Combined Authority and local authorities as outlined above.

Table 2: Local Plan Timetables (as of March 2019)

Authority	Present Plan Adoption Date	Proposed Plan Review Date	Target/Actual Reg. 18 Date	Target/Actual Reg. 19 Date	Target/Actual Submission Date
Halton	2013	Ongoing	Jan 2018	Summer 2019	Dec 2019
Knowsley	2016	TBC			
Liverpool	2002	Ongoing	Sep-Nov 2016	Jan-Mar 2018	May 2018
St.Helens	2012	Ongoing	Dec 2016-Jan 2017	Jan-May 2019	Autumn 2020
Sefton	2017	TBC			
West Lancashire	2013	Ongoing	Oct-Dec 2018	Autumn 2019	Winter 2019
Wirral	2000	Ongoing	Jan 2020	Sep 2020	Nov 2020

Appendix 1: Background Information on the Seven Local Authorities

Information on the development plans of the seven local authorities and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority SDS is available on the following web pages.

Halton: <https://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/policyguidance/planningplans.aspx>

Knowsley: <https://www.knowsley.gov.uk/residents/building-and-planning/local-plan>

Liverpool: <https://liverpool.gov.uk/council/strategies-plans-and-policies/environment-and-planning/plan-making-in-liverpool/current-local-plan-documents/local-plan/>

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority: <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-spatial-planning/>

Sefton: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/localplan>

St.Helens: <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/localplan>

West Lancashire: <https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/the-local-plan.aspx>

Wirral: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans>

Appendix 2: Summary of Key Cross-Boundary Spatial Planning Issues

N.B. The individual signatory authorities recognise the need to continue to cooperate and work closely with other neighbouring local authorities and relevant bodies and, where necessary, will prepare separate Statements of Common Ground with these to cover more locally specific cross boundary matters.

	Halton	Knowsley	Liverpool	St.Helens	Sefton	West Lancashire	Wirral
Liverpool John Lennon Airport – expansion and surface access	✓	✓	✓				
Mersey Estuary – protected habitat (with Cheshire West and Chester, Liverpool, and Wirral; also Natural England).	✓		✓				✓
Tidal flood risk from River Mersey	✓		✓		✓		✓
Tidal flood risk from Ditton Brook	✓	✓					
Highways access to key existing and future economic development/employment sites	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Housing growth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategic road infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public transport connectivity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sankey Valley river catchment	✓			✓			
Green Belt and strategic green infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Renewable energy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategic access to Port of Liverpool			✓		✓		
Managing impacts on internationally-important nature sites	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Flood risk (managing fluvial impacts in Alt and Crossens catchments)		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Agreement of housing and employment land targets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Development and improvement of transport infrastructure to address cross-boundary commuting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Minerals and waste planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cross-Mersey movement	✓		✓				✓

Glossary

Key Route Network (KRN): Networks being developed by combined authorities to improve the management of local roads in their area. KRN identify local roads that are strategically important to the growth of the economy. They provide a city region-wide approach to managing strategically important roads, allowing for more efficient maintenance and action to reduce congestion.

Local Aggregate Assessments (LAA): An annual assessment of the demand for and supply of aggregates in a mineral planning authority's area. LAAs can be produced jointly by more than one mineral planning authority.

The LCR authorities: Unless otherwise stated, for the purposes of this Statement of Common Ground, these are the local authorities of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St.Helens, Sefton, West Lancashire and Wirral, along with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Major Road Network (MRN): Proposed network of roads that will form a middle tier of the country's busiest and most economically important local authority 'A' roads, sitting between the national Strategic Road Network (SRN) and the rest of the local road network. A specific new funding stream will be dedicated to improvements on MRN roads.

Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS): Specialist unit jointly funded by the six Liverpool City Region authorities to provide advice on specific environmental matters.

Regulation 18 (Reg 18): As set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The initial stage of consultation on the preparation of a Local Plan where Local Planning Authorities invite comment (representations) from local communities, businesses and other interested stakeholders about what subjects the plan ought to contain.

Regulation 19 (Reg 19): As set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The second stage of the consultation process when forming a Local Plan providing local communities, businesses and other interested stakeholders with the opportunity to make comment (representations) on the policy content of a draft Local Plan, within a specific remit. The remit relates to the 'Tests of Soundness' and also includes legal compliance, as set out in National Planning Policy Framework.

Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA): Assessment commissioned jointly by the LCR authorities to provide a consistent joint evidence base on housing and employment land needs for the LCR up to 2037.

Strategic Route Network (SRN): Comprises nationally significant roads which connect the main centres of population. These roads provide access to major ports, airports and inter-

modal freight terminals and the main cross-border routes to Scotland and Wales. Highways England operate, maintain, and enhance the SRN.