

Cabinet

18 April 2012

Seaham and Murton Masterplan

Key Decision R&ED/05/12



Report of Corporate Management Team

Ian Thompson, Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development

Councillor Neil Foster, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The masterplan provides the detailed programme of activity that is taking place or is planned in Seaham and Murton by the Council and our partners.
- 2 The masterplan provides the strategic context to delivery and seeks to establish key principles to co-ordinate and guide regeneration activity and investment decisions. The document is one of a series of masterplan frameworks that is being established for the principal towns across the County. The masterplan has been prepared by Officers within RED and builds upon recent, independent advice from external consultants and collated baseline information.

Background

- 3 Seaham is a key, major centre within County Durham and is allied closely with Murton, given the geographic proximity of the settlements and previous regeneration and economic development initiatives to tackle deprivation in former coalfield communities. Over recent decades, the resident population has reduced (primarily as a result of the contraction and ultimate cessation of coal mining in East Durham) although, more recently, the population has stabilised at circa 22,000 in Seaham and 7,350 in Murton. The population trend is now upwards, creating identified requirements for new housing within the County Durham Plan (Core Strategy Policy Directions 2011).
- 4 The settlements benefit from easy access to the A19 and, from there, to the major regional conurbations, airports and other strategic transport networks. Seaham and Murton's position within the A19 corridor, location on the Durham Heritage Coast and previous, substantial investments (led by the public sector under the Seaham Regeneration Strategy 1994 and the National Coalfields Programme) have led, over the course of the last

decade, to the attraction of development in retail facilities, a wider range of housing options and a supply of business space.

- 5 With the programmes and projects contained within the Regeneration Strategy of 1994 having been delivered, a new, refreshed masterplan is proposed, to encompass both settlements, with core aims to:
 - Focus and co-ordinate the regeneration activities of Durham County Council and its partners and assist the enabling of a delivery mechanism for the various regeneration projects;
 - To input into the delivery of the emerging Local Development Framework and Community Infrastructure Plan and draw together the strategic and policy drivers for development and regeneration within Seaham and Murton;
 - Assist in the consultation process with partners, stakeholders and the community;
 - Assist in taking proposals forward with investors, developers and landowners; and,
 - Raise the profile of Seaham and Murton to stimulate further investment activity.

- 6 This masterplan framework seeks to express the County Council's desire to stimulate regeneration activity and to guide investment and development in Seaham and Murton, with a focus on enhancing the vitality of both centres, and to build upon the potential within both settlements for further regeneration and investment activity. It is designed to secure the creation of modern and vibrant settlements with the potential to further diversify and grow. The work which underlies the masterplan has examined the specific needs of Seaham and Murton, together with the range of potential development opportunities that exist in the area and has devised a delivery plan to make provision for a series of key, linked physical regeneration projects which have the potential to have a catalytic effect in raising the profile and economic performance of both settlements. This work involved also an assessment of infrastructure needs associated with the masterplan area.

- 7 The key drivers which underlie the masterplan include:
 - Providing sustainable and vibrant settlement centres with a focus on deliverability, creating key opportunities for change by securing definitive proposals for development, redevelopment or refurbishment of land and premises;
 - Establishing a clear set of priority projects together with a realistic delivery plan which reflects both market demand, investor appetite and availability of sources of finance.
 - Promoting the diversification of the local economy and employment growth, led by the private sector;
 - Developing the leisure offer and asset base, most notably in relation to Seaham North Dock, the coastal park, green infrastructure links between Murton, Seaham and the coast and gateway locations;

- Consolidating and building the population and expenditure base and improving the balance and mix of the housing offer to include market for sale, intermediate tenure and rented, which would in turn help to underpin a sustainable local economy;
- Optimising the environmental, social and economic sustainability of Seaham and Murton through the design and phasing of the developments and the implementation process; and,
- Ensuring that key stakeholders, in particular those using the settlement centres, are positively engaged in the process and that the final outcomes are ones which local residents and businesses have confidence and pride in.

8 To create truly vibrant and sustainable centres in Seaham and in Murton will require the assembly of the necessary “building blocks”, infrastructure and appropriate investment to attract shoppers, business and leisure visitors and their expenditure. In addition, the centres are and will be home to numerous residents who can take advantage of the services and facilities available to them. There is a range of opportunities to be exploited and promoted and, in summary, the necessary conditions for sustainable and competitive settlement centres, building upon existing resources, will be as follows:

- The Council will work with private sector partners and others to deliver appropriate, market-driven solutions to optimise the use of the sites in the context of the primary retail area of Seaham town centre. In some locations, this may entail facilitating the provision of modern floorplates for retailers, office users and leisure providers and, in other locations, to improve the public realm and legibility between key areas. The priority sites are at:
 - **Land Above North Dock**
 - **Railway Streets**
 - **Blandford Place/ Caroline Street**
 - **Castlereagh Road/Tempest Road**
 - **St John’s Square**
 - **Church Street**
- Similarly, the Council will seek to support private property owners, retailers, service providers and other interested parties in securing and enhancing **Woods Terrace** as the primary retail area of Murton.
- The Destination Plan prepared for Seaham in March 2009 recognises that the town should make better use of its principal natural resources, being the coastline and the harbour. It proposes a series of initiatives, based around uplifting Seaham’s leisure offer to provide a safe and attractive environment for visitors. The Council has already delivered the first, key project in the form of a marina and dockside business units at North Dock. **There is a need to support the private sector and identify land for hotel development in the town. The Council**

will continue to work with partners to facilitate the growth of Seaham as a visitor destination.

- There are a number of sites (to the north of Seaham town centre and throughout the village of Murton) that could provide residential development for sale, intermediate tenure and rent. **Additional housing close to the centres will help the vitality and viability of the settlements and the Council will continue to work with The Homes and Communities Agency and the development industry to deliver the new homes that Seaham and Murton require. In Seaham, this work is being undertaken by way of a Joint Venture with the Homes and Communities Agency which aims to deliver new homes and to facilitate the relocation of the town's secondary school with the provision of new facilities.**
- The prospects for the development of a Centre for Creative Excellence (major film/media village) to the South of Seaham are of regional significance. The scheme has the potential to act as a beacon for economic, educational and cultural opportunities and bring benefits to the economies of Seaham and Murton, nearby settlements and the whole region but has suffered delay in implementation due to the global restrictions on finance. **The Council will continue to work with the scheme sponsor, towards delivery of the project.**
- Seaham has been successful in attracting business space development to three sites which formed part of the East Durham Enterprise Zone Scheme from 1995 to 2005. Whilst this has provided the area with a supply of larger footplate, modern premises there remain unfulfilled opportunities to attract new businesses and additional employment, particularly at Spectrum Business Park. Additionally, there is an absence of smaller business units to accommodate SMEs. **The Council will endeavour to work with landlords and prospective incoming companies to ensure that Seaham and Murton take advantage of these opportunities and to encourage developments which offer business units for SMEs.**
- The Council will continue to work with partners to facilitate the delivery of an appropriate and feasible redevelopment scheme at the site of the **former Murton Colliery.**
- There are a number of examples of businesses in the locality and in the low carbon/automotive manufacturing sector which have been able to expand, increase exports, profits and employment. For example GT Precision Engineering has relocated to larger premises within the A19 corridor to undertake a programme of research and development, the manufacture of reduced emission exhaust systems and the employment of up to 200 additional staff. Other examples include TRW and Caterpillar. The sector supports over 2,000 jobs within the A19 corridor in East Durham alone. **The Council will continue to work with Business Durham, the development industry and**

companies in the low carbon/automotive sector to further expand research and manufacturing activity in the A19 corridor, including Hawthorn Prestige Business Park at Murton and the former Enterprise Zone sites in Seaham.

- Baseline study work has identified that the intersection of the A182 with the A19 will reach its designed capacity as a number of proposed property development projects are implemented and it is likely that improvements to the junction will be required. Similarly, it is anticipated that new residential development to the north of Seaham town centre may trigger a requirement for road improvements around the intersections between the A19 and B1404 and between the B1404 and B1285. **The Council will work with the Highways Agency and private developers and owners to identify necessary solutions and to ensure that Seaham and Murton's wider infrastructure is capable of accommodating future requirements.**
- The potential exists to **extend the coastal park** concept out to the site of the proposed film studio/media village and on to Murton and to open up additional pedestrian routes along Seaham's denes.
- There are also opportunities to **enhance the outer gateways** to both settlements and to improve the surrounds of the A182 South of Seaham link road, particularly as it nears Seaham town centre.

9 The Council is currently actively engaged with a range of private sector developers and public sector partners in order to influence the pace and scale of development in Seaham and Murton and to lever in maximum private sector investment, design quality and opportunity for residents. Examples of such developments and projects include:

- Working with landowners above Seaham North Dock in order to bring forward new development.
- Working with the Homes and Communities Agency and the private sector to deliver high quality and affordable new homes, a new secondary school for Seaham and new business sites to support the resident population.
- Working with developers and the HCA to deliver a mixed use scheme at the site of the former Murton Colliery.
- Supporting private property owners to improve premises in Church Street through an improvement scheme targeting business premises.
- Working to identify a development partner and deliverable development solution for the remainder of St John's Square.
- Working with Visit County Durham to improve the area's tourism/visitor potential and
- Supporting and encouraging inward investment and local entrepreneurial activity via Business Durham and property developers.

10 In terms of leading regeneration opportunities in Seaham, the Council is actively pursuing the following:

- Building upon the marina established at North Dock and extending development activity to the Land above North Dock with the creation of improved links to Byron Place and Church Street.
- Delivering an improved access to North Dock and Marquess Point.
- Refurbishing the Lifeboat House at North Dock.
- Utilising land assets at Hawthorn Prestige Business Park to attract businesses in the low carbon, automotive and advanced manufacturing sectors.
- Exploring opportunities for the redevelopment of key settlement centre sites.
- Conducting a masterplanning exercise to advise on the delivery of new homes for sites in the north of Seaham.
- Assessing infrastructure and environmental requirements across the framework area.
- Delivering the County Durham Apprenticeship Programme to Seaham and Murton.

11 The Council is also helping to support regeneration projects across the town. These are:

- Working with the scheme sponsor to deliver the Centre for Creative Excellence (Film Studio) project.
- Working with property developers to bring forward a redevelopment scheme for the former Murton Colliery;
- Working with the private sector to identify and develop new Hotel and Bed & Breakfast accommodation;
- Supporting private property owners to improve premises in Church Street and create a coherent streetscape through a building improvement scheme.

12 This masterplan is supported by a detailed delivery plan and project plans for each development site/proposal. These will be kept up-to-date.

Recommendations and Reasons

13 The Development Masterplan is the cornerstone document that will help plan, co-ordinate and deliver regeneration activity in Seaham and Murton over the coming years. It is therefore recommended that:

14 Cabinet approve the Seaham and Murton Masterplan 2012, subject to endorsement by the AAP.

15 Authority to agree the Masterplan is delegated to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development and the Corporate Director for Regeneration and Economic Development.

Background Papers

Seaham and Murton Development Masterplan 2012.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

The document contains a detailed delivery plan, with identified costs across Council services.

Staffing

None

Risk

We will regularly undertake a detailed risk assessment for each development project

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

These will be explored in further detail as part of specific projects brought forward under the framework.

Accommodation

The document refers to the potential need to relocate Sure Start facilities from an existing site above North Dock to alternative accommodation within the town centre, the most logical solution being purpose-built facilities at St John's Square.

Crime and Disorder

None

Human Rights

None

Consultation

Consultation has taken place with local Members in Seaham and Murton and with various external stakeholders including local businesses and various local stakeholders. The masterplan was circulated to the AAP in February 2012 and arrangements are being made for a presentation to be made and further dialogue to take place.

Procurement

None

Disability Issues

None

Legal Implications

The document will provide evidence to support the County Durham Plan but it will not have any statutory weight in the planning process.