

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2005

---

Report of the Director of Regeneration  
**BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN CENTRE URBAN RENAISSANCE MASTER PLAN**

**purpose of the report**

1. To update Members on the progress of a design-based master planning exercise which consultants Red Box Design Group are carrying out on behalf of the Council in relation to Bishop Auckland Town Centre.
2. To present and seek endorsement of the principles of the resulting draft proposals in order that a comprehensive public consultation exercise may be carried out so that the work may be progressed.

**background**

3. ONE North East Regional Economic Strategy Objective 6 identifies the town and city centres of the region as major drivers of economic change and as a result the County Durham Economic Sub-Regional Partnership have allocated significant resources to meet this objective. Members will be aware that within County Durham six major centres, including Bishop Auckland will benefit from this initiative. This reflects the priority agreed by the Wear Valley LSP.
4. In this context Red Box Design Group were commissioned earlier this year to prepare a design-based master plan for the northern part of Bishop Auckland town centre, the boundaries of which are defined in red (the inner boundary) on the plan in Annex 1.
5. The tender brief required the need to include:-
  - public realm design proposals
  - building improvement proposals
  - integration with ongoing proposals such as the restoration of Bishop's Palace Park
  - identification of design proposals for important redevelopment sites
  - proposals which exploit the potential to link and integrate the northern part of the town with the riverside and wider countryside
  - traffic management proposals (including exploration of Market Place circulation changes) and possibilities for additional parking.

6. A stakeholder workshop was held in August 2004 as part of an initial visioning exercise. The contributions made during this event have been fed into the project.
7. This is an important project, providing the basis for a bid to ONE North East for funding under The Urban Renaissance Programme to facilitate renaissance of the town centre. This work will also inform the review of the current Bishop Auckland Town Centre Strategy and preparation of the new Local Development Framework (L.D.F). The final Master Plan could be used as an Action Area Plan within the L.D.F.
8. On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December Red Box Design Group presented their proposals to Members and Officers of the Council. The work so far has identified some radical, exciting but achievable proposals. This work and resulting proposals are summarised in the proceeding sections of this report for Members consideration.

### **context**

9. The consultants recognised the importance of familiarising themselves with both the physical and economic context of Bishop Auckland and the wider district. This has required them to understand and appreciate the following issues:-
  - Demographics
  - Employment categories
  - Unemployment trends
  - Retailing system
  - Leisure tourism base
  - Deprivation
10. This information base has largely been achieved through discussions with stakeholders, reference to relevant studies, including the recent district wide retail study, statistical data and site visits.

### **identification of key strategic issues**

11. Based upon the above context the following strategic issues have been identified:-
  - Market Place – function & physical fabric
  - Fore Bondgate – function & physical fabric
  - Car parking & circulation
  - Linkages between attractions
  - Vibrancy of town centre
  - Evening economy
  - Housing demand
  - Public realm
12. A draft Master Plan is currently being developed on the basis of these key strategic issues.

## formulation of draft master plan

13. The plan in Annex 1 summarises the key elements of the draft Master Plan. The principles adopted include:-
- Identifying and tackling poor quality buildings including demolition and replacement
  - Improving permeability through town centre
  - Public realm improvements
  - Providing more accessible/ strategic parking areas
  - Replacing less accessible parking with architecture to make better use of available space to enhance the urban fabric.
  - Providing a sense of arrival
  - Diversifying & developing the 'evening economy'
  - Encouraging initiatives to promote residential development opportunities
  - Exploitation of towns natural assets

## study zones

14. With the above strategic issues and principles in mind the draft Master Plan has been divided into 3 study zones comprising of urban design, transport and landscape.

## urban design

15. The draft Master Plan promotes the need in Bishop Auckland to create a new public realm through good urban design which will;
- Enhance and create new spaces
  - Improve legibility and permeability
  - Enrich the experience of space
  - Make Bishop Auckland an aspirational place, attractive to residents and visitors.
16. Within this study zone the following opportunities have been identified, some of which would, if adopted, require commitment of the Council to take direct action such as compulsory purchase to assemble sites where necessary to facilitate the process:-
- **Redevelopment of the Newgate Centre Bus Station, Saddler Street, George Street and Tenters Street area including extension of the Newgate Centre.** There is an opportunity to drastically improve the physical fabric of this part of the town centre by rationalising the bus station, replacing/redeveloping buildings that do not positively contribute to the area and extending the existing Newgate Centre. A scheme could be

developed which releases up to 90% of land currently taken up by the existing bus station for redevelopment.

- **Redevelopment and improvement of the buildings situated on the junction of Newgate Street and Fore Bondgate.** Such action facilitates the creation a better interface between Fore Bondgate, Market Place and Newgate Street thus encouraging much greater use and activity as well as improving environmental quality.
- **Redevelopment of west end of Fore Bondgate to provide a public space and Finkle Street to provide leisure and retail units.** This site currently suffers from the unsightly visual effects that informal car parking provides coupled with poor quality properties in Finkle Street. It is suggested that the car parking area could be redesigned to transform the character of the site as a public space with café terraces and market stalls and by doing so could encourage usage and activity. Strategic tree planting could be carried out to soften the visual environment and permeability to the proposed retail site on North Bondgate to the north and redeveloped bus station area to the south could be improved through selective demolition.
- **Kingsway North.** The Master Plan identifies potential to extend the existing public car park at Kingsway and exploit the remaining natural asset of Castle Chare Woodland and improve the pedestrian experience through it.
- **Kingsway South.** The Master Plan identifies car-parking areas at Victoria Avenue (32 spaces) as offering potential for new, high quality development to reinforce street frontages onto Kingsway. These parking areas have manifested historically in response to clearance schemes. The spaces lost would be provided elsewhere, for example at Westgate Road. The Master Plan suggests that of the 77 displaced parking spaces 90 new spaces could be accommodated in more appropriate locations.
- **North Bondgate car park and bus depot site.** Members will be aware of the development potential of this site. The Master Plan recognises the potential that this site offers in respect to the renaissance of the town centre in respect to retail, leisure and residential opportunities which in turn could enhance the physical fabric of the area. The master plan also refers to the potential to redevelop the area to the east of this site.
- **Shop front improvements.** The Master Plan supports the concept of mechanisms to improve shop fronts as an integral component of the renaissance of the town centre.

## transport

17. Within this study zone a key issue has arisen, namely how to maintain transport links and facilities and achieve the aspirations for improvements to the public realm. A number of opportunities have been identified which would address this and assist in the renaissance agenda:-

- Traffic restrictions and diversions to Market Place
- Creation of peripheral car parking at Bob Hardisty Drive/ Westgate Road and Kingsway north.
- Rationalisation and redevelopment of bus station and changes to bus circulation.
- Traffic calming/ pedestrian priority through 'build outs' along North Bondgate to change the emphasis within the streetscape to one that is more pedestrian friendly.
- Public realm improvements at Theatre Corner.

### **landscape**

18. Within this study zone a number of opportunities have been identified which would assist in the renaissance agenda:-
- Maximising tourism opportunities through marketing and branding.
  - Improving the physical pedestrian environment of North Bondgate and Fore Bondgate through improved links and physical enhancement of buildings and streetscape.
  - Restoring the civic and community role of Market Place through building and streetscape enhancements and effective traffic management.

### **priorities identified**

19. Through the master plan exercise the following priorities have been identified:-
- The junction between Newgate Street, Market Place & Fore Bondgate ('Pound Stretcher Corner').
  - North Bondgate car park & bus depot redevelopment site.
  - Market Place public realm improvements including effective traffic management.
  - Public realm improvements to Fore Bondgate.

### **early wins**

20. It is suggested that the following projects would create the greatest impact with the greatest ease:-
- Market Place public realm improvements
  - Fore Bondgate public realm improvements
  - Shop front improvements

- Traffic restrictions and diversions relating to Market Place and North Bondgate
- Car park rationalisation
- Traffic calming/ pedestrian priority works along North Bondgate
- Theatre Corner public realm improvements
- Improved interpretation, signage & lighting within town centre.

### **conclusion**

21. It is proposed that the draft Master Plan be the subject of a public consultation exercise within the coming months. It is recognised that some of the proposals such as the manner in which traffic in Market Place can be managed and the clearance of unsightly buildings will no doubt raise lengthy debate. It is also considered that the work done so far presents a proactive, exciting but realistic approach to the challenges that Bishop Auckland faces at present.
22. It is also important that as part of the consultation process all members of the Council are able to participate. A presentation to full Council is proposed for the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 That Members endorse the principles of the proposals outlined in the draft Master Plan in order that a public consultation exercise may be carried out.
- 2 That members receive a full presentation on the proposals at Council on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

---

#### **Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
 Director of Regeneration  
 Ext 264

#### **Author of the report**

Carole Dillon  
 Principal Planning Policy Officer  
 Ext 269

---

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

12<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2005

---

Report of the Director of Regeneration

**ELDON LANE HOUSING RENEWAL AREA: COMPULSORY ACQUISITION OF LAND AT THE HOLLOW**

**purpose of the report**

1. To request the Committee's agreement to compulsory purchase proceedings being initiated for land at The Hollow, Eldon Lane. (See map attached at Annex 2).

**background**

2. As indicated in previous reports, significant interest has been apparent amongst private sector developers to acquire and redevelop land at Eldon Lane known as 'The Hollow.'
3. Although the land forms part of a clearance area, there remain several former house plots which have never been registered with the Land Registry, and where no record exists of the former owner(s). Consequently, the Council has not been in a position to offer the entire redevelopment site for sale with an unencumbered title to the land. This makes redevelopment extremely problematic, because potential purchasers are deterred by a lack of certainty over ownership.
4. A report, agreed by Housing Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2000, made provision for compulsory purchase proceedings to be instigated under delegated powers where no agreement on terms could be reached between the District Valuer and the relevant owners. However, in the case of the plots mentioned above, the owners are simply not known, so there is no opportunity for negotiation and subsequent invocation of compulsory purchase proceedings.

**the way forward**

5. Clearly, the Council needs to acquire the outstanding plots in order to put the larger area on the market for redevelopment with some degree of success. The most straightforward way of doing so is to use powers under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985.
6. Section 17 empowers local housing authorities to acquire compulsorily land for the provision of housing accommodation. It must be demonstrated that there is a compelling case in the public interest for such action, which must result in a quantitative or qualitative housing gain. The Secretary of State, in confirming an order, would expect the proposed development to be completed within 3 years of acquisition.

7. In seeking to acquire the land compulsorily, it can be confidently argued that all of these requirements will be met. Among the points in favour are:-
- Redevelopment of the site is essential to the overall improvement of the Eldon Lane area.
  - New housebuilding will help in re-establishing confidence in the local housing market by providing a range of modern dwellings for sale.
  - An otherwise undeveloped, derelict area of publicly-owned 'brownfield' land will be brought into use.
  - The increased population will help to underpin local services and will support the sustainability of Eldon Lane generally.
  - Local people who would otherwise have to move away from the area will have a greater choice of housing which may encourage them to stay.
  - The Council would be sending a clear message of its commitment to the future of the area.
8. The Council's Legal Advisor endorses this course of action, and costs can be met from the Housing Renewal Area budget.

### **conclusion**

9. It is important to facilitate the redevelopment of this unused land at Eldon Lane for the benefit of the community and this can only be achieved by compulsory acquisition of those plots whose ownership is unknown.

- RECOMMENDED**
- 1 That use of compulsory purchase powers in respect of the land at 'The Hollow' be approved, and
  - 2 the Director of Regeneration be instructed in conjunction with the Head of Legal Services to prepare an Order forthwith.

### **background information**

Land Registry Search Certificate Reference 153/W64TADB; Housing Act 1985 Section 17.

---

#### **Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
 Director of Regeneration  
 Ext 264

#### **Author of the report**

Jim Corby  
 Planning & Environmental Policy Officer  
 Ext 302

---



## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2005

---

Report of the Director of Regeneration

### **REGENERATION DEPARTMENT BALANCED SCORECARD**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To update Committee on the development and implementation of the regeneration service department balanced scorecard.
2. As part of its Performance Management Framework, the Council has undertaken to produce Balanced Scorecards both for Departments and for the Council as a whole. The purpose of the scorecards is to provide members, managers and staff with a fast but comprehensive view of how well we are doing against stated priorities.
3. The balanced scorecard represents the final aspect of the Council's performance management framework. It brings together our values, performance objectives, corporate baselines and financial requirements. All of these are important and we need to be able to measure how well we are performing against them. The scorecard is designed to bring together ordinary day to day activities of the department with corporate overall strategic objectives. This identifies a number of critical indicators that are seen to be important enough to measure in relation to the corporate/strategic objectives; namely:-
  - Customer centred
  - Citizen focussed
  - Community led
  - Finance and resources
  - Developing and empowering the people
  - Management and organisation.
4. The attached Regeneration Departmental Scorecard at Annex 3 has been developed alongside departmental Service Plans.
5. The balanced scorecard offers us a quick snapshot of "total" performance and goes beyond financial data as a measure of success. It assesses the relevance of each indicator to the Council's objectives of population, economy environment, crime, health and lifelong learning.

#### **the regeneration services balanced scorecard – see annex 3**

6. The scorecard identifies 15 critical success factors (csf) across the range of departmental services. Measurement of achievement is a mixture of output

and outcome based, and progress against identified programme activity. Of the 15 CSF and 20 individual targets, it can be seen that:

- 13 are on target
- 6 anticipate that target will be achieved by end of year
- 1 is behind target.

7. Refinement of the process of scoring success against the various aspects of the scorecard is underway. Following this, performance will be monitored on a six-monthly basis.

#### **conclusion**

8. The balanced scorecard represents the final piece in the jigsaw of the Council's performance management system. It puts together the various aims, objectives and plans and allows us to measure success in delivery. The system will develop and improve as time passes and circumstances and priorities change. However, it will always provide us with a baseline from which we can easily measure our performance and react positively where this is failing.

|                    |   |  |
|--------------------|---|--|
| <b>RECOMMENDED</b> | 1 | Committee endorses the progress made against the Balance Scorecard system within the Regeneration Service. |
|                    | 2 | Committee receive 6-monthly reports on this subject.   |

---

**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Director of Regeneration  
Ext 264

**Author of the report**

Robert Hope

---

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2005

---

Report of the Director of Regeneration

**'VIEW: SHAPING THE NORTH EAST.' THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE NORTH EAST: CONSULTATION DRAFT; NOVEMBER 2004**

**purpose of the report**

1. To bring to the Committee's attention the consultation draft of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and to determine the response to the consultation request.

**background**

2. '*VIEW: Shaping the North East*' is the draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East of England. The Regional Planning Body, the North East Assembly, has a statutory duty to produce this strategy as part of the Government's reform of the planning system. The document covers the period to 2021.
3. The final document will be of extreme importance to the Council as it will determine how much development should take place in the region over the next 15-20 years, what the form of this development should be, and where it should be located. The consultation period in relation to the draft document runs from 29<sup>th</sup> November 2004 to 4<sup>th</sup> February 2005. Thereafter, the document will be submitted to the Government in March 2005, which implies that major changes to the draft are not expected.
4. The Government expects local development frameworks produced by district authorities to be 'in conformity' with the Regional Spatial Strategy, hence what is included in the latter will undoubtedly influence and shape how Wear Valley District might develop. The RSS is, therefore, likely to have major repercussions for the Community Plan, as well as the statutory planning documents produced by the Council designed to support and give expression to the Community Plan's aspirations.

**main points**

5. Described as a 'working document' which attempts to strike 'the right balance between the development and protection of the region,' the RSS identifies four main themes:-

- Delivering economic prosperity and growth
  - Creating sustainable communities
  - Environment
  - Transport connections
6. An underlying assumption is that economic growth, as indicated by Gross Value Added (GVA\*) will be increased from 1.8% in 2001 to an annual average rate of 2.8% over the period covered by the strategy. This, in turn, will require a 'substantial' population increase, but one which carefully balances over- and under- supply of housing. The strategy therefore adopts a cautious approach towards the housing market, assuming an annual average GVA of 2.4% in this sector, whereas the higher rate of 2.8% is applied to all other aspects of the regional economy. That economy is seen as increasingly 'knowledge based.'
7. It is the conurbations, especially their city and town centres, which are regarded as the focus of economic activity and main centres for growth. The overall policy approach adopted by the RSS is therefore based on 'reducing economic disparities with development focussed within both the conurbations and towns in the city regions.'
8. In practical terms, this is expressed as prioritising growth based on 'city regions.' Thus, the RSS accords with '*The Northern Way – First Growth Strategy Report*,' which also proposes a clear spatial focus on city-regions as catalysts of growth, although Wear Valley is outside the city regions as defined by the Northern Way. The RSS, however, makes reference to both Bishop Auckland and Crook, albeit split between two city regions, in identifying the following spatial components:-
- the Tyne Wear City Region (defined as including Crook,) and in particular, central parts of Tyneside and Wearside; and
  - the Tees Valley City Region, (including Bishop Auckland,) particularly the central parts of the Tees Valley conurbation.
9. In both instances, development in the more peripheral areas such as Crook and Bishop Auckland, although to be promoted, is required not to impact adversely on regeneration initiatives in the core areas of the city regions.
10. A fundamental theme underlying all development activity is that it should follow a sequential approach and be sustainable, adhering to national planning guidance in relation to the use of previously developed sites.

### **implications of the draft strategy: population and housing**

11. There are certain aspects of the RSS about which individual Durham districts, and the County Council, have expressed strong reservations in the past.

---

\* a measure of productivity based on business output and employment statistics

12. Of fundamental concern is the issue of housing numbers. The County Durham local authorities have argued forcefully that the minimum aspiration for the County should be the achievement of population stability. Through the Local Strategic Partnership, a more ambitious target of modest population growth for Wear Valley District has been agreed, and planning for population increase, rather than accepting a trend of decline, is one of the Council's fundamental objectives.
13. The ability to achieve this objective clearly depends on the requisite housing allocations being made through the RSS. Whilst it is agreed that the conurbations are, and will continue to be, the main 'drivers' of the regional economy, that cannot justify, even by default, a negative view of the prospects for growth in County Durham generally and Wear Valley in particular.
14. Yet the figures put forward in the RSS for housing, as far as Durham County is concerned, seem to be based on an acceptance of continued out-migration and decline. They ignore pleas made by all the Durham authorities for provision for better and more housing, and suggest a potential reduction of 3,200 in population in County Durham.
15. Moreover, the distribution of housing to individual districts put forward by the RSS reflects a strong bias towards the conurbations. This ignores the need and potential for self-sustaining growth which is a feature of the Council's approach, developed with the LSP. It simply reinforces the view that areas outside the immediate urban field of the conurbations are to be regarded as peripheral - despite the 'Sustainable Communities' diagram in the document identifying part of Wear Valley as a '*Housing Market Restructuring Area*.'
16. Given that housing development is a key component in the process of regeneration (and not simply a 'by-product'), then the share of the housing allocation to be available to Durham County, and to Wear Valley in particular, ought to reflect the scale of problems this part of the region faces.
17. This aspect of the RSS is a major unresolved issue as far as the County Durham authorities are concerned which makes endorsement of the document in its present form very difficult for that reason.
18. Policy 32 of the RSS states that strategies, plans and programmes should include policies and programmes that provide for *average net additions* to the dwelling stock of Wear Valley District for the period 2004 – 2021 as indicated in the table.

## housing allocations

| <i>Period</i>        | <i>Average Annual Net Additions</i> | <i>Total Additions for Period</i> | <i>Commitments Indicated in UCS</i> | <i>Balance</i> |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 2004-11 (7 years)    | 145                                 | 1015                              | 2015                                | -1000          |
| 2011-16 (5)          | 190                                 | 950                               | 1000                                | -50            |
| 2016-21 (5)          | 140                                 | 700                               | 50                                  | -650           |
| Overall Average (17) | 155                                 | 2665                              |                                     | +650           |

19. It should also be borne in mind that the rate of new housing completions in the District has been running at an average of 258 per annum over the last 3 years compared to the proposed 157 per annum over the 10 years of the RSS. Although housing construction tends to be cyclical in character, following the national economy, there is no indication that housing completions would be likely to drop to what would be unprecedented low levels. Indeed both at sub-regional (the Durham County) and District levels, the whole thrust of community aspiration is to work towards increasing the social and economic attractiveness of the area and to stimulate in-migration. This approach would be severely compromised if the choice and location of housing were to be excessively and artificially constrained.
20. In addition the recently completed Wear Valley Urban Capacity Study (September 2004) identified a potential existing commitment at that time of some 2015 houses. If this is taken into account, then the additional net figure for new permissions for the 17 year RSS period amounts to only 650 houses above what is already identified. This represents a new build rate of about 38 houses per annum. Given that demolitions over this period could be in excess of 200 at least, then the 650 allowance for additional housing seems woefully inadequate.

### **summary : population and housing**

1. The key role of the conurbations as core areas of economic development is acknowledged and accepted. However, the aspirational target of 2.8% growth for the region must apply to all locations. County Durham, with a population of a quarter million, has severe problems of deprivation in areas like Wear Valley (the most deprived rural area) and Easington (the most deprived district in the North East). These problems cannot be ignored or bypassed simply to concentrate on the conurbations.
2. The unfulfilled potential of the districts must be realised so that they, and the County as a whole, can contribute to and benefit from the 2.8% growth rate which is advocated for the region generally.
3. A possible reduction in the population of County Durham of 3,200 is thus unacceptable. The RSS should be advocating positive development across the region, not presiding over the growth of certain favoured urban agglomerations at the expense of the decline of other settlements. The artificial suppression of the housing market in County Durham will reduce housing choice and accelerate the decline of many settlements in the County.

4. The inclusion of the main towns of Bishop Auckland and Crook in the city-regions is to be welcomed. However, inclusion should be accompanied by positive support for the development of these key towns as centres serving parts of the city-regions and rural “fringe-areas” which seem to be largely ignored.
5. The housing allocation to Wear Valley is inadequate to maintain current rates of housebuilding.

### **implications of the draft strategy: de-allocation of employment sites**

21. The RSS emphasises the need to monitor and review employment land allocations. It stresses that the quantity and distribution of land should ‘*reflect the RSS locational strategy; create employment opportunities in places that are economically competitive; and are close to where available workforces live.*’
22. The RSS suggests that, notwithstanding a projected increase in the take up of employment land, an oversupply exists in certain areas, notably County Durham. It suggests 105 ha of general employment land should be available in Wear Valley over the strategy period, although the existing Local Plan already identifies some 220ha.
23. Whilst it is acknowledged that the new Local Development Framework will need to consider the appropriateness of employment allocations, the premature acceptance of a large scaling-down of provision, without considering the local context, is unlikely to be consistent with Council objectives. Many sites may be difficult to ‘de-allocate’ and unsuitable for other uses, particularly housing.

### **summary : employment sites**

1. The de-allocation of employment sites is an issue that the Local Development Framework will consider taking into account the local context. The studies upon which the RSS’s arbitrary deletion of sites is based are not regarded as particularly robust or accurate. Hence, the need to achieve a “paper target” of reduction of sites is not acceptable.
2. At this stage in the development process, with the Local Development Framework not completed, it is premature to delete sites and difficult to replace them. There is no reason why the sites should be deleted at present; they do not inhibit local economic growth or cause any other difficulty.
3. The recent positive analysis of the geo-thermal potential of the Eastgate site makes the inclusion of reference to Eastgate in the RSS particularly welcome.

### **implications of the draft strategy: rural development/connectivity**

24. Although the RSS draws attention to the issue of Housing Market Restructuring, emphasis is again placed on the needs of the conurbations. The 'Regeneration Areas' shown on the key diagrams coincide with, but do not stretch beyond, the Housing Market Restructuring zones.
25. This analysis leaves areas like Weardale - and other towns and villages throughout the North East regarded as being on the fringe of the city-regions - somewhat out on a limb as far as any regional recognition of their difficulties is concerned. Yet in microcosm, their problems are often as severe as those found elsewhere in the region. Wear Valley is particularly hard hit as regards rural deprivation, and has 'connectivity' disadvantages which the RSS is supposed to be addressing regionally.
26. Again, the key diagram emphasises major north-south transport corridors in County Durham, apart from identifying the A66 trans-Pennine link. The document does not really elaborate on rural problems and solutions, nor relate these to connectivity issues which clearly have a major bearing on areas like Wear Valley.

### **summary : rural development/connectivity**

1. The problems of rural deprivation in areas like Wear Valley can be as severe as those experienced in parts of the conurbations. The Government requires all policy documents to be "rural-proofed", so that this aspect is not overlooked. The cursory attention paid to rural problems tends to follow from the "city-region" approach, and needs to be addressed in the RSS document.
2. Closely allied to this, "connectivity" has to embrace east-west access to the peripheral parts of the region, as much as concentration upon already-established north-south routes.

### **conclusion**

27. The approach to the major issue of sub-regional housing allocations still remains unresolved and as such cannot be supported. In a document which purports to address and influence change, a more 'optimistic' approach is necessary, and one which acknowledges fully the problems 'peripheral' areas face. I would recommend that the Council objects to these issues in the consultation process. If these are not resolved by the time the draft RSS is presented to ODPM in March then the Council will be obliged to be formal objectors to the RSS.



28. Many areas have significant rural problems and these need to be addressed with as much vigour on a regional scale as those experienced by the conurbations.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1 That the Committee approves the report and
- 2 Instruct the Director of Regeneration to respond to the RSS consultation emphasising the points made in this report, viz:
  - Acceptance of the role of the conurbations;
  - Formal objection to the housing allocations which will result in a drop in population in Co. Durham of some 3,200;
  - Objection to the emphasis on the conurbations at the expense of Co. Durham and Wear Valley in particular;
  - Objection to the proposed allocation of housing for Wear Valley as a suppression of the housing market, and rates of builds and as a hindrance to the ability of the Council and LSP to achieve sustainable communities through regeneration;
  - Emphasis on the need for positive support for key towns like Bishop Auckland and Crook as integral components of the city-regions, serving part of the latter and the rural fringe;
  - The issue of the de-allocation of industrial land is premature and in any event should be dealt with at a local level;
  - Welcome support for the Eastgate Project;
  - The need for more attention to be given to rural issues; and
  - East-West connectivity across the region needs more emphasis.

**background information**

View: Shaping the North East; *Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East; Consultation Draft. The North East Assembly, November 2004.*

---

**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Director of Regeneration  
Ext 264

---

**Author of the report**

Jim Corby  
Planning & Environmental Policy Officer  
Ext 302

---



**REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**12 JANUARY 2005**

Report of the Director of Regeneration  
**CONTAMINATED LAND STRATEGY UPDATE**

**purpose of the report**

1. To update members on a review of this Authority's existing Contaminated Land Strategy in accordance with the recommendations of The Environmental Protection Act 1990 Part IIA.

**background**

2. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 Part IIA placed a statutory duty upon local authorities to produce, consult and publish a Contaminated Land Strategy by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2001. In accordance with this duty, a Contaminated Land Strategy was produced and subsequently reported to Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2001.
3. The enforcement of this statute presented the Council with an important legal duty to inspect the district to identify any land that may be contaminated as a result of past or current usage, and to take any appropriate action to prevent any consequential harm to the environment.
4. Council agreed to adopt the Contaminated Land Strategy, which was to be subject to continual review.

**introduction**

5. The published document outlined a number of strategic aims, objectives and milestones in relation to the identification and remediation of contaminated land within the authority's boundaries. Since the adoption of the Strategy however, changes have occurred, both internally and externally, which have had an impact upon these targets and more specifically upon how the issue of contaminated land is dealt with in Wear Valley District.
6. Strategic Objectives outlined in the Strategy were to:-
  - Develop and publish a Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy – Achieved
  - Consult with Internal and External organisations – Achieved
  - Acquire a Geographical Information System (GIS) for use in connection with the new Part IIA contaminated land regime – Achieved

- Acquire relevant datasets and historical land use database – Not yet Achieved
  - Acquire and develop GIS prioritisation model – Not yet achieved.
  - Inspect potential contaminated sites – Unable to progress until GIS model is 'in situ'.
7. Additionally, recent legislation has affected how possible contaminated sites are to be assessed and internal re-organisation has 'clouded' the process of how the Strategy is to be delivered. In order to comply with Part IIA of the Act these areas need to be addressed.

### **internal re-structuring**

8. The initial strategy document identified the primary point of contact for Contaminated Land issues at Wear Valley District Council as the Principal Housing and Environment Officer. Since its publication, this officer left the authority, and for a period of time the position was left vacant with the role of contaminated land issues being dealt with on an 'ad hoc' basis.
9. A recent restructure of this post has devolved responsibility for upholding Part IIA of the Environment Protection Act to the newly appointed Environment/LA21 Officer. With the appointment of the officer the Council have given a clear focus and priority to resolve the outstanding issues and implement the reviewed strategy in accordance with existing legislation.

### **points to address for review**

update of risk assessment and guideline values

10. Possible contaminated land sites may require remediation to ensure that they pose no risk to human health or the environment, and in most cases the remediation recommended will be based on the findings of the risk assessment.
11. In March 2002 the *Contaminated Land Exposure Assessment (CLEA)* model and additional *Contaminated Land Reports (CLR)* were introduced. These contained the first UK approved, toxicologically based, Soil Guideline Values (SGV's), and the new adopted policy for human health risk assessment.
12. Following this, in December 2002, the Government withdrew the formerly used *Interdepartmental Committee on the Redevelopment of Contaminated Land (ICRCL)* intervention values.
13. It is therefore inappropriate to accept assessments based on ICRCL values and Wear Valley's Contaminated Land Strategy is now being amended to reflect the use of the CLEA model and SGV's.

acquisition of relevant datasets and historical land use database

14. The identification of all parcels of potentially contaminated land within the District, from current and historical data sources, will provide the Council with crucial information that will impact upon many of its corporate aims and objectives.
15. The purchase of historic mapping data transferred onto GIS (Geographical Information System) will highlight potential conflicts with other designations, for example Sites of Specific Scientific interests and Special Wildlife Sites, which will enable informed decisions to be made, and lead to a programme of individual site inspections over a period of several years, to determine actual contamination.
16. Without such information the authority is unable to accurately determine potential contaminated sites and carry out detailed inspections, as required under Part IIA of the Environment Protection Act 1990.
17. The acquisition of this information was last reported to Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2003 where recommendations were made to receive tenders for its purchase. Since then contractors have been appointed and work has progressed to identify, capture and plot historical land use data. Unfortunately, delays have also occurred because of errors which have arisen in the plotting of the data, leading to disputes between the contractors involved. These are now being resolved, and it is anticipated that accurate plotting of the sites will be able to continue.

## **conclusions**

18. The existing Contaminated Land Strategy is a detailed document that outlines the approach the authority should take in order to comply with Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The points noted for review would bring the Strategy up to date, and in line with the latest Government guidelines.
19. However, it should be noted that the authority still falls some way short of fulfilling its obligations under the Act. The issues that have actually been addressed have been the publication of the Strategy and the development of a consultation framework.
20. The identification of potential contaminated sites, their inspection and subsequent remediation, are all subject to the acquisition of historical data for use with GIS (Geographical Information System). This process has been delayed because of problems with the quality of data being supplied.
21. In order to satisfy Stage 1 of the requirements of the Act it is vital that the acquisition of historical data continues, together with the digitisation of relevant datasets for use with GIS, which will allow the identification and inspection of priority sites.

22. Once these actions are completed, the existing well researched Contaminated Land Strategy will be extended to include more detailed implementation objectives and timescales.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1 Members agree to the points under review being addressed, to update the existing Contaminated Land Strategy in order to comply with Part IIA of the Environment Protection Act 1990.
- 2 Members note the remit of the Environmental/LA21 Officer in working towards achieving the aims and objectives of the Contaminated Land Strategy.
- 3 Members receive a further report on progress on the implementation of the Contaminated Land Strategy once the mapping problems have been resolved.

---

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Officer responsible for the report</b> | <b>Author of the report</b> |
| Robert Hope                               | Ian Bloomfield              |
| Director of Regeneration                  | Environment/LA21 Officer    |
| Ext 264                                   | Ext 423                     |

---

**REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**12 JANUARY 2005**

---

Report of the Director of Regeneration

**ELDON LANE HOUSING RENEWAL AREA: FUTURE WORK**

**purpose of the report**

1. To seek the Committee's endorsement of future work proposed as the next stage of the Eldon Lane Housing Renewal Area.

**background**

2. The Committee previously agreed to the appointment of Accent Regeneration to undertake survey work and act in an advisory capacity regarding future improvements to be undertaken in Eldon Lane.
3. Currently, Accent Regeneration are completing two important pieces of work, dealing with Randolph Street in some detail (as the agreed immediate priority) and reviewing progress in Eldon Lane generally. This work will lead to advice on the 'best course of action' which should form the basis of future phases.

**randolph street**

4. A detailed survey has been carried out at Randolph Street, looking at the physical condition of the properties, and also seeking residents' and landlords' opinions on the housing (and the future of the area.)
5. The results have been heartening. Whilst the properties are small, they are in reasonable condition and demolition would be entirely inappropriate. They are still capable of providing adequate, comfortable accommodation at modest cost in improving surroundings, with local facilities close at hand. They also provide an essential step on the home-ownership ladder and are therefore an important part of the local housing market.
6. This view is reinforced by local residents themselves, who in the majority of cases, are well settled in the area and see no reason to move. 44% of the residents of the street have lived there for more than five years, with one having lived there for more than 42 years. They do make the point, however, that while some physical upgrading of properties and surroundings is necessary, it is the attitude and behaviour of a small minority of residents which can cause the major problems.

7. These problems (not in any order of priority) were identified as:-

- appearance of houses
- derelict buildings
- litter
- drug dealing
- gangs of youths
- rubbish
- noisy music
- lack of parking
- crime
- speeding cars
- state of rear lanes

8. On the other hand, residents emphasised a number of good points:-

- quiet
- nice area/good outlook/scenery
- bus route
- fields/playing field
- neighbours
- amenities
- contentment
- no hassle
- liked house
- countryside open spaces
- near work

9. Fuller details of the results of the surveys are given in copies of the report tabled for Members' information. It is clear, however, that Randolph Street is a place where people like to live and, as indicated, demolition is not warranted. The suggested way forward is to deal with the issues by a combination of individual grant aid for internal disrepair, and, most importantly, an overall improvement scheme.

10. The latter would have a major impact on the appearance of this prominent terrace, helping to restore confidence and underlining the Council's commitment to the future of Eldon Lane, as well as setting a standard for further work.

11. The improvement scheme would involve both front and rear elevations, and could include brick cleaning, raking out and repointing brickwork, repairing and redecorating render, renewal of rainwater goods, redecoration, new boundary walls and gates to the rear elevations, and provision of security lighting. Residents would be asked to make a modest contribution to the scheme – say £10 for pensioners and those receiving a means-tested benefit, to £100 for those in full time employment - to ensure 'ownership' of the scheme.

12. The issues of parking and damage to cars in the street could be addressed by the conversion of the grass verge adjoining the 'Rec' into parking bays (the subject of a previous proposal which was never implemented.)
13. Other initiatives include the provision of free smoke alarms, and investigating improved insulation for dwellings via the charity National Energy Action.

#### **progress in eldon lane generally**

14. Accent Regeneration are still undertaking the Mid-Term Review of the Renewal area, and expect a draft to be completed by the end of this month. A key element of that work will be a proposed future programme with likely costs for both property and environmental improvements. A preliminary indication of the possible scope of the work is given in Annex 4.
15. More generally, Accent Regeneration have outlined further initiatives which they suggest should be considered in addition to any physical works. These include:-
  - better co-ordination of services (already being addressed through the recent appointment of a Housing Strategy Officer in the Regeneration Department,)
  - landlord Accreditation/Good Tenant Scheme (under way-partly introduced through the Private Housing Empty Property Strategy)
  - a 'handyperson' scheme – particularly for elderly people (a scheme is operated by Help the Aged; the Home Improvement Agency which will soon be fully operational is looking towards establishing this more widely)
  - a youth training scheme to give young people a chance to train and learn building skills in their own area.
16. A combination of both physical and socio-economic measures as indicated above should provide an excellent platform for the sustained improvement of the area, and give further confidence in the 'turn-round' of this part of the District.

#### **financial implications**

17. Financial provision has been made within the Council's Capital Programme for the Dene Valley Housing Renewal Programme. A detailed study of Randolph Street has been completed which suggests an improvement scheme in combination with grant assistance is the most positive way forward. Finance is available in the Council's Renewal area budget to progress this. Procurement of this capital scheme will be undertaken by tender in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and with current Contract Procedure Rules.
18. Tenders for the work, if agreed, will be sought in January for start on site in March 2005.



## conclusion

19. The work on Randolph Street represents the next phase of the Dene Valley Housing Renewal Programme, following the major Group Repair scheme in Bridge Place and the clearance of The Hollow. This scheme will ensure the long term viability of an important street in the village.
20. The Mid Term Review of the Renewal Area will be completed shortly. Preliminary results indicate further scope for renovation and environmental works, and the need to combine these, for greatest effect, with other socio-economic initiatives. This will identify and inform future phase of the Renewal Programme.

## RECOMMENDED

- 1 That the overall approach set out in the report be endorsed.
- 2 That the carrying out of a facelift scheme for Randolph St as indicated in the report be authorised.
- 3 That competitive tenders are invited in accordance with current Contract Procedure Rules.
- 4 That the Director of Regeneration be instructed to report back to the Committee on the Mid Term Review of the Renewal Area when this is finalised

## background information

Draft reports prepared by Accent Regeneration on behalf of the Council

---

| <b>Officer responsible for the report</b>          | <b>Author of the report</b>                                     |
|--|---|
| Robert Hope<br>Director of Regeneration<br>Ext 264 | Jim Corby<br>Planning & Environmental Policy Officer<br>Ext 302 |

---

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2005

---

Report of the Director of Regeneration

**EXTERNAL FUNDING UPDATE**

**purpose of the report**

1. To outline to members the current position in relation to the future of Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) and other external funding / initiatives and the potential impact upon regeneration activity in Wear Valley over the next 2 years.

**introduction**

2. Over recent years the levels of deprivation suffered by Wear Valley residents has been recognised and the district has been able to successfully attract resources to bring forward regeneration initiatives and tackle many of the issues which underlie the deprivation in the area.
3. Since 1997 the area has attracted and utilised significant amounts of 'external funding' resources to improve the social and economic infrastructure of the district. These resources have come from:-
  - Single Regeneration Budget (Rounds 3, 5 and 6)
  - European Structural Funds
  - European Regional Development Funds
  - ONE Single Programme
  - Neighbourhood Renewal Funding
  - Settlement Renewal Initiative
  - Market Towns Initiatives
4. Each of these programmes has been unique with different eligibility criteria, thematic activity area and target geographic areas, which has led to a complex overview of funding and activity. Table 1 attempts to clarify the situation and shows the wards within each of the three sub-areas of Wear Valley and the funding which each ward has been / remains eligible for.

5. Overall these resources have meant that a number of initiatives have been developed and implemented which have had a significant impact upon the quality of life of many residents of Wear Valley.

**Table 1 – Eligible Wards for Various External Funding Sources**

| Ward   | SRB3 | SRB5 | SRB6 | NRF <sup>(c)</sup> | Ob 2 Pr 4. | SRI | MTI | ESF |
|--|------|------|------|--------------------|------------|-----|-----|-----|
| <b>Bishop Auckland and Surrounding Area</b>        |      |      |      |                    |            |     |     |     |
| Bishop Auckland Town                               |      |      | X    |                    |            |     |     |     |
| Cockton Hill                                       |      |      |      |                    |            |     |     |     |
| Coundon  |      |      | X    | X                  | X          | X   |     |     |
| St Helen Auckland <sup>(a)</sup>                   | X    |      | X    | X                  | X          |     |     |     |
| West Auckland                                      |      |      |      |                    |            |     |     |     |
| Henknowle  | X    |      | X    | X                  | X          |     |     |     |
| Escomb   |      |      |      |                    |            |     |     |     |
| Coundon Grange (Dene Valley)                       |      |      | X    | X                  | X          | X   |     | X   |
| Woodhouse Close                                    | X    |      | X    | X                  | X          |     |     |     |
| <b>Crook &amp; Willington and Surrounding Area</b> |      |      |      |                    |            |     |     |     |
| Crook North  |      | X    |      | X                  | X          |     | X   |     |
| Crook South  |      | X    |      |                    |            |     | X   |     |
| Howden   |      | X    |      |                    |            |     |     |     |
| Hunwick  |      |      |      |                    |            |     |     |     |
| Tow Law and Stanley                                |      | X    |      | X                  | X          |     |     |     |
| Wheatbottom and Helmington Row                     |      | X    |      | X                  | X          |     |     | X   |
| Willington Central                                 |      | X    |      | X                  | X          |     |     |     |
| Willington West End                                |      | X    |      |                    |            |     |     |     |
| <b>Weardale</b>                                    |      |      |      |                    |            |     |     |     |
| St Johns Chapel                                    |      |      |      | X                  | X          |     | X   |     |
| Stanhope   |      |      |      | X                  | X          |     | X   |     |
| Wolsingham and Witton Le Wear <sup>(b)</sup>       |      |      |      | X                  | X          |     | X   |     |

Please note:

<sup>(a)</sup> St Helen Auckland has been included as a target ward pre boundary change in 2002

<sup>(b)</sup> Witton Le Wear does not qualify for NRF, MTI, or Ob 2 Pr 4 funding.

<sup>(c)</sup> Refers to local-area NRF resource identified specifically for tackling issues in these target wards

6. However, the majority of these sources have been time limited and are all scheduled to end between now and March 2006. This is likely to lead to a significant increase in pressure on the remaining resources and has a potentially detrimental impact upon much of the social regeneration activity which has been undertaken in the area and many of the good initiatives and work which is ongoing.

### **funding sources**

#### single regeneration budget

7. Wear Valley has had the benefit of three rounds of Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). SRB3 operated in the wards of South Bishop Auckland between 1997 and 2001, SRB5 has been operating in Crook & Willington areas since 1999 but finishes in March 2005 and SRB6 started in 2000 in Bishop Auckland and will run to March 2006.
8. In total, the three SRB programmes have enabled over £7 million of resources to be invested in the social and economic fabric of the district. Whilst the priorities for each SRB round have changed the funding overall has been primarily focused on social regeneration objectives. This has enabled a diverse range of projects to be supported and benefit to assist with:
  - Education, training and capacity building
  - Increasing economic growth and competitiveness
  - Environmental improvements
  - Crime and community safety initiatives
  - Enhancing health, culture and sporting opportunities.
9. In particular SRB has been successful at community engagement and supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to deliver projects to make a difference to their neighbourhoods.
10. SRB is currently being facilitated through the Regional Development Agencies and at the present time ONE NorthEast have indicated that there will be no direct replacement for SRB funding.

#### single programme funding

11. Single Programme Funding is currently the mainstay of Economic Regeneration Funding in the North East and is the predominant source of funding for capital investment and infrastructure improvements. The Single Programme also supports a number of revenue projects and is used to fund a number of the time-limited initiatives currently running in Wear Valley.
12. In past years around 75% of ONE North East's Single Programme resource has been delegated to the sub-regional partnerships to allocate to prioritised projects.

However, recently policy shifts at ONE North East will see more regional prioritisation of projects instead of sub-regional discretion.

13. Current indications are that Single Programme is set to be the only major fund committed to economic regeneration activity post March 2006. However, this will create an increasingly competitive environment for projects and it can be assumed that those which can deliver the most impact and the best economic outcomes will be given priority. This may potentially compromise the ability of Wear Valley to deliver projects which potentially have a high impact locally.
14. The picture with regard to Single Programme is further complicated with the publication of the Northern Way Strategy. This outlines policies to accelerate the growth across the three Regional Development Agencies in the North and attempts to close the productivity and employment gaps between the North and the rest of the country. The basis of the growth strategy is the concentration on achieving growth in the City Regions and the strengthening of relationships between the urban and rural areas. The impact and opportunities of this strategy for Wear Valley are not clear at this time.
15. Given this strategy and ONE North East's commitment to it, it is reasonable to assume that ONE North East are likely to allocate significant resources to achieving the aims of the Northern Way. What is unknown at this moment is the impact that this will have upon more localised prioritisation of projects and in particular the impact upon the ability of rural areas to attract Single Programme funding.

neighbourhood renewal funding

16. Since 2001 Wear Valley District has been awarded Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) to assist regeneration activities. This resource was awarded to the area on the basis of its relatively high levels of deprivation identified in the Index of Multiple Deprivation produced in 2000 (IMD2000) and is to tackle the issues which the area faces and improve the area's performance in the key themes of:
  - Economy,
  - Health,
  - Education,
  - Crime / Community Safety,
  - Housing,
  - Environment
17. Over £4 million of NRF resource has already been spent in Wear Valley over the last 3 years. In addition a further £2.9 million has been earmarked for 2005/6 to enable a range of projects to be implemented.

18. A number of high quality worthwhile projects have been put forward which could potentially have delivered tangible outcomes and improve the quality of life of Wear Valley residents but due to the demands on the money were unable to be funded through NRF.
19. Although the continuance of NRF funding for 2006-2008 was announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Spending Review in July, the detail of how this will be distributed to Local Strategic Partnerships is yet to be agreed. Indeed ODPM have launched a consultation exercise which will be concluded in February 2005 which explores key stakeholders views as to how the money should be allocated.
20. Although it is impossible to pre-empt the outcome of this consultation exercise it is clear from the consultation paper that NRF for 2006-2008 is likely to take a significantly different form to NRF for previous periods. In particular the level, nature and focus of funding are not clear and will not be for some time yet. Also given the piloting of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) in some areas in preparation for wide-scale roll out of this strategy, it is not yet clear how this policy is to be implemented in areas with two-tiers of local government. This again causes concern about the degree of funding available to implement many of the local initiatives which are achieving neighbourhood regeneration and needs careful consideration by the LSP.

European social funding and European regional development funding

21. European resources have played an increasingly important part in regeneration activity in Wear Valley. Objective 2 Priority 4 which is a Community Economic Development Fund accessible in 13 of the District's wards (grouped into three 'local-package' areas) and has been used to fund a variety of social regeneration projects.
22. Last year (2004) saw a reduction in the number of projects which have been approved or can access European support as a result of over commitment of the funds within the North East region. All of the European resources which remain available to the 3 Wear Valley packages are allocated to projects and a number of good projects have been unable to be supported and are looking around for other monies.
23. European money from Objective 2 Priority 2 and Priority 3 has also been a substantial contributor to capital investment projects to improve the business infrastructure of the District. However, the current programme is nearing its end and there is an ever increasing demand on an ever decreasing pot of money. This is already beginning to affect the delivery of projects with the requirement to spread the available resource ever more thinly making it difficult to find sufficient other resources to fund major capital schemes.
24. All remaining European resources from Priority 2 and 3 must be allocated to projects by the end of December 2005 with spend being achieved by December 2006. This will in effect mean that European Funding in its current form will end in December 2005.

25. Current indications are that although European funding will exist beyond 2006 it is anticipated that the majority of this resource will be awarded to the newer member states of the European Union. Some regions of the UK may be eligible to receive some form of assistance from the European Union to assist regeneration but again at this stage it is too early to speculate about the form this may take and the ability of the North East, County Durham and in particular Wear Valley to attract this money.

### **time limited initiatives**

#### settlement renewal initiative

26. Wear Valley has benefited from two settlement renewal initiatives (SRI), the first in Dene Valley ran from 1996 to 2001 and the current Coundon and Leeholme initiative has run from 2001 and will finish in March 2006. Again these programmes have been a catalyst to spark locally led regeneration in the community and have been extremely successful.
27. The Dene Valley SRI has left a lasting legacy on the area and has meant that the Partnership created through the SRI has continued to exist and has been successful at drawing in resources to continue its work and expand into new areas of activity.
28. It is envisaged that the Coundon and Leeholme SRI will leave a similar legacy. The Partnership is already preparing for the end of the initiative and is now a 'company limited by guarantee'. This should ensure a future for the Partnership after the end of the initiative.
29. The Coundon SRI is currently predominantly funded by ONE North East Single Programme and European Objective 2 Priority 4 but given the increasingly competitive environment for funding in the future will create a difficult operating environment for the Partnership after the initiative comes to an end.

#### market towns initiative

30. Crook and Stanhope both benefit from inclusion in the Market Towns Initiative. Currently funded from ONE North East's Single Programme, having being established using Countryside Agency and Rural Development Programme money, the initiative has been allocated money through to March 2006.
31. The MTI has made progress in reinforcing the role of the towns as the service centres for the surrounding rural hinterlands. Significant capital has been or will be invested in both towns for public realm and key facility development work over the life of initiative. This has improved the amenities and facilities on offer in the towns for local residents and visitors alike.

32. Like the SRI the MTI has had a significant impact on regeneration at the grass roots level and has been successful in engaging with the communities in each town. Given the strides forward, which have been made with the partnerships in each of the towns, it is hoped that like the SRI, these partnerships will continue the work of the initiative after March 2006.

### **mainstreaming**

33. Mainstreaming is a frequently used term relating to the incorporation of projects into 'mainstream' activity. The presumption is that time-limited projects and initiatives, which are delivering tangible benefits to communities, will be incorporated into the core activity of the public sector. The idea is that this will ensure the long-term sustainability of public services and ensure that there is not a grant dependency culture.
34. However, mainstreaming requires cultural changes in the public sector to facilitate more collaborative working between agencies and more strategic thinking about the impacts and outcomes that can be delivered. Mainstreaming is predominantly thought of in the context of public sector bodies finding the money to continue the project, but mainstreaming is ensuring the continued service delivery by the most suitable means.
35. Given the large number of funding sources and initiatives which are coming to a close within a short space there is a high degree of pressure upon public sector bodies to continue projects. This will inevitably lead to an inability to mainstream all of the projects which are having a positive impact on regeneration activity and will not be the answer to continuing projects for all cases.

### **conclusion**

36. In conclusion, the picture is complex and far from clear with a rapidly changing environment for regeneration activity.
37. Overall, Wear Valley has been fortunate over recent years to attract significant amounts of resources to assist with social and economic regeneration activity. Despite significant progress having been made in the regeneration of the area, Wear Valley remains one of the most deprived districts in England. The latest statistics show that the area is the 32nd most deprived in the country overall (rank of deprivation score) and remains the most deprived rural district.
38. There remains significant social and economic difficulties and challenges facing the District and every effort is being made to achieve the Council's objectives of enabling the development of a continuously improving economic infrastructure and environment in Wear Valley.
39. However, in order to achieve this and to continue to improve the quality of life of inhabitants of Wear Valley and eradicate high levels of deprivation there is a need for continued investment to tackle many of the underlying issues. To achieve this Wear Valley District Council and the Voluntary and Community



Groups of the area are heavily reliant upon the resources of other public sector agencies.

40. Given the significant changing environment for regeneration activity over the next year and a half there is an uncertainty of future funding sources and levels. This potentially could have a very serious impact upon the continued efforts of all those involved in regeneration activity in Wear Valley and could lead to many worthwhile initiatives and schemes being discontinued.
41. As part of the preparation for the changes which will take place officers from the Regeneration Department are attending a number of events as familiarisation for the future changes to funding, e.g. the recent 'Future of Funding' event with keynote speech by the Treasury Minister John Healey.
42. We are continuing to utilise our relationships with other key stakeholders through our existing partnerships to ensure that, given this uncertainty about the future, every opportunity being explored to ensure our ability to attract funding is maximised. Officers supporting Voluntary and Community Sector organisations are helping the groups to prepare exit strategies at the close of the funding or initiative to try to ensure they are in the best position possible to capitalise on any opportunities created.
43. Members will also recall that work has commenced on the economic futures study which is a key piece of work looking at the future economic aspiration of the District. This will be a critical pillar of future regeneration policy, and is an essential piece of work which will provide a strong basis for ongoing investment in the District to achieve the 'step-change' which is required.
44. Although this is a relatively negative message of future uncertainty, there is a commitment at all levels towards the regeneration of the parts of the country, region and district and new opportunities will be created to achieve the regeneration objectives set out. It is important that organisations, public, private and voluntary, are clear in the contribution they can make to regenerating area, as this will be where the scarce resources will be directed.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1 that Members note and contents of the report.
- 2 that Members endorse the approach adopted by the Department and receive further updates when the situation is clarified.

---

**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Director of Regeneration  
Ext 264

**Author of the report**

Alan Weston  
Principal Regeneration Officer  
Dawn Eggleston & Ross Cowling  
Ext 387

---

**REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**12 JANUARY 2005**

---

Report of the Director of Regeneration  
**EASTGATE CEMENT WORKS – REDEVELOPMENT**

**purpose of the report**

1. To inform Members of the progress made to date with respect to the redevelopment of the Lafarge Cement UK Eastgate site and the geothermal drilling contract.

**background**

2. The Weardale Task Force has been driving forward the redevelopment plans for the Eastgate site following the successful outcome of the community consultation exercise 'Renewing Weardale – The Way Forward', during the summer of 2003.
3. Feasibility works carried out to date have identified that the site has the potential to become a major UK Renewable Energy 'model' village of high-spec mixed-uses; providing recreation; tourism; housing and high technology business space on the 333ha redundant cement works site, ultimately creating a minimum of 173 new jobs. The site has the potential to generate and utilise on-site, an unparalleled range of renewable energy; wind power, biomass, hydro-electricity, heat-exchange pumps, solar power and most significant of all geothermal energy, utilising hot water from the hot Weardale granite rocks that lie beneath the site.

**progress**

4. Town Planning and Urban Design consultants 'David Lock Associates', appointed by Lafarge Cement UK, have prepared a draft programme for the redevelopment of the Eastgate Cement Works and Quarry, for the Task Force, based on the geothermal potential of the site.
5. To evaluate the geothermal potential and measure the available resource beneath the site, following a full tender process, drilling contractors Foraco SAS were appointed to sink a borehole to a depth of 1 kilometre. PB Power Limited were appointed to supervise, monitor and evaluate the drilling contract and Professor Paul Younger and Professor David Manning from the University of

Newcastle were contracted to analyse the resultant subsoil and water samples, on behalf of the Task Force.

6. At the Weardale Task Force meeting on Tuesday, 14 December 2004 PB Power Limited and Professor David Manning, from the University of Newcastle, reported that the drilling of the 1 kilometre borehole was completed on 11 December 2004 and that the geophysical logs were currently being processed. Although the final report is not expected until January 2005 the preliminary findings had identified water temperature of 46<sup>0</sup>C at the bottom of the borehole. This geothermal resource is at least as promising as the best ever previously identified in the UK and that the water currently standing in the borehole is sufficiently warm to be potentially used for space heating. A copy of the interim report is attached as Annex 5.
7. The final report is expected in January 2005, a copy of which will be made available on the Council's web site.
8. With the successful outcome of the geothermal drilling, efforts can now be made to finalise the draft redevelopment masterplan for the Eastgate site. A master planning workshop is planned for January 2005:-
  - 1) to consider the redevelopment options in light of the geothermal energy source and;
  - 2) to consider the numerous expressions of interest received from the private sector and identify those which best fit with the concept of site as a 'Renewable Energy Model Village'.
9. This draft masterplan will then be reported to members before being made available for consultation.
10. Following completion of a full tender process Durham County Council, on behalf of the Weardale Task Force, have appointed consultants Genecon to provide advice on the most appropriate delivery mechanism a 'Special Purpose Vehicle', (which could possibly be a non profit making Development Trust), to drive forward the redevelopment of the Eastgate site. The approved consultants will start on 10 January 2005 and finish 28 February 2005.
11. At the same Task Force meeting Lafarge Cement UK announced that they had awarded the 12 month demolition programme of their former Eastgate cement works to demolition experts Brown & Mason. They plan to start demolition works in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week in January 2005.

**conclusion**

12. With the successful outcome of the geothermal drilling project the draft masterplan for the redevelopment of the Eastgate Cement Works and Quarry site can now be finalised ready for consultation in the new year. Following this consultation the plan, will be amended if needed, and will form the basis of the Development Framework Plan for the planning application.

**RECOMMENDED**                    1            That Members endorse the progress made to date and receive further reports on the redevelopment of the site in due course.

---

|   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| <b>Officer responsible for the report</b> | <b>Author of the report</b>   |
| Robert Hope                               | Sue Dawson                    |
| Director of Regeneration                  | Head of Economic Regeneration |
| Ext 264                                   | Ext 305                       |

---

## REGENERATION COMMITTEE

12 January 2005

---

Report of the Director of Regeneration

### **NORTH PENNINES AONB: INSURANCE FOR PARTNERSHIP/STAFF UNIT**

#### **purpose of the report**

1. To inform members of the outcome of discussions and to seek agreement to a proposed course of action to resolve insurance problems.

#### **background**

2. A report was presented to the Committee at its meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> March 2004 outlining a problem which had arisen in respect of insurance cover for AONB staff.
3. Because the concept of an AONB 'Joint Advisory Committee' or 'AONB Partnership' does not exist in law, the host local authority insurance (Durham County Council) only covers activities carried out on behalf of that individual authority. It thus excludes work undertaken 'jointly' on behalf of partner authorities. Since work by AONB staff is always done jointly on behalf of the partnership authorities, the insurance cover would not apply.
4. A case had arisen in the Chilterns AONB, where a member of staff and the chairman of the partnership had been subject to legal action, and where they were deemed not to be covered by insurance. All AONB partnerships had therefore been requested to review their insurance arrangements, and it transpired that the North Pennines AONB staff and agents would also not be covered, except for personal injury.
5. Since then, efforts have been made to overcome the problem, looking at possible options in the (unlikely) event of a claim being made against the staff unit. The principal complicating factor was that, as an unincorporated association, the Partnership could not take out separate insurance.
6. Two types of possible claim are envisaged. These are 'Public and Employers liability/Officials Indemnity (financial loss)' and 'Libel and Slander.'
7. It has therefore been suggested by Durham County Council that they will cover the day-to-day activities of the AONB Partnership's Staff Unit, whilst partnership authorities will be responsible for covering their own staff. Organised events, like guided walks, will be covered by the County, but in the event of payment being made, the excess would be split between the partners.

8. Claims of defamation arising from publications issued by the AONB Partnership Staff Unit will be covered by the County Council's insurance. Again, in the event of payment being made, the excess would be split between the partners.
9. Durham County Council has confirmed that the excess would be a maximum of £100,000, which would be shared by the partners ideally using the current funding formula, whereby the counties would pay twice the sum of the districts.
10. The one outstanding issue remaining is insurance cover for elected members from partner authorities and the Chairman of the AONB Partnership. It would appear that members and the Chairman cannot currently be indemnified and insured by the County Council. However, the situation is about to change since new provisions are being placed before Parliament designed to overcome restrictions on indemnification.
11. It should be emphasised that risks are regarded as very low. The only known claim brought against members is 'the Chilterns case,' which provoked this investigation in the first place. Nevertheless, it is considered important that members are aware of the problem.

#### **conclusion**

12. Although insurance claims are very unlikely to arise, it is important that provision is made for this possibility, however remote, otherwise the work of the Partnership could be affected.
13. North Pennine AONB Partnership members have provisionally agreed that Durham County Council should take the lead on insurance matters for the Partnership and its Staff Unit, subject to the formal agreement of constituent authorities.
14. In the event of a successful claim, costs for the excess would be apportioned according to the existing funding formula of the AONB Partnership.

- |                    |   |  |
|--------------------|---|--|
| <b>RECOMMENDED</b> | 1 | The report be approved.  |
|                    | 2 | That the proposal to meet insurance obligations is acceptable. |

#### **background information**

North Pennines AONB Officer; 'Insurance for the AONB Partnership/Staff Unit,' Report to the AONB Partnership, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2004.

---

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Officer responsible for the report</b>          | <b>Author of the report</b>                                     |
| Robert Hope<br>Director of Regeneration<br>Ext 264 | Jim Corby<br>Planning & Environmental Policy Officer<br>Ext 302 |

---

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2005

---

Report of the Director of Regeneration

**DURHAM DALES HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY - ACCOMMODATION**

**purpose of the report**

1. To seek Members' approval for Wear Valley District Council to sign a lease agreement for a property in Newgate Street (No. 115) Bishop Auckland from which the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) can deliver its service.

**background**

2. As Members are aware, the Council is committed to the establishment of the Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency in partnership with Teesdale District Council, Durham Social Services and the Durham Dales Primary Care Trust.
3. The HIA is to be established as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.
4. Funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) through the Supporting People Framework has been granted for the setting-up and running of the HIA, which must be matched by funding from the partner organisations. To date all funding has been received apart from the Primary Care Trust which has indicated its intention to do so.

**current situation**

5. The HIA has been operating since April 2004 with a Manager and Technical Administrator. A Technical officer has now been appointed and will take up post mid January 2005.
6. Due to a lack of available office space in the Civic Centre, the HIA has recently located to Old Bank Chambers Bishop Auckland as a temporary measure. Whilst this is the first step in the move towards the perceived independence of the HIA, the building is not conducive with the nature of HIA business.
7. Since April 2004 the HIA Manager along with the Town Centre Manager has been in search of a shop fronted premise in the centre of Bishop Auckland. The four partners feel that this is the ideal location for clients of Wear Valley and Teesdale Districts.

- 8 A premise of this type has recently become vacant and discussions have taken place with regards to the lease. A draft lease agreement is now with the Councils legal services for comment.
- 9 The lease is for a term of 10 years with a break at 5 years. The Council has enquired about a break at 2 years, which is not acceptable to the owner.

### **financial and legal implications**

- 10 It is suggested that the Council signs the lease and assign it to the HIA once fully incorporated. In doing so the Council will initially be under obligation to the lease agreement, which is fully insuring and repairing. The HIA would fund such items.
- 11 The management model for the HIA, company limited by guarantee with charitable status, is ongoing. The constitution and memorandum and articles of association are with solicitors at present and will be reported to Members at a later date.
- 12 Should the HIA not being incorporated as an independent company, there would still be a need for the service and the partner organisations would have to rethink the management model they would want to adopt. There would still be a need for the HIA service and the premises to accommodate it.
- 13 In the unlikely event of the HIA being dissolved the property could be utilised as office space for council staff until the term of lease is due.
- 14 The legalities have been discussed with the councils Legal Advisor who has advised that the council can enter into the lease, but emphasises that if the HIA is not incorporated the Council would be committed to a lease of the building for a minimum period of five years.

### **conclusion**

- 15 The HIA is an invaluable service to the people of Wear Valley and Teesdale. It meets all the Councils objectives and has been widely welcomed by other agencies and organisations as filling the 'missing link' in the process of providing an integrated service for vulnerable groups.
- 16 The HIA is at the stage where it needs to expand its service delivery and has employed a Technical Officer with this in mind. It now needs suitable office accommodation from which to operate.
- 17 The financial risks to the Council in entering into a lease to re-assign to the HIA are considered to be minimal. The condition of the property will be carefully assessed before any lease is actually signed.
- 18 Not proceeding will jeopardise the successful "roll-out" of the HIA to the detriment of the many vulnerable, potential clients in Wear Valley and Teesdale.



**RECOMMENDED**

That committee agrees to the Council signing the lease and assigning it to the HIA once incorporated.

---

**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Director of Regeneration  
Ext 264

**Author of the report**

Jim Corby  
Head of Planning and Environmental policy  
Ext 302

Shirley Wild  
Home Improvement Agency Manager  
Ext 501

---

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2005

---

Report of the Director of Regeneration  
**“ELFINWOOD”, HIGH WEST ROAD, CROOK**  
**PROSECUTION FOR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ENFORCEMENT NOTICES**

**purpose of the report**

1. To inform Members about a successful prosecution for non-compliance with enforcement notices.

**description of site and proposals**

2. Two Enforcement Notices were served in relation to several breaches of planning control which were taking place on land known as ‘Elfinwood’, High West Road, Crook. The notices were served on the owner and occupier of the land, Mr. Mark Dixon, for carrying out development on the land which did not benefit from planning permission. The breaches consisted of the siting and use of a caravan for residential purposes, the storage of motor vehicles on the land, the siting of two railway carriages and engineering operations that had taken place on the land.
3. Two Enforcement Notices were hand delivered to Mr Dixon on 4 December 2003.
4. The first Enforcement Notice related to operational development in that Mr Dixon had, without planning permission, sited two railway carriages and had carried out engineering works. The railway carriages were required to be removed by 1 April 2004 and the engineering works should be restored to its former condition by re-grading and reseeding to original ground levels within 28 days from the date the Notice took effect. The engineering works should have been restored by 3 February 2004.
5. The second Enforcement Notice related to a material change of use in that the defendant had, without planning permission, sited a touring caravan for residential purposes and used the land for the storage of motor vehicles. The caravan and the vehicles were required to be removed within 56 days from the date the Notice took effect. The caravan and motor vehicles should have been removed by 2 March 2004.
6. The Enforcement Notices were not appealed.

### **non-compliance with the enforcement notices**

7. Following the date for compliance it was noted that the Enforcement Notices had not been complied with. Due to this a prosecution file was forwarded to the Legal Section and subsequently summons were issued for the offences of failing to comply with the two Enforcement Notices.

### **appearance at court**

8. On 7 December 2004, Mr. Dixon pleaded guilty to two offences at Bishop Auckland Magistrates' Court. He was fined £250 for each offence and ordered to pay the Council's costs of £300, making a total of £800. He was ordered to pay by monthly instalments of £100 commencing at the end of January.

### **subsequent compliance with the two enforcement notices**

9. Mr Dixon removed the caravan, motor vehicles and railway carriages and re-graded the area of land, which had been subject to the engineering works on 6 December 2004.

### **RECOMMENDED**

That the court decision in relation to the above prosecution be noted for future reference.

### **background information**

Enforcement file and prosecution file.

---

**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Director of Regeneration  
Ext 264

---

**Author of the report**

Ali Blackett  
Enforcement Officer  
Ext 272

---

**REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**12 JANUARY 2005**

Report of the Director of Regeneration

**POLICY FOR DEALING WITH AMENDMENTS TO APPROVED PLANS**

**purpose of the report**

1. To agree a policy for dealing with amendments to approved plans.

**background**

2. I have been asked to produce this policy, following a recent case when a significant amendment to an approved plan was incorrectly accepted without requiring a new application to be submitted, which lead to the payment of compensation to a neighbour.

**best practice**

3. To assist in drawing up a policy I have looked at best practice in Councils across the country. The following is a summary of the results of my consultations with other Councils.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Allerdale Borough Council              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not accepted as an amendment if need to re-consult anyone.</li> <li>• Not accepted as an amendment if an increase in size.</li> <li>• No written procedure.</li> </ul>   |
| Boston Council                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepted if relatively minor and as long as no re-consultation is required.</li> <li>• Has a written policy.</li> </ul>  |
| Carrick Council                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor amendments accepted as long as do not materially affect the character of the development.</li> <li>• No written policy.</li> </ul>   |
| Chester le Street                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepted if the amended proposal would have a lesser effect.</li> <li>• Re-consultation takes place for 14 days if objections are received they are reported to committee.</li> <li>• 10% allowance for changes in heights, distances, volumes.</li> <li>• No definition of material alterations.</li> </ul> |
| Derwentside District Council           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-consult if required.</li> <li>• No hard and fast rules.</li> </ul>  |
| Lake District National Park Authority. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only very minor amendments are accepted such as relocation of windows and doors.</li> <li>• Not accepted if have to re-consult.</li> </ul>   |

**trevor roberts recommendation**

4. The Trevor Roberts Review has suggested a post decision amendment procedure, which is set out below.

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <p><b>Category 1 Amendments</b></p> | <p><b>A letter should be sent requesting a new application</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the changes raise new issues or affect the conditions of the permission</li> <li>• Have a material effect on the surrounding area (i.e. larger built area or volume, windows or doors in different positions)</li> <li>• Relate to an essential feature of the site.</li> <li>• Where there have been previous objections.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Category 2 Amendments</b></p> | <p><b>These can be approved by letter, referencing the approved plan, under the scheme of delegation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the changes have a lesser or nil effect.</li> </ul>   |

**proposed policy**

5. It is important to adopt a procedure which is unambiguous to avoid a repeat of the problem case referred to earlier. However, equally it is important to have a degree of flexibility to avoid being too rigid.

**conclusion**

6. The Trevor Roberts suggestions are a useful guide but I consider that it should be possible to agree a small (up to 5%) increase in area or volume for isolated sites or in cases where the change would have no adverse effect on neighbouring occupiers. Subject to this variation, the Trevor Roberts proposed is recommended.

**RECOMMENDED**

That the following policy be adopted for dealing with amendments to approved plans:-

**Category 1 Amendments**

**A letter should be sent requesting a new application**

- Where the changes raise new issues or affect the conditions of the permission
- Have a material effect on the surrounding area (i.e. larger built area or volume (except for cases referred to in Category 2), windows or doors in different positions)
- Relate to an essential feature of the site.
- Where there have been previous objections.

**Category 2 Amendments**

**These can be approved by letter, referencing the approved plan, under the scheme of delegation**

- Where the changes have a lesser or nil effect.
- Where an increase in area or volume of up to 5% is proposed and the site is isolated or the increase would have no adverse effect on neighbouring occupiers.

---

**Officer responsible for the report**

Robert Hope  
Director of Regeneration  
Ext 264

**Author of the report**

David Townsend & Anthea Jones  
Head of Development & Building Control  
and Principal Planning Officer  
Ext 270 and 369

---