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Michael Laing Chief Executive

3rd July 2007

Dear Councillor,

I hereby give you Notice that a Meeting of the **REGENERATION COMMITTEE** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, CROOK** on **WEDNESDAY 11th JULY 2007**, at **6.00 P.M.**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To consider the Minutes of the last Meeting of the Committee held on 6th June 2007 as a true record – copies previously circulated. Copies previously circulated
3. To consider local development framework documents for public consultation. 1 - 8
4. To consider the Wear Valley economic strategy – consultation with key stakeholders. 9 – 21
5. To consider the North East of England Regional Spatial Strategy Secretary of State's proposed changes to the draft revision submitted by the North East Assembly (May 2007). 22– 37
6. To consider such other items of business which, by reason of special circumstances so specified, the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency

Yours faithfully

Chief Executive

Members of this Committee: Bailey, Buckham, Ferguson, Grogan, Hardaker, Hayton, Laurie, Mews, Mowbray, Murphy*, Miss Ord, Perkins, Seabury*, Stonehouse, David Wilson, Yorke and Zair.

*ex-officio, non-voting capacity

Chair: Councillor Mowbray

Deputy Chair: Councillor Yorke

TO: All other Members of the Council for information
Management Team

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

11 JULY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

purpose of the report

1. To seek approval for public consultation on LDF reports on the issues and alternative policy options to be considered for the Core Strategy and Generic Development Control Policies.

background

2. Members will recall that as part of on-going work on the LDF Council have produced and approved:
 - The Local Development Scheme
 - The Statement of Community Involvement
 - Annual Monitoring Reports 2005 and 2006.
 - Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.
3. The next stage of plan preparation involves work on the LDF Core Strategy and the Generic Development Control Policies DPD. As part of this work the Council must identify the key district issues that the new district plan should address and the alternative policy options, which could considered to address these.
4. To advance this work the following documents have been prepared for public consultation purposes, namely:
 - **'Creating a new district plan: Setting the context' document** (Annex A);
 - **'Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report'** (Annex B); and
 - **'Generic Development Control Policies: Issues and Alternative Options Report'** (Annex C).

5. The purpose of these consultation documents is to:-
- Set out the procedural context within which the new plan is to be prepared;
 - Provide a current profile of the district;
 - Present the key social, economic and environmental issues facing the district that the Council has identified and that the new plan could influence;
 - Seek third parties comment on whether the issues identified so far are correct and whether any key issues have been omitted;
 - Establish which options consultees prefer and would like to see developed into actual plan objectives and planning policies; and
 - Identify whether any other realistic alternative policy options have been omitted.
6. It is important to note that the content of all three documents has been informed by the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (endorsed by Members on 2nd April 2007), a series of internal and external workshops held last year. In addition the reports are informed by research, commissioned background studies and the content of relevant strategies, including the Council Plan and the Community Plan.
7. It is intended that these documents will form the basis for public debate on the strategic direction that the new district plan should take. To ensure that the resulting engagement is carried out in a full and meaningful manner it is intended that it will be undertaken in accordance with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement. The scope of the consultation has been informed by discussions with the Community Network and will be tabled.
8. The purpose of this committee item is to seek Members approval of the three reports for consultation purposes. Members will have the opportunity to express their preferred choices in relation to these documents in due course. This will include a workshop event, details of which will be circulated at a later date.
9. The outcome of the public consultation on these reports will, alongside the application of the adopted Sustainability Appraisal Framework, inform the Council's choice of preferred options to be taken forward and be developed in to the final Core Strategy and Generic Development Control Policies documents for the new district plan.
10. The revised project plan for the LDF identifies that the Council will undertake a six week public consultation in relation to this stage in plan preparation scheduled to take place between the 23rd July and 31st August 2007.

creating a new district plan: setting the context

11. This document, contained in **Annex A**, outlines the key social, economic and environmental issues facing the district that form the context of the LDF. The structure of the document is described below:-

Section 1: Background – Presents a brief introduction to planning, the new district plan and describes the purpose of the first two policy documents being prepared as part of the new district plan.

Section 2: Profile of Wear Valley – Provides a portrait of the district, including the headline figures relating to social, environmental and economic factors. This section reflects a format based upon planning for People, Place, Prosperity proposed to provide a consistent structure for the new plan.

Section 3, 4 & 5: Key district issues – Identifies 37 key social, environmental and economic issues facing the district in the planning context and describes how and the degree to which these effect the district. Where appropriate each of these sections identifies how the new district plan could seek to address these issues.

12. The purpose of undertaking public consultation on this document is to establish:
- Whether an accurate description of the district has been presented;
 - Whether all the key district issues identified so far are correct; and
 - Whether any key issues facing the district have been omitted.

core strategy: issues and alternative options report

13. This consultation document sets out the alternative available planning choices identified to help develop the new district plan's:
- Spatial Vision;
 - Spatial Objectives; and
 - Strategic planning policies (including a Locational Strategy).
14. This document, contained in **Annex B**; the structure of the document is outlined below:-

Section 1 - To develop a Spatial Vision. This section briefly describes the role of a Spatial Vision and details how the proposed draft Spatial Vision for Wear Valley was developed before presenting it for consideration.

Section 2 – To establish the draft Spatial Objectives for the new district plan. This section briefly describes the purpose of Spatial Objectives and how the resulting 18 draft Spatial Objectives for the new plan were identified, before presenting them for consideration.

Section 3 – To establishing the focus for the Core Strategy. This section identifies the role of the Locational Strategy and the scope of potential strategic policies. These strategic policy areas are centred around:

Planning for People:

- Meeting local community needs
- Delivering a sequential approach to releasing land for development

Planning for Place:

- Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Protecting and enhancing the district's environment

Planning for Prosperity:

- Delivering a sustainable and prosperous district economy
- Declaring Area Action Plans.

Section 4 – To develop a Locational Strategy. This section identifies the four steps involved in establishing a Locational Strategy for the LDF and identifies the choices available relating to these steps. These steps involve examining:

- 1: The strategic role of the district within the region and sub region.
- 2: The role of settlements within the district and establishing the criteria to determine the 'Limits to development'
- 3: The geographical distribution of growth within the district.
- 4: The scale of growth through new development.

Sections 5, 6 and 7 - Establishing the scope of the strategic policies in light of the key district issues identified. For each theme the following are detailed;

- Why the strategic policies are required in relation to the particular theme;
- What the Council has to do in respect to the particular policy area. (This may be due to national planning policy requirements, the nature of key district issues that have been identified or in order to meet the Spatial Objectives presented earlier in the report); and
- Alternative ways by which the above could be achieved through a strategic planning policy framework. In some instances it may be appropriate for the reader to select more than one option.

The Strategic Policy Themes are identified as

A: Meeting local community needs

The consultation seeks to establish how the new district plan will achieve each of the following:

- Achieve a housing mix;
- Provide affordable homes;
 - Develop thresholds to trigger the requirement to provide affordable units;
 - Develop targets to identify the proportion of affordable units required;
 - Identify the delivery mechanism;
 - Identify the location of provision; and
 - Determine other targets relating to type and size of affordable housing.
- Accommodate the needs of gypsies and travellers;

- Provide open space and sport and recreation facilities;
 - Determine the type of development that the local targets are applicable to;
 - Determine the thresholds to trigger provision; and
 - Identify the delivery mechanisms.
- Deliver community facilities.

B: Delivering a sequential approach for housing

The consultation seeks to establish how the new district plan will achieve mechanism for adopting a sequential approach to new housing development.

C: Mitigating and adapting to climate change

The consultation seeks to establish how the new district plan will achieve each of the following:

- Increase the district's renewable energy generation capacity;
- Require energy efficient developments throughout the district;
- Maximise the sustainable use of resources within the district;
- Reduce the need to travel by car within the district; and
- Enable the district to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

D: Protecting and enhancing the district's environment

The consultation seeks to establish how the new district plan will achieve each of the following:

- Protect and enhance biodiversity and geological conservation;
- Protect and enhance the district's landscape and townscape;
- Conserve and enhance the district's historic environment; and
- Protect and make prudent use of natural resources.

E: Delivering a sustainable and prosperous district economy

The consultation seeks to establish how the new district plan will achieve each of the following:

- Delivering a diverse and competitive local economy;
- Delivering a strong rural economy;
- Tapping into the tourism potential of the district; and
- Creating vibrant towns and villages.

F: Declaring Area Action Plans

The consultation seeks to establish how the new district plan will deliver a criteria based approach to identify Area Action Plan areas.

15. The purpose of undertaking public consultation on this document is to establish:
 - Which options consultees consider are preferred and should be developed into actual plan objectives and planning policies; and
 - Whether any other realistic alternative choices have been omitted.

generic development control policies: issues and alternative options

16. It is essential that the Council has a suite of general policies which can be applied universally to all new planning applications. These policies could cover highway safety, residential amenity etc. This consultation document sets out the alternative policy choices identified to develop such planning policies for the new district plan. The document (see **Annex C**) is outlined below:-

Section 1 – To determine the focus, appropriateness and scope of the document. This section presents issues and alternative options relating to the following:

- **Appropriateness of purpose**
The **purpose** of the generic policies document is to provide a limited suite of development control policies, against which every development control application will be determined. Consideration needs to be given as to whether this purely generic approach is appropriate for Wear Valley, or whether some land-use based policies should be included within the document.
- **Appropriateness of proposed focus**
The potential **focus** that this document could take in contributing towards the Spatial Objectives and Spatial Vision of the **Core Strategy** is set out for consideration.
- **Prioritising the proposed focus**
The potential for weighting or priority awarded to each aspect of the **focus** is set out for consideration. This will determine the varying extents to which the generic policies will work towards the plan's Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives.
- **Determining the scope**
The coverage or **scope** of the generic themes contained within the **Generic Development Control Policies** document is set out for consideration. The Generic Themes were identified through a number of complimentary methods, including the policy content of the current local plan, consideration of the key issues facing the district, the content of national and regional planning policy and the Community Plan and Council Plan. The following generic themes have been identified:-

| PEOPLE | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| • Community Safety and Health | • Building Communities |
| • Residential Amenity | • Accessibility |
| PLACE | |
| • Highway Safety | • Risks of and from flooding |
| • Local Amenity | • Biodiversity and Geodiversity |
| • Efficient use of land | • Landscape and townscape |
| • Risks of and from pollution | • Design |
| • Heritage and Culture | • Waste Management |
| PROSPERITY | |
| • Sustainable Economy | • Town Centres and Rural Service centres |
| • Rural Economy | |
| • Economic Activity | |

SECTION 2, 3 and 4 - Establishing the scope of the generic policies themes. These provide background, key issues and alternative policy choices that have been identified for the generic policy themes set out in Section 1. **For each policy theme** alternative options relating to the approach a generic policy could adopt to address the specific issues are identified.

17. The purpose of undertaking public consultation on this document is to establish:
 - Which options they consider are the preferred ones and would like to be developed into planning policies; and
 - Whether any other realistic alternative choices have been omitted.

financial implications

18. The consultation on this series 'Issues and Alternative Options Reports' is a key milestone in the adopted revised Local Development Scheme. The outcome of this stage, alongside the Sustainability Appraisal, will assist in the identification of the preferred policy and provide the direction for the LDF to take. The preferred options will be the subject of further consultation next year. Government Office for the North East have indicated that achievement in meeting these key milestones is likely to be rewarded financially in the future as an incentive for local planning authorities. This is reflected through recommendations made in the recent planning white paper.
19. The existing LDF budget will meet the cost of consultation.

legal and human resource implications

20. Existing staff will be involved in consultation, and in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement, the assistance of the Community Network will be requested.

consultations

21. The Local Development Scheme identifies that consultation on the 'Issues and Alternative Options Reports' for both the Core Strategy and the Generic Development Control Policies documents should take place within July and August this year. This consultation exercise will be carried out in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement, adopted by the Council on the 15th August 2006. This consultation will therefore be directed towards key stakeholders and community groups as well as the district's wider community and will include the wide circulation of the appropriate documents as well as workshops and other public events. Details of the consultation will be tabled.

conclusion

22. 'Creating a new district plan: Setting the context' provides the context in which the LDF is to be developed. It also presents an introduction to the new planning framework for all those who want to become involved in its preparation. The purpose is to provide a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities currently facing the district which in turn influence potential planning policy and future direction of the plan. Government guidance is clear that in order to establish the 'soundness' of the new LDF, the Council should explicitly examine and publicly consult on all possible options and alternatives for future development and policies for control. The Core Strategy and Generic Development Control Policies documents provide for such consultation.
23. It is proposed that all three documents will undergo a 6 week public consultation period through July and August this year.
24. It is hoped that the public consultation exercise will verify the issues currently facing the district and identify any further alternative options which could be pursued through either the Core Strategy or Generic Development Control Policies documents. It is also anticipated that the public consultation exercise will also provide an indication as to which alternative options stakeholders and the community of Wear Valley would prefer the new district plan to develop.

RECOMMENDED

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | The content of 'Creating a new district plan: Setting the context' is endorsed fit public consultation. |
| 2 | The content of 'Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report' is endorsed fit public consultation. |
| 3 | The content of 'Generic Development Control Policies: Issues and Alternative Options Report' is endorsed fit public consultation. |

Officer responsible for the report

Robert Hope
Strategic Director for Environment and
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Ext 264

Author of the report

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Ext 538

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

11 JULY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration

**WEAR VALLEY ECONOMIC STRATEGY – CONSULTATION WITH KEY
STAKEHOLDERS**

purpose of the report

1. To inform members of the outcome of the consultation with key stakeholders and seek agreement to proposed actions arising

background

2. At the April Committee meeting members agreed to consult on the draft Wear Valley Economic Strategy and were advised that consultation would include key stakeholders such as One NorthEast, Durham County Council, Learning and Skills Council, Forum for Business, Business Link, and Government Office North East. That consultation is now complete.
3. Of the 34 organisations invited to comment 7 have replied. Their responses are highlighted in the attached Annex 1 together with issues identified and proposed action. Annex 1 also includes reference to issues raised by the Audit Commission, in relation to the District Regeneration Best Value Review which are considered relevant to the strategy.

policy context

4. The Action Plan accompanying the strategy identifies how the proposed activities fit with existing regional and sub regional strategies.

considerations

financial/legal/human resource/IT/H&S implications

5. None.

value for money

6. The strategy will provide a framework for action that will ensure resources are utilised in the most effective way.

equality and diversity/access to services

7. Will be addressed through the strategy.

consultations

8. The purpose of the report is to feedback on the consultations that have taken place with regional stakeholders.

conclusion

9. The responses received are generally very positive and in the majority of cases where issues have been raised they can be accommodated or are already addressed in the strategy.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Members note the results of the consultation and agree the proposed actions.
- 2 The revised strategy is tabled at a future meeting of the committee.

Officer responsible for the report

Robert Hope
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Ext 264

Author of the report

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REGENERATION COMMITTEE

11 JULY 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration

**NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY
SECRETARY OF STATE'S PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DRAFT REVISION
SUBMITTED BY THE NORTH EAST ASSEMBLY (MAY 2007)**

purpose of the report

1. To bring to Members' attention the Secretary of State's (SoS) proposed changes to the submission draft of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North East released in May 2007.
2. To determine the Council's response to the consultation exercise on the proposed changes to the submission draft RSS.

background

3. Following the announcement in Parliament on 24th May 2007 by Meg Munn, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the government has published for consultation its proposed changes to the RSS. The initial consultation period is for 10 weeks ending on 6th August.
4. In addition, the North East Assembly has been invited to comment on the housing figures and the implications of the recent household projections from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The Assembly and other stakeholders have also been requested to provide further factual information about the employment sites proposed for deletion.
5. Once the Assembly and others have made their comments, there will then be a further set of changes published for an 8-week consultation, before the government takes any final decision. A special Plenary meeting of the Assembly will consider the proposed modifications on 16 July.
6. The District Council has formally considered and responded to all RSS submissions both individually and collectively with other County Durham authorities (previous reports are identified at Annex 2. It is again proposed to provide a unified County Durham response to the changes on matters of strategic importance, and to separately respond to issues of significance to the district. This is a formal stage in the RSS process so all responses need to be on the pro-forma provided identifying formal objection or support to the proposed changes of relevance.

proposed modifications

7. The current RSS for the North East was originally published as RPG1, and became the formal RSS in September 2004. In June 2005 the North East Assembly submitted a draft revision of the RSS to Government. This was considered by an independent Panel of Inspectors at an Examination in Public during March and April 2006.
8. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes take into account the Panel's recommendations and also the views of everyone who has commented so far, as well as changes in Government policy since June 2005. Also published are the reports of a Sustainability Appraisal of the Proposed Changes, and a draft 'Appropriate Assessment' of the RSS revision, to meet the requirements of the European Habitats Directive.
9. In summary the Proposed Changes upon which comment is required include:-
 - a new policy on climate change;
 - a revised statement of future major transport priorities;
 - an increase in the total number of additional new dwellings in the region from 107,000 to 112,000 over the period to 2021;
 - requests for more information from the North East Assembly and others on the Panel's recommendations to reconsider housing allocations to some districts and to change policies on major employment sites (this includes an invitation to take into account the latest population and household projections, which show the possibility of increased growth in the region) ;
 - a clearer position on land near airports;
 - policy changes affecting the Metro Centre and major out of town office developments ;
 - new policies on 'green infrastructure' – networks of protected sites, nature reserves, green spaces, and wildlife corridors ; and
 - various changes to policies to reflect the sustainability appraisal and 'appropriate assessment'.

county response

10. In the last few years all County Durham authorities have worked to present a unified response to all RSS matters in order to safeguard the County from the potential 'threat' of over concentration on the conurbations of the region. This approach has achieved some success to date. This included a presentation to County Durham MPs on 22nd November 2006 and the launch of a Manifesto to Change the RSS in February 2007. This highlighted the main concerns for County Durham which arose from the recommendations of the EiP Panel report.
11. The report of the County Durham Association of Local Authorities on the Panel report is summarised at Annex 3. The degree to which the Proposed Modifications meet these requirements should therefore frame the response.

key issues for county durham

policy 30 dwelling provision

12. The Proposed Changes (reference PC135E) reflect the Panel recommendations in promoting an increased regional housing total from 107,000 to 112,000 net new dwellings in the period 2004-2021 whilst reducing the housing allocation of 19,040 net new dwellings to County Durham (previously 19,975). This will involve reduced allocations for Chester-le-Street, Derwentside, Easington and Wear Valley districts. As the County Durham Local Authorities have advocated the need for at least 23,000 new dwellings to meet the demands of natural change within existing population levels, **it is proposed that formal objection is made to change PC 135 E to Policy 30.**
13. Recent work has been undertaken through the Assembly on housing, in line with the expected request from CLG to revisit the figures in line with ONS population projections and more recent evidence of economic performance. This work has sought to significantly increase the RSS housing figure. This approach has regional support.
14. Discussions on new regional totals are currently being pursued and it is hoped agreement will be achieved soon. I hope to table new regional figures at the meeting.
15. The justification for an increase regional housing total includes the fact that the region is starting from a higher population and economic base than previously thought which is grounds for a more optimistic planning position. This affects the whole region. The strategy does concentrate the vast majority of new dwelling provision in the conurbations and main settlements, with potentially 70% of provision in Tees Valley and Tyne & Wear over the period. This concentrates the majority of development in the two urban sub-regions as set out by the RSS. Elsewhere it will be focussed in defined regeneration towns and rural service centres. Despite this it is envisaged that agreement can be reached for a higher allocation for county Durham. Previous decisions by the County Durham Association has promoted at least 22000 dwellings in the County.
16. **It is proposed:-**
 - **that formal objection is made to change PC 135 E to Policy 30 relating to a reduction in total housing allocations for County Durham:**
 - **that formal support is given to an increase in total regional housing allocation; and**
 - **that formal support is given to a new total for County Durham of at least 22,000.**

strategic employment sites

17. The Proposed Modifications endorse the Panel report by proposing the continued deletion and/or the placing of limitations on allocated strategically important employment sites in County Durham.
18. The Proposed Modifications propose:-
 - **Policy 19 Prestige Employment Sites – NETPark development limited to 13ha.**
 - **Deleted Policy 20 Reserve Sites – Heighington Lane West and South of Seaham**
 - **Policy 13 Regional Brownfield Mixed Use Developments – Eastgate not included**
 - **Policy 57 Sustainable Freight Distribution – deletion of Tursdale**
19. Individual District Councils are currently considering 'live' development inquiries for all these sites which could bring forward these regionally significant developments and collectively could generate over 20,000 new jobs and £30m of investment into the County Durham economy. The RSS Proposed Changes could make realisation of these developments significantly harder. Individual districts will make specific comment on these sites/developments but it is considered that a collective rejection of these changes is warranted.
20. Despite representation the Proposed Changes fail to identify the potential of the proposed **Eastgate Renewable Energy Village** which provides an opportunity to create a major centre for energy research and business development, tourist and recreational activity based on the development and sustainable use of five land-based renewable energy sources. This could provide over 350 new jobs in West Durham and see the development of a 25 hectare brownfield site and become a catalyst for more widespread rural regeneration. The potential of the development has been recognised in the Regional Economic Strategy as a Regional Energy Centre and a Planning application is expected to be submitted in October 2007.
21. It is contested that at a strategic level Eastgate and other sites need to be fully endorsed in the RSS. All these developments are specific to County Durham and cannot be relocated elsewhere and as a result such employment growth and investment could be lost to the region.
22. **It is proposed that the District object formally to:-**
 - **the failure to include Eastgate as a strategically significant brownfield in Policy 13;****and support other districts in their opposition to:-**

- the deletion of Policy 20 (PC96E), including the deletion of reserve sites at Heighington Lane West and South of Seaham;
- the restriction of Netpark to 13ha in Policy 19 (PC93D/E);
- the deletion of Tursdale as a sustainable freight distribution site from Policy 57 (PC201E).

focussing on growth and regeneration

23. Policies 5 (Locational Strategy), 6 (Tyne-Wear City Region), 7 (Tees Valley City Region) and 8 (Rural Areas) of the Proposed Changes make provision for the regeneration of towns and rural service centres in County Durham. All of the County's named towns and villages are identified as investment priorities.
24. Collectively and in response to a request from the panel for a more strategic approach to regeneration to be agreed in County Durham, the County Durham Association proposed that priority for regeneration should be directed towards specific Regeneration Areas as defined as:
 - The Darlington - Newton Aycliffe/Spennymoor - Bishop Auckland strategic corridor;
 - The Chester-le-Street –Stanley – Consett strategic corridor; and
 - The East Durham A 19 strategic corridor focussed on Peterlee and Seaham.
25. The Proposed Changes do not endorse this approach, but as stated all the main towns and settlements within these corridors are named and included as priorities for development/regeneration in RSS policy. It is therefore not considered important to pursue the corridor concept through the RSS.
26. Notwithstanding the above, work currently being undertaken to revise the County Durham Economic Strategy has identified strategic economic corridors in the County as a basis for significant further investment. This will continue to be pursued in order to prioritise RDA and other investment in the County.
27. Whilst the Panel's recommended changes sought to further reinforce the strategy of concentration on development in the conurbations and in particular in the core areas of the City Regions, the specific inclusion of all the regeneration towns of County Durham is welcomed. The wording of the relevant policies continues to seek to address indigenous growth and ignores potential "aspirations" for more significant growth. Policy 6 specifically deletes the word 'aspirations' from the policy (PC38E). This is not accepted.
28. In addition Policy 6 (Tyne-Wear) includes specific reference to the regeneration of the Durham Coalfield settlements, this is excluded from Policy 7 (Tees Valley).

29. **It is proposed that objection is made to:-**

- **The exclusion of 'aspiration' from Policies 6 and 7 in relation to regeneration towns; and**
- **The omission of reference to the regeneration of the Durham Coalfields from Policy 7 on the Tees Valley City Region.**

district response

30. As stated the District Council has made specific and detailed comment at all stages of the RSS process. **Annex 4** contains a table detailing the concerns raised by the Council in October 2005 and identifies whether the SoS proposed changes have satisfied these concerns. Any action required by the Council is also contained in this table. The main concerns which are still outstanding are detailed below:

- Inclusion of 'the need for housing market renewal in the Durham Coalfield areas' to be included in Policy 7 (referred to above).
- The decrease in the county and district housing apportionment for the plan period; this is discussed in greater detail below.
- The strategic importance of the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village to Wear Valley, the wider area and regional prosperity should be acknowledged in Policy 13 (referred to above).
- Recognition of the potential development of the Weardale Railway and its potential role in regeneration should be made in Policy 56.
- The Council should continue to strongly advocate the inclusion of the A68 as a strategically important route within the region due to its potential to assist in development and regeneration of West Durham.

31. Other concerns the Council has in light of the SoS proposed changes are set out below and discussed in greater detail.

locational strategy

32. The proposed changes to the Locational Strategy (detailed by Policy 5) have provided greater detail and clarification on the two City Region areas within the North East, which the Council should welcome. The justification to Policy 5 now identifies Bishop Auckland and Crook as regeneration towns and Stanhope as a rural service centre. In line with the Panel Report, the proposed changes recommend that Wear Valley in whole, or in part, falls within the Tees Valley City Region. It is now considered that no parts of Wear Valley fall within the Tyne and Wear City Region. This has however not been translated in to the two policies which relate to the City Regions; Crook is still referred to under Policy 6: Tyne and Wear City Region.

33. Whilst the Council should welcome and support the clarification that none of the district falls within the Tyne and Wear City Region, it is considered that the Council should make representation regarding the inconsistency between the justification to Policy 5 and Policy 6, seeking Crook to be included within Policy 7: Tees Valley City Region, alongside Bishop Auckland.
34. **It is proposed to make representation on the locational strategy as follows:-**
- **to welcome and support the clarification made to the locational strategy in relation to the two City Region areas;**
 - **seeking consistency in approach to recognise Crook within Policy 7.**

population and housing

35. Following the SoS Proposed Changes to the distribution of housing across the region Table 1 shows it is proposed that the housing allocation for Wear Valley to be reduced by 700 in the period to 2021. In October 2005 the Council supported the 20,000 figure for the county as a minimum; these revised figures are therefore cause concern and cannot be supported.

Table 1 – Housing allocation for Wear Valley

| Period | Submission Draft Average annual Net additions | Total Allocation | Proposed changes to Average annual Net additions | Revised total additions for period | Current Commitments as of 1 st April 2006 |
|------------------|---|------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 2004 – 11 (7yrs) | 260 | 1820 | 185 | 1295 | 3,533 |
| 2011 – 16 (5yrs) | 110 | 550 | 140 | 700 | |
| 2016 – 21 (5yrs) | 85 | 425 | 20 | 100 | |
| Annual Average | 165 (figure rounded up) | 2805 | 120 (figure rounded up) | 2095 | |

36. It is hoped that within the work currently being undertaken by the NEA on new regional and sub-regional totals (referred to above) a significantly increased regional total will allow for a much higher District total. The Council is working very closely with the County Council and the NEA to ensure a more reasonable distribution, which reflects local circumstances. It is hoped to prevent these figures at the meeting.

37. **It is proposed that:-**

- **the Council strongly object to the revised housing allocation of 2095 for the district.**
- **the Council continues to work closely with the NEA to agree a more reasonable housing allocation for the county and district which better reflects local circumstances.**

other comment

38. As stated above the Council should make specific objection to the exclusion of Eastgate from Policy 8.

39. In addition the Secretary of State has not endorsed other comments of the Council (as detailed in Annex 4) relating to Weardale Railway and the improvement to the A68.

40. **It is proposed to:-**

- **Request the inclusion of reference to the Weardale Railway in Policy 56.**
- **Request the inclusion of reference to the A68 in Policy 5A and Policy 56.**

next steps

41. It is recommended that the responses proposed in this report be presented formally to the Government Office for the North East by 6th August 2007.

conclusion

42. The Proposed Changes largely reflect the Inspectors report, which further disadvantages both the district and County Durham as a whole, and which has been objected to by County Durham authorities and by local MPs. It is important that once again a forceful argument is submitted against the negative impacts on the County. County Durham Planning Officers have worked with the NEA to address some of these issues. This report seeks to reflect this work and agree a more positive outcome for County Durham.

43. A united front from County Durham would continue to be desirable and as previously could be backed up by individual district responses.

RECOMMENDED

1. That the District Council formally objects to the RSS Proposed Changes as indicated in the report.
2. That the Council supports the County Durham Local Authorities Association response as indicated in the report.

Officer responsible for the report

Robert Hope
Strategic Director for Environment and
Regeneration
Ext 264

Author of the report

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Regeneration
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Forward Planning Officer

CREATING A NEW DISTRICT PLAN: SETTING THE CONTEXT

FOREWORD

What is the purpose of this report?

This document seeks to set the context within which the new district plan is to be prepared. It sets out the new development plan system to which the new district plan must accord and the key issues facing the Wear Valley which it should seek to address. This document should be read in conjunction with the Issues and Alternative Options Reports that have been published for consultation in respect to the emerging [Core Strategy](#) and [Generic Development Control Policies](#) documents which will form part of the new plan.

What is the content of this report?

[Section 1](#) introduces planning and the new-style district plan, known as the Local Development Framework. A profile of Wear Valley, covering the location, population, economy and environment of Wear Valley is presented in [Section 2](#).

[Sections 3, 4 and 5](#) present the key issues facing Wear Valley relating to *Planning for People, Place and Prosperity*; a significant number of which are long standing and deep rooted. They are the issues that holistically the new plan should seek to positively influence and impact upon. They have therefore informed the development of the new plan's draft Strategic Objectives. It must however be recognised that the new district plan will have the potential to tackle these district issues to certain degrees either directly or indirectly. It should also be noted that further specific planning issues that arise for each individual emerging planning policy documents are discussed in their respective Issues and Alternative Options Reports.

The key district issues presented in [Sections 3, 4 & 5](#) have been identified through the collation of baseline data alongside the consideration of the community's concerns and aspirations reflected in the current [Community Plan](#). The resulting baseline data and issues identified were subject to discussion during a series of initial workshops attended by Stakeholders, elected Members and Council Officers held in July and November 2006. These issues are discussed in the proceeding section of this document which adopts a structure centred around planning for 'people', 'place' and the 'prosperity' of the district

What do I need to do next?

The publication of this report for third party comment represents the first stage in preparing the [Core Strategy](#) and the [Generic Development Control Policies](#) documents for the district. This report is subject to consultation for a period of 6 weeks from [XX July 2007](#) until [XX August 2007](#). Having considered the content of this report in terms of its proposed scope, priorities, potential policy options, accuracy and appropriateness any representations should be made by completing the Consultation Response Form which accompanies this report and submitted to the Council by [no later than XX August 2007](#).

Any representations received in respect to this report will be considered and where deemed justifiable used to inform the finalisation of the draft Strategic Vision, Strategic Objectives contained in the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) and identification of the preferred policy options for the policy documents currently being prepared.

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SECTION 1

BACKGROUND

This document seeks to set the context within which the new district plan is to be prepared in respect to the new development plan system to which it must accord and the key issues facing the district that it can seek to address. It should be read in conjunction with the Issues and Alternative Options Reports that have been published for consultation in respect to the emerging [Core Strategy](#) and [Generic Development Control Policies](#) documents which will form part of the new plan.

What is the relevance of these consultation documents?

Planning is a process which encourages, guides and controls new development and the use of land and buildings. It works within the public interest. It affects all of us on a daily basis, often unknowingly. It shapes the places within which we all live, work, are educated and spend our leisure time. The planning process also influences how and where we travel to in order to live our lives as well as providing opportunities for future generations. There are two main elements making up the local planning process: firstly, the formulation of local planning policies and proposals; and secondly, the determination of development proposals made by third parties against these policies.

'What sort of place should Wear Valley be in 10 – 15 years time? Which parts of the District need to be developed? Where should new houses be located? Where should we plan new areas of employment? How can transport links be improved? How can we secure good design and improve the appearance of the District?'

Being at the early stages of preparing a new district plan these are just some of the questions that the Council needs to consider and address over the coming years. This new district development plan, to be known as the Local Development Framework, will set out new planning policies and proposals for the district. This new plan will serve as the new land use delivery mechanism for a variety of plans and programmes that relate to or impact upon the district, including the district's [Community Plan](#)¹

The Council adopted a [Statement of Community Involvement](#)² in August 2006. This sets out the Council's policies and procedures for facilitating the meaningful involvement of third parties in the formulation of new planning policies and in the determination of planning applications. The joint public consultation on the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) and the [Generic Development Control Policies: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) to which this context document relates represents the implementation of the Council's undertaking to engage with third parties in the development of new planning policies for the district from the outset of development plan preparation.

¹ The Community Plan was prepared by the district's Local Strategic Partnership which is an umbrella group bringing together various organisations to work with, and improve the services delivered to, the people of Wear Valley.

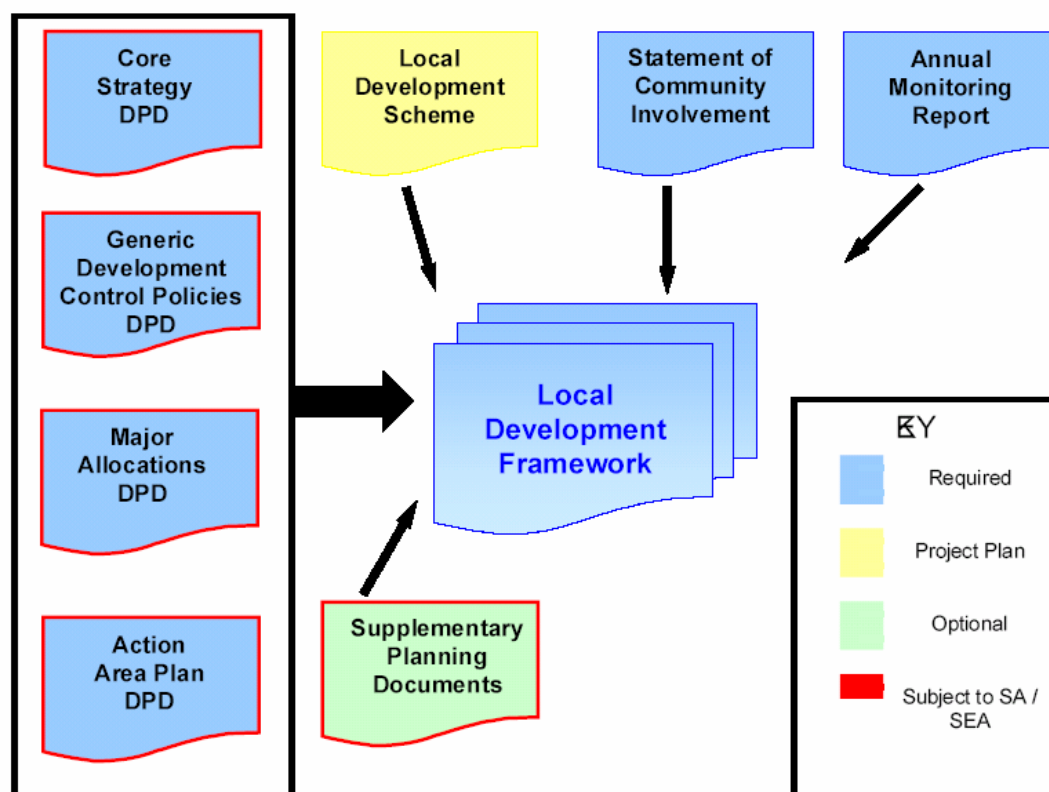
² [Wear Valley District Statement of Community Involvement \(2006\)](#) available to view and download at www.wearvalley.gov.uk Hard copies also available upon request from the Environment and Regeneration Department, Civic Centre, Crook (01388 765555)

Each Issues and Alternative Options Report sets out the specific issues that have been identified in respect to each proposed policy document and potential planning policy options available to satisfy these and address the key district issues identified in this context document. The representations made through this consultation will be considered and used to identify any reasonable alternative policy options that have been omitted and where appropriate will inform the selection of preferred policy options that will be the subject of further public engagement.

What is a Local Development Framework?

The Local Development Framework will progressively replace the existing [Wear Valley District Local Plan](#) (adopted March 1997) and will differ substantially from it; the new plan will comprise of several individual but related documents prepared in phases as opposed to being one comprehensive plan prepared in one go. The components of the [Wear Valley District Local Development Framework](#) which are currently proposed by the Council are summarised in [Figure 1](#) below.

Figure 1: Wear Valley District Local Development Framework



A key difference between the new plan and previous plans is the requirement for the new plan to be 'spatial' in nature; it must embrace issues such as education and health which were previously not recognised as traditional planning land use matters. Therefore, collectively the policy documents that will make up the new district plan will be key implementation tool to support and co-ordinate with a range of plans, programmes and strategies relating to the district from a planning perspective.

The first phase of plan preparation relates to the preparation of a [Core Strategy](#) document and the [Generic Development Control Policies](#) document. A detailed project plan of work is proposed over the next 3 – 5 years is contained within the Council's current [Local](#)

Development Scheme³. As the first phase of Local Development Framework documents are progressed further documents may be proposed, including Supplementary Planning Documents which will give detail as to how particular policies should be implemented.

What is a Core Strategy?

All Local Development Frameworks must contain a **Core Strategy**. The government has advised that this should normally be the first document that a council produces. As its title suggests a **Core Strategy** document is central to a Local Development Framework. Its purpose amongst other things is to set out the overall Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives of the proposed Local Development Framework. The term 'Spatial' is a reference to the fact that the new plan will not be based purely on the regulation and control of land use, but it will also address social, environmental, economic issues and other strategies and plans from agencies which have an impact on the district that is beyond simple land use issues. All policies to be contained in subsequent Local Development Framework documents, including the **Generic Development Control Policies** document, will need to accord with The **Core Strategy** these in order to be approved by the Secretary of State.

The **Core Strategy** should also contain a strategy that sets out in broad terms the scale and location of new development for the area the period up to 2021. This will be known as the 'Locational Strategy'. This Locational Strategy will in turn guide the direction that site specific land use allocations should take which will be set out in a document to be known as the 'Major Allocations' document that will emerge at a later date. The **Core Strategy** should also contain a set of policies relating to strategic issues including flood risk, provision of affordable housing and the efficient use of land.

What is a Generic Development Control Policies document?

As with the **Core Strategy** document all Local Development Frameworks should include generic development control policies. These policies may be included within the Core Strategy document or within a stand-alone document. The Council has decided that it is more appropriate to take the latter approach.

As its title suggests a **Generic Development Control Policies** document comprises of policies which are based upon planning related themes which can be applied to any development. Generic policy themes include matters such as highway safety, residential amenity, design and environmental protection. The government has advised that the number of policies should be far less than those contained within old style development plans which tend to be themed according to specific and uses.

The purpose of such a document is to provide a framework of policies which can be used to determine any proposal regardless of its location or scale, in conjunction with other local planning policies. These generic policies must relate to the Spatial Objectives of the Local Development Framework and therefore work towards delivering its Spatial Vision⁴ as referred to above.

³ Wear Valley District Local Development Scheme (version ii) available to view and download at www.wearvalley.gov.uk Hard copies also available upon request from the Environment and Regeneration Department, Civic Centre, Crook (01388 765555)

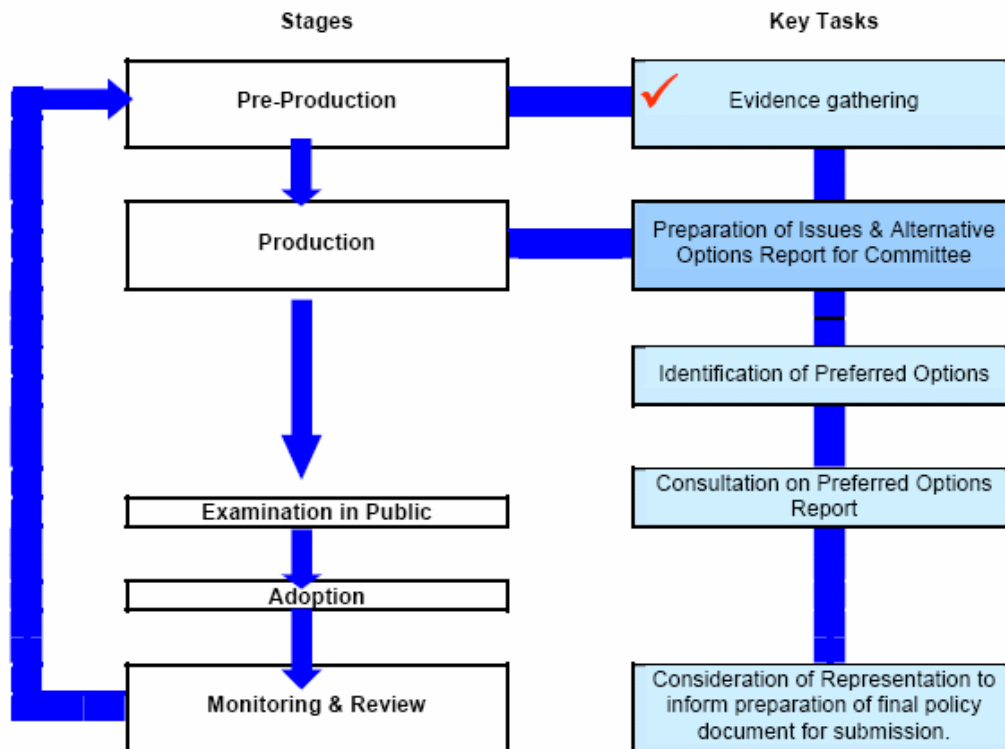
⁴ The draft Strategic Objectives and Strategic Vision are contained within the *Core Strategy Issues and Alternative Options Report* which is subject to consultation in tandem with this report. It can be viewed and downloaded at www.wearvalley.gov.uk Alternatively hardcopies are available upon request from the Environment and Regeneration Department, Civic Centre, Crook.

A subsequent 'Major Allocations' document will set out site specific land use proposals that will enable the implementation of the Locational Strategy which will be set out in the Core Strategy document and therefore it is important to note that site specific issues and options cannot be a focus of the [Core Strategy](#) and [Generic Development Control Policy](#) documents.

Stages in plan preparation

Figure 2 below summarises the key stages in the production of new planning policy documents that will form part of the new district plan. The current stage in plan production that has also been reached in respect to these first two policy documents is indicated.

Figure 2 : Stages in policy document production



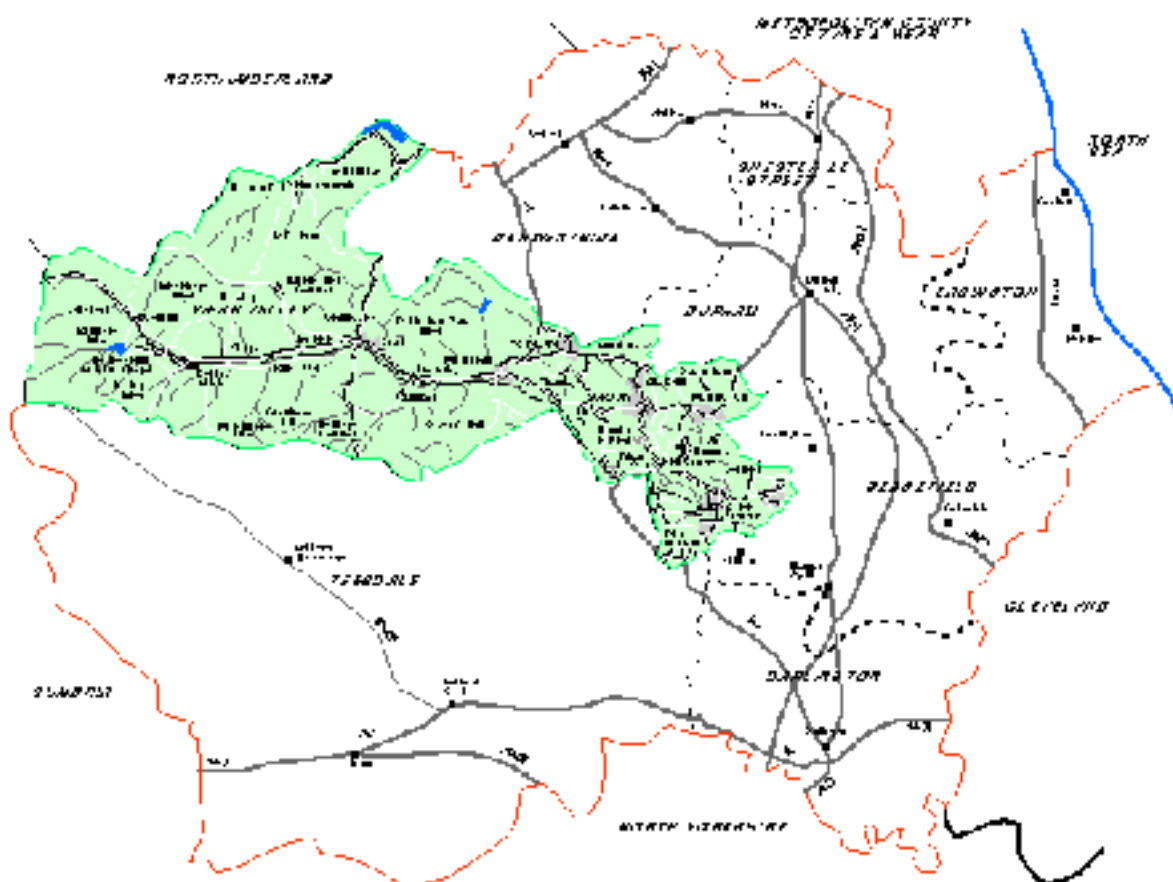
SECTION 2

A PROFILE OF WEAR VALLEY

Location

Covering 195 square miles, Wear Valley is 1 of 6 District and 1 Borough Councils within County of Durham, which is located in the North east region of England. Northumberland and the Tyne and Wear conurbation bound the County of Durham to the north, with Cumbria to the west and Teeside to the south.

MAP 1 - Location of District (*map to be upgraded*)



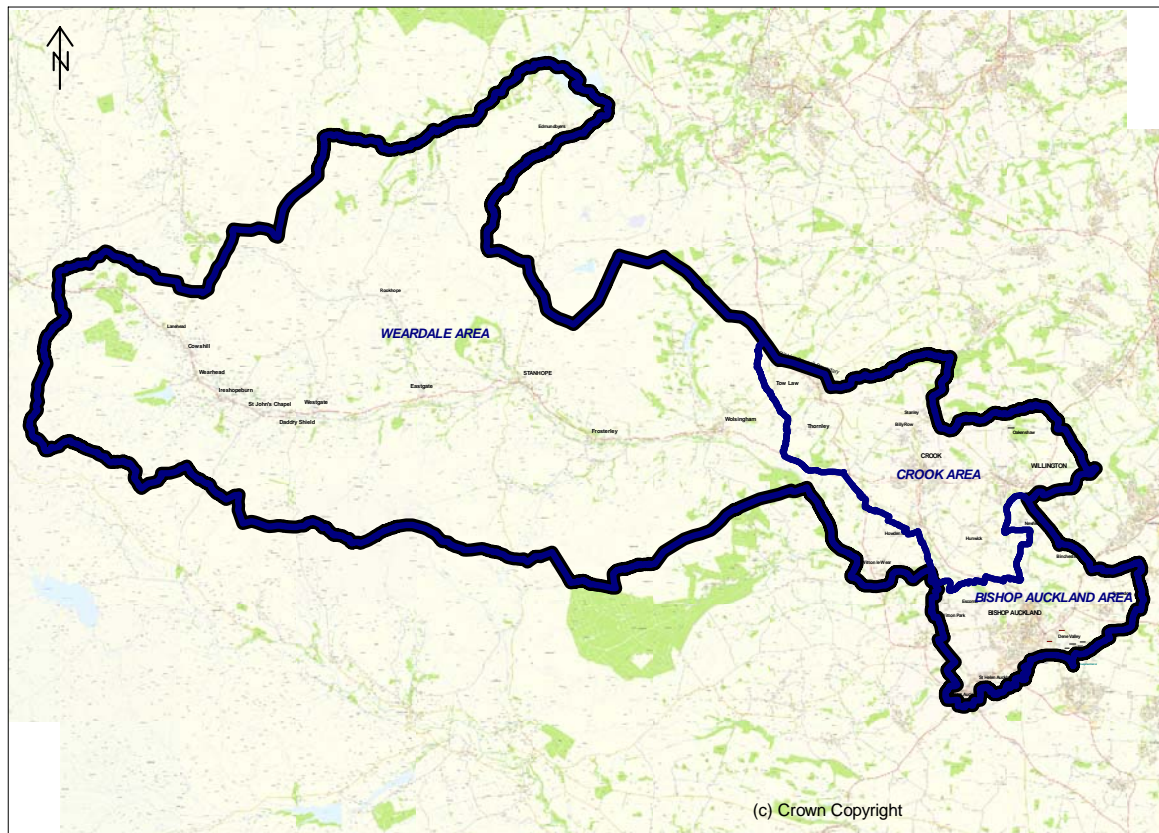
Description

The district of Wear Valley extends from the centre of the County, westwards along the course of the River Wear, spanning over 30 miles, to its western boundary with Cumbria. Almost half of its 195 square miles falls within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Sub-areas

Wear Valley has a mixture of both urban and rural environments. The district has 3 distinct sub-areas; Bishop Auckland, Crook and Willington and Weardale.

Map 2 - Sub-area boundary map (NB: Boundaries need confirming)



The **Bishop Auckland sub-area** comprises of Bishop Auckland town and its surrounding hinterland which contains numerous smaller settlements such as Coundon and Escomb; all located in a rural setting. The former Durham Coalfields area extends into this sub area. The population of the sub-area is 30849. Bishop Auckland town is the District's largest commercial, residential and employment centre; it has a vibrant town centre with a strong retail base second in the county to Durham City. It also has an important historic foundation with 2 conservation areas. However the town and surrounding settlements also suffer from severe deprivation including poor housing, skills, education, health, low incomes and employment and both a high incidence of crime and fear of crime.

The **Crook and Willington sub-area** consists of a collection of small towns and villages including Tow Law developed around the former coalfield; the sub-area has a population of 22715. Crook is the main market town within this sub area, located in the central part of the district. It provides facilities and services for the surrounding area and is also the administrative centre for Wear Valley District Council. The sub area has experienced a significant amount of new development particularly of large detached houses in the settlements of Crook and Willington

The majority of the **Weardale sub-area** is designated as the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; a landscape of national importance. Part of this sub area also enjoys Geo Park status. Of the 20 conservation areas in the district 13 are located within this sub area, many relating to whole settlements. Weardale has a population of 7775. The market towns of Stanhope and Wolsingham are key service centres within this sub-area. The Weardale economy is primarily based on tourism and agriculture, with a traditional dependence on industries including heavy engineering and mineral extraction have greatly

declined in the area. Due to the scenic nature of the area in recent years there has been an increased demand for housing in relation to the retirement and second homes markets.

Political Composition

Politically the Council is made up of 40 elected Councillors who represent 19 wards throughout the district. The current political composition of the Council is: 18 Labour, 16 Liberal Democrats and 6 Independents (May 2007).

Demography

Historically Wear Valley has experienced a declining population; by mid 2005 the population of Wear Valley stood at 62,100. Whilst still less than the 1981 Census figure of 64,110 the district has experienced a slight population increase in recent years when compared to the 2001 Census figure of 61,300.

In terms of ethnicity, the level of the population who are described as white stands at a level of 99.1% with the remainder being from other ethnic groups. The majority of the population is concentrated in the more urban areas of the eastern part of the district in the Crook / Willington and Bishop Auckland sub areas.

In 2005 residents of working age accounted for 60.2% of the population of the district. This compares with the figure of 62.1% for Great Britain as a whole. The percentage of the population aged 65 and over accounted for 17.7% with children accounting for 22.1%.

In respect of health the male life expectancy for the district is 75 years (2002-04), representing a small but steady improvement since 1996; with the female life expectancy declining slightly to just below 79 years over the period from 1996 to 2004. Both of these district figures are two years below the national average.

In terms of health of the resident population whilst the overall death rate from circulatory diseases and cancer significantly fell over the period from 1998 to 2004, this is still well above the national averages for England. There is evidence that this discrepancy between national and district figures is down to lifestyle and deprivation.

Another significant issue within the district is the conception rate amongst 15 - 17 year olds, which although has fallen since 1998 is still well above the national average. This has significant consequences with regard to housing, education, employment and welfare.

Housing

The majority of the house types within the district comprise of terraced properties which represent 46% of the total number of dwellings. This is largely a legacy of post coal-mining activity in the district. Semi-detached and detached dwellings make up 28% and 18% of the stock respectively; these properties tend to relate recent developments in comparison to the terraced properties. Flats / maisonettes / apartments represent of existing stock only a small percentage at 5%. However in recent years several such developments have been provided in the Bishop Auckland area.

In terms of the District's tenure profile in 2001 owner occupancy stood at 67% of all stock, which is lower than the level of owner occupancy in England which stands at 71%. The highest proportion of owner occupancy is in Weardale. Local authority housing represented 19% which is significantly higher than the 11% for England. Housing associations accounted for 5% of the stock which is lower than the 8% for England. Private rented stock accounted for 9%. The above figures reflect the greater dependency of the District's population on the local authority rented stock than the national average.

National and emerging regional planning policy gives priority to the re use of previously developed land and sets targets in respect to the delivery of new housing on such sites. In Wear Valley itself of all new dwellings completed during 2005/06 55% were provided on brownfield land. This has increased to 61.9% in 2006/07, slightly ahead of the national target of 60%. These figures representative the rural nature of much of the district.

Economy

In July 2006 77% (28,760) of residents of working age were economically active. While this figure is greater than the average for the North East at 75%, it is slightly less than the national average which is just over 78%. This leaves 23% of people are at working age who are not working for one reason or another. Within the district those claiming Job Seekers Allowance accounted for approximately 3% of the working age population (3.6% in 2003) with the average figures for the north east and nationally being 3.2% and 2.6% respectively. Within the district there are geographical variations in respect to this.

The dependency level in respect to Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance in 2005 was nearly 5% higher than the national average.

In 2004 Wear Valley was one of the most deprived districts in England ranking 32nd out of the 354 local authorities. This however, represents an improvement from a previous ranking of 22nd in 2002. In broad terms the most deprived areas in the district are located on the surrounds of Bishop Auckland and the Crook / Willington area, with the least deprived areas located in Weardale.

Traditionally employment in the east of the district was centred on mining as the area formed a principal and important part of the Central Durham Coalfield. Today engineering and general manufacturing industries are more prevalent in this area. The west of the district comprises of a traditional rural settlement pattern with the key employment sectors being agriculture and mineral extraction.

The above is reflected in the following figures which illustrate the changes in employment from 1998 to 2004. The industries that have seen a rise in employment comprise of construction which has seen a rise of 109% to 1423, the tertiary (banking, finance and insurance) sector has risen 30% to 1744, and the distribution, hotel and restaurant sector has risen 6% to 4959. The industries that have seen the most significant fall are manufacturing which has fallen by 39% to 2949, transport and communications which has seen a fall of 11% to 795, and agriculture / fishing fell by 6% to 326. The principle source of employment is in the public administration, education and health which stood at to 6523 showing a 2% rise.

It is important to note that tourism is a growing industry for the district as a whole and Weardale in particular. Tourism generated £37 million in 2004/05 and £38 million 2005/06 in Wear Valley through direct and indirect tourism related activities.

Education

The District has 37 Primary Schools with 5 Secondary Schools.

Educational achievement has improved from 1997 with the percentage of 16 year olds achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A to C rising from 31% in 1997 to 48% in 2005. However, the level of achievement is still 4% below the county average and 9% below the national average (2005).

There is also a skill shortage relating social skills, soft work skills, poor adult literacy and numeracy skills and low educational achievement in schools.

Natural Environment

The landscape of Wear Valley is predominantly rural and it is also very diverse, from the attractive open heather moorland of the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) located within the western part of the District, to the eastern part of the district which is a former coalfield area.

Throughout the district there are environmentally important habitats including 1 UNESCO Geopark, 3 Special Areas of Conservation, 19 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and a range of Priority Habitats as listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. In respect of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest the quality of these are measured by the Governments Public Service Agreement with a 95% target for 2010. In 2006 9 of the sites exceeded this target. However, the conditions of some of the remaining site are very poor with one measuring 7% and three sites measuring 0%.

River water and air quality in the district are both at a high level. Therefore there is no requirement for an Air Quality Management Plan. In respect of river water quality in biological terms 87.5% is described as very good to good compared to a national average of 72% (2005). In respect of chemical quality the figure is 94.3% compared to 67.7% nationally (2005).

Built Environment

The Council has designated 20 Conservation Areas given their building group value and public realm which comprises of trees, open spaces and village greens, street and village patterns and features of historic and archaeological interest. The Council has a statutory duty to protect and enhance their character and appearance.

As well as Conservation Areas there are over 550 listed buildings within the district which are protected on their own merits in regards to architectural and or historical importance. There are currently 3 listed buildings on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk Register. There are also currently 16 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the district.

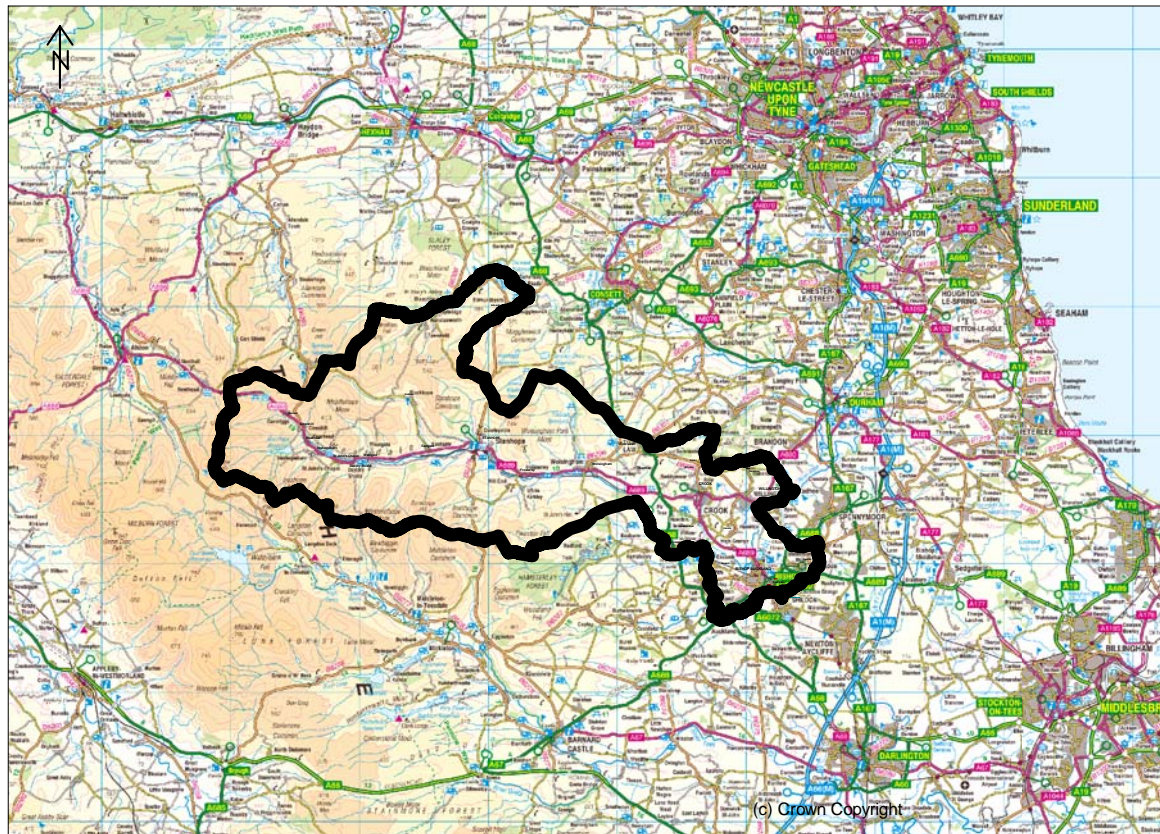
Transportation

The issue of transportation relates to accessibility to transport within the district and accessibility between the district and the region as a whole.

There is approximately 520 km of roads within the district; given the relative position of the district within the region these are vital to the economy of the district. However, a feature of the district is the relative low level of car ownership; the 2001 Census confirmed that 32% of households within the district were without a private car or van. This figure was approximately 9% below national average.

Car ownership levels together with the dispersed nature of settlements, the increasing ageing population and the geographical spread of high levels of deprivation within the district only serves to emphasise the significance of accessibility as an issue and the importance of the public transport network and the ability for the local population to access it. Currently the public transport providers concentrate on arterial routes and this can make it difficult to access the service for those who do not live on the main routes especially in Weardale. Thus services such as hospitals and colleges can be difficult to access particularly out of hours. There are however 3 community transport providers within the district but as yet community transport providers do not generally operate feeder services to arterial routes.

Map 3 - Key Diagram with river and transport routes (*map to be upgraded*)



In addition to the existing road network the district also has a direct link to the national railway network via the rail-line from Darlington to Bishop Auckland. There is scope to extend this rail network up to Eastgate in Weardale, although at present this is limited to a tourist rail service between Wolsingham and Stanhope.

The district has a significant number of Public Rights of Way which allow good access to walkers and provides important informal recreational opportunities.

SECTION 3

PLANNING FOR PEOPLE: KEY ISSUES FACING WEAR VALLEY

This section of the report presents the key issues facing Wear Valley which are considered to be most relevant to the 'People' theme to be adopted as part of the overall Local Development Framework Spatial vision and structure. [Section 1](#) of this report identifies how these key issues were identified.

They are the issues that holistically the new plan should seek to address, influence or impact upon. They have therefore informed the development of the new plan's draft Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives which are identified for consideration in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

The key issues identified as being most relevant to the 'People' theme of the new district plan and the related spatial objectives are:

- KI (1) Reversing the demographically unbalanced population of the district
- KI (2) Reversing the traditionally declining population of the district
- KI (3) Responding to equality and diversity throughout the district
- KI (4) Reducing the high teenage pregnancy rate in the district
- KI (5) Reducing significant health deprivation in the district
- KI (6) Increasing Wear Valley residents' accessibility to leisure facilities
- KI (7) Promoting informal recreation opportunities
- KI (8) Delivering open spaces within the district that meet local needs
- KI (9) Tackling and working to reduce crime and the discrepancies between actual and perceived district crime rates.
- KI (10) Improving highway safety within the district
- KI (11) Managing the risks of and from flooding
- KI (12) Utilising established mechanisms for engagement in the planning process
- KI (13) Promoting community participation
- KI (14) Working with partners to deliver improvements to the district
- KI (15) Meeting the needs of the District's community groups
- KI (16) Tackling the local skills shortages
- KI (17) Tackling the intergenerational worklessness culture of the district
- KI (18) Influencing the long-term viability of schools in the district
- KI (19) Meeting local housing needs
- KI (20) Securing the efficient use of land

[What we need you to tell us](#)

- Whether you consider that all the key issues facing the district have been identified .
- Whether you consider all the key issues identified have been appropriately reflected in the draft Spatial Vision or the draft Spatial Objectives as set out in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

KI (1) Reversing the demographically unbalanced population of the district

KI (2) Reversing the traditionally declining population of the district

The decline in the overall population has been slow but steady from 64,000 in the early 1980's to 61,000 in 2002 and despite an increase to 62,100 by 2005 the long-term trend is forecast to decline to 59,000 by 2028 (National Statistics indicate 63,300). This is exacerbated by the forecasted reduction in the proportion of younger residents resulting from a range of factors including a reduction in birth rates, out-migration and the fact that people are generally living longer. It is projected that the district will experience an increasingly ageing population over the coming years.

Having regard to the above it is considered that attraction and retention of younger people are crucial as they positively contribute towards population growth and provide a better demographic balance so as to sustain local schools and to provide the workforce for local businesses, shops and services, thus contributing to the local economy.

The new plan could incorporate policies aimed at encouraging younger people to remain within and migrate to the district in the future, through the allocation of suitable land for new employment, housing and community facilities, safeguarding and supporting existing provision and the adoption of targets that will ensure that their future needs are met through such new development.

Notwithstanding the requirements of the younger generation the new plan also has the potential to provide a policy framework that supports the older population and provide people with opportunities to maintain independent lives in their own homes and wider communities.

KI (3) Responding to equality and diversity throughout the district

The district has a very low number of Black and Minority ethnic resident populations which is significantly lower than the national average. However there are established Gypsy and Show People communities within the district.

Also of relevance to this issue is the district's age profile, and high incidence of long term sickness. The level of Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance is nearly 5% above the average for England. Therefore there is a significant level of people currently out of the labour market. This results in a higher level of dependency which presents the potential for significant levels of social exclusion to continue into the future.

The new district plan can seek to address the needs of these residents in relation to matters including the type and location of housing and employment as well as mobility within the public realm and access to services and facilities, so as to promote equality for all.

KI (4) Reducing the high teenage pregnancy rate in the district

Despite the ageing population profile within Wear Valley the conception rates of females from the ages of 15 to 17 years were 54 per 1000 which is 12% higher than the national average in 2004. This can be linked directly to the significant levels of low educational achievement which are apparent within the district.

Though not directly traditionally associated to land use planning this issue can be indirectly related to the new plan given the resulting impacts on household composition and thus the ability of the current housing stock to meet current and future needs. There are also implications in respect to opportunities for mothers to access childcare facilities and services to enable mothers to return to education, training and employment.

The delivery of adequate levels of housing stock of the right type, cost and location falls within the scope of the new plan, as does the future provision of suitable community facilities, employment land and premises to provide greater opportunities to take up employment, training and education.

KI (5) Reducing significant health deprivation in the district

The life expectancy of those living in the district provides a good indication of the overall health of the local population. Whilst over the past decade the life expectancy of males living within the district has improved by 3 years to 74.7 years, it is still about 2 years below the national average. Unfortunately the life expectancy of females, whilst still higher than that of males, has declined over the same period to 78.5 years. This too is below the national average. There are geographical variations with regard to life expectancy; Of the 19 wards within the district residents of 8 wards have a life expectancy that is significantly lower than the national average, correlating with the most deprived parts of the district.

Unfortunately the number of early deaths resulting from circulatory diseases and cancer are significantly higher than the national average. This is further compounded by the district having high levels of obesity and a high incidence of lifestyle related illnesses and deaths. This reflects the high incidence of the District's population who are suffering from a long-term illness and results in the high level of dependency upon Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowances, which are higher than the national average.

The continuation of these trends may influence the degree to which the district's population base can grow and prosper. They impact upon the ability for residents of the district to take up educational and employment opportunities. Unless addressed it is likely that economic hardship for a significant number of the district's residents will continue to be prevalent, impacting upon their ability to contribute to their communities and access local services and facilities.

Policies of the new district plan could be developed to provide a mechanism to assist in improving these trends by making provision for an adequate level and range of employment and housing opportunities, securing the physical improvement of and additional leisure, informal recreation and sports facilities to meet local needs as well as improving access to these facilities.

KI (6) Increasing Wear Valley residents' accessibility to leisure facilities

KI (7) Promoting informal recreation opportunities

KI (8) Delivering open spaces within the district that meet local needs

Leisure is linked to the issue of health and approximately half of the resident population of Wear Valley do not have reasonable access to sports facilities. This is largely due to the dispersed nature of the majority of settlements within the district particularly in Weardale, although the people of Weardale are compensated through access to informal countryside recreation areas. There are only 2 existing public leisure centres located within the main towns of Bishop Auckland and Crook. A third leisure centre located in Willington was closed in 2003. The remaining facilities both date back to the 1960's and are likely to come to the end of their useful life by the end date of the new plan's Core Strategy.

The current [Local Plan](#) safeguards 309 hectares of open spaces within the district from new development. Some of these are protected because of their recreational function, while others are considered to be important from a visual point of view. Recent policy monitoring has highlighted the fact that some of these spaces, either in part or in totality, which are located within settlement limits have come under development pressure, resulting in the submission of planning applications for housing development. In most instances planning permission has subsequently been granted as it was deemed that safeguarding these particular sites was no longer justifiable.

With the above in mind the current local standards set out in the [Local Plan](#) need to be reconsidered and new standards in terms of quantity, type and geographical distribution need to be developed which reflect actual local need. This will determine future land allocations, and may result in either an increase or decrease in provision. Existing open spaces within the district have recently been the subject of a quantitative and qualitative audit. The results of the audit will inform the development of new standards which in turn will be set out in the [Core Strategy](#) and eventually translated into land use allocations in other forthcoming documents to be contained in the new district plan.

Given accessibility issues that residents within the district encounter the use of open spaces as a recreational resource is considered to be even more vital for an area such as Wear Valley. Their contribution to improving the health and social well being of the communities of Wear Valley, as well as positively contributing to the visual amenity of the district. However, this resource also places great demands on public authorities to maintain open spaces from a financial point of view. With this in mind the new district plan can act as a mechanism through which to promote the role of the community and developers in these matters.

Notwithstanding the above the rural setting of the district potentially offers residents greater opportunities to engage in informal recreation activities, including usage of the extensive Public Rights of Way, cycle routes and bridleway networks. Again this has the potential to positively contribute towards the health and social wellbeing of the communities of Wear Valley. The new district plan also offers the potential to identify and promote the development and enhancement of these networks and establish green corridors along existing features, including railway lines and river corridors that can offer greater and enhanced informal recreational opportunities.

KI (9) Tackling and working to reduce crime and the discrepancies between actual and perceived district crime rates

There are geographical variations with regard to the crime rate within the district. It is relatively low in Weardale but high in town centres and in the more deprived wards of the district. From both a district and County Durham perspective the level of crime rose between 2003 – 2006 in a context where the overall crime rate in England fell. This contributes to the high level in the overall perception of and fear of crime. In turn this perception has implications for the economic and social well being of the district as a whole. It can detract investors, and inward migration of people to live in the district. The quality of life of residents and their mental health can be significantly affected by crime itself, including the issue of anti-social behaviour, and the perception of crime.

The new plan is a mechanism to encourage development to be planned in a way to reduce the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour. The new plan can also make provision to encourage the development of community facilities including leisure facilities for all age groups, in particular facilities for the young as part of a diversionary process. It can also facilitate improvements to the public transport network and car-parking facilities that would also help in regards to the issue of fear of crime.

KI (10) Improving highway safety within the district

The district has a higher than average traffic accidents rate in comparison to County Durham as a whole; from 2001 to 2004 the accident rate increased. The County [Local Transport Plan 2](#) suggests that this may be attributed to the rural nature of the District's road network.

The new district plan is a mechanism to ensure that new development is planned according to existing local highway capacity and that highway improvements are considered, possibly through legal agreements associated with large-scale proposals. Directing new development

toward public transport nodes and thereby reducing the need for reliance on private transport would also assist to improve this trend.

KI (11) Managing the risks of and from flooding

There are unimplemented allocated sites and existing developments within the district located next to rivers and on flood plains, and there has been extreme and recurring flooding in the district in the past in West Auckland, South Church and Weardale. Flood alleviation measures have been implemented to reduce the likelihood of this reoccurring. However the council must be mindful that recent trends and projections relative to climate change indicate that generally the level and occurrence of flooding is likely to increase.

The new plan will determine the location of new development and is therefore a mechanism to direct development away from areas prone to the risk of flooding and to ensure that the effectiveness of previously implemented mitigation measures are not undermined. In addition the new plan can ensure that when considering development proposals the issues of the drainage capacity in the local area and the amount of hard landscaping as part of an overall proposal are managed.

KI (12) Utilising established mechanisms for engagement in the planning process

KI (13) Promoting community participation

KI (14) Working with partners to deliver improvements to the district

KI (15) Meeting the needs of the District's community groups

Much of the support provided for people in the community is provided by volunteers and community groups. The extensive Community Network supported by Two Dales (2D), the voluntary sector for Wear Valley and Teesdale districts, is an example of such activity. The Council needs to ensure that it utilises, builds upon and supports volunteers and community groups so that this vital work can continue, and effective community engagement can be achieved throughout the planning process.

The Council's [Statement of Community Involvement](#) adopted in 2006 seeks to facilitate the involvement of third parties in the preparation of the emerging district plan, and the determination of planning applications. This document was produced with full community involvement. Community involvement will inform the development of the new plan in respect of the needs of the communities. Conversely the new plan itself is a mechanism to address those needs in the form of the provision of community facilities.

KI (16) Tackling the local skills shortages

KI (17) Tackling the intergenerational worklessness culture of the district

Skill levels of the resident population are below the regional and national averages. Whilst educational attainment has improved from 30.5% of 16 year olds achieving 5 or more A – C GCSE grades in 1997/98 to 47.5% in 2004/05 this is still well below the national average of 56%. This is compounded by the fact that 19.3% of the population of working age have no qualifications compared to the national average of 15.2%. This determines the quality of the local labour force which may influence future business investment decisions. It also affects the ability for local people to access local job opportunities both now and in the future. This in turn holds significant economic and thus social consequences for the district's population both now and in the future and will determine employment land allocation take-up rates unless addressed.

In December 2006 the district's working age employment rate was 71.9% with an unemployment rate at 5.1%; the unemployment rate compares to the regional rate for the North East of 6.2% and rate for Great Britain which was at 5.0%.

Current rates of worklessness in the district are high with an economic inactivity rate of 24.2%, which is just below the rate for the North East at 24.8% but above the rate for Great Britain at 21.7% (December 2006). Though Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance Claim rates (as a percentage of the working age population within the district) had fallen from 13.8% in 2004 to 12.8% by May 2006, this figure is still high in comparison to rates for the North East of 10.6% and the rate for Great Britain at 7.4%.

It will be vital that the new plan has regard to existing educational strategies and the need for further mechanisms to improve local skill levels when identifying land to accommodate future employment opportunities within the district.

KI (18) Influencing the long term viability of schools in the district

The viability of schools within the district is very much dependent on population size and demographic mix. Whilst not currently quantified the issue of future viability is likely to be particularly pertinent to the more remote rural parts of the district particularly given demographic projections.

The new district plan is a mechanism to encourage a stable or even growing population by providing opportunities for an appropriate mix and geographical distribution of employment, housing, community facilities and infrastructure to attract and retain young families within the district. The new plan should also have regard to the requirements of future 'building schools for the future' programmes, Sure Start programmes and the needs of existing educational establishments within the district.

KI (19) Meeting local housing needs

Ensuring the supply of the right types of houses, in an acceptable condition to provide a decent home, in the right locations is another future challenge that will influence the future sustainability of the district. Given the increasing costs of homes and the increasing level of second home ownership (particularly in Weardale) the cost, tenure and size of any new housing are critical factors. It is therefore important the new district plan becomes a mechanism in which any proposed housing development contributes towards meeting local needs. Notwithstanding this however, the new plan will also have to operate in a context where net additions to the existing dwelling stock are set to be constrained by regional planning policy. Therefore the Council is challenged with finding a way of planning to meet existing and future housing needs in a context where existing housing commitments (made up of completed dwellings since 2004, sites under construction and sites benefiting from unimplemented planning permission) already exceed the housing and supply target set by emerging regional planning policy.

A key factor in respect to meeting local housing need is the cost of homes. Of significance is the fact that the average price for a house in Wear Valley increased by approximately 72% over the period of 2001 to 2004. Prices have continued to rise since 2004. Having regard to the average income for the district, the ratio of house prices to income was 3.4 in 2003 and this will have continued to be exacerbated to the present day. Affordability is thus set to be a continuing issue for the District's resident population, in particularly in respect to young people. Nationally there are a growing percentage of single person households. This is due to a range of factors including people living longer and changes to the way people form separate households, for example through single people living alone before marriage, or through separation and divorce. This may influence the size and type of new homes that need to be provided.

As household needs vary, there is a need to provide for a range of size of dwellings. In the absence of an up-to-date Housing Needs Survey it is not clear whether the existing housing stock and forthcoming interim planning approvals match up with actual need. The forthcoming [Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) will inform the new plan of the precise nature of this local requirement.

The new plan is the key mechanism to ensure that adequate provision is made for the delivery of new housing in terms of numbers, type, and geographical location in order that the needs of the existing and future population of the district can be met. The success in doing so will directly impact on the ability to retain the right demographic population mix for both the overall well being and future sustainability of the district.

The Council's ability to meet local housing need is however dependant upon the housing land supply within the district. Regional planning policy provides each local authority with a target number of additional dwellings to provide before 2021. The Council can demonstrate a housing land supply sufficient to meet the targets for Wear Valley, as contained in the draft [Regional Spatial Strategy](#) for the North East of England.

With respect to housing it is apparent that as of 31st March 2007 the land requirement set up to 2021 was already satisfied through:-

- additions to the existing housing stock completed since 1st April 2004 (1108 net)
- those units currently under construction (1399)
- units benefiting from a valid, unimplemented planning permission (935)
- units minded for approval but awaiting a legal agreement (91).

At this present moment the geographic distribution and scale of additions to the existing housing stock is predetermined by previous decisions made by the Council. Furthermore the types and tenure of housing mix to be delivered over the next few years is also predetermined by the extant planning permissions. However it should be recognised that net additions to the existing dwelling stock is only one method of attaining growth. A degree of additional growth may be attained in the district by improving the range and quality of the existing dwelling stock. This could be attained by bringing vacant units back into use and replacing current stock. This will influence the planning approaches that may be adopted in certain areas of the district.

KI (20) Securing the efficient use of land

Land is an important resource and given its scarcity it is crucial to ensure that it is used efficiently. National advice and emerging regional planning policy advocate a sequential approach to the identification of sites for development, recognising the need to make the best use of land and optimise the development of previously developed land and buildings in sustainable locations.

[Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing](#) (2006) requires that at least 60% of new housing should be provided on previously developed 'brownfield' land. This target is set to increase to 70% by 2007/2008. In Wear Valley performance in relation to the proportion of brownfield housing development stood at 60% in 2000/01 however this fell to 41% in 2003/04, the latest data shows a rise to 62% (2006/07). This performance may be partly explained by the fact that given the rural nature of a significant part of the district opportunities to develop on previously developed land are more limited than in other parts of the country.

Some previously developed land is located in remote areas of the district or in smaller settlements where there are few facilities. Given the requirement of emerging regional planning policy for a sequential approach to land to be taken for any type of development and not just for houses it is considered that the more remote sites are unlikely to be a priority for development purposes. A further consideration is that these brownfield sites may be

contaminated given past industrial usage either on or near the site; they may not be suitable for development other than recreation or agriculture in view of their remoteness. As the end use determines resulting land values this will make securing their remediation even more challenging.

In order to ensure that the district achieves national targets it is considered that there is a need to develop a Brownfield Strategy which would inform the new district plan and provide a mechanism by which to make the best use of previously developed sites.

The density of proposed housing developments can also have a significant impact on the degree to which efficient use of land is secured. National planning policy suggests an average of 30 dwellings per hectare of land. The average density for new housing developments in Wear Valley has increased from 26 per ha on 2001/02 to 31 per ha in 2005/06. Making efficient use of previously developed land through achieving greater densities reduces the pressure to develop on 'greenfield' sites and minimise the requirement for greenfield extensions outside of current limits to development of settlements.

The new district plan could facilitate improvement in this performance in future years with the adoption of appropriate policies and proposals which make it clear to developers the parameters within which they will be expected to operate. Ultimately the new district plan will need to provide a framework in which development on previously developed land at sustainable locations is prioritised for delivery.

SECTION 4

PLANNING FOR PLACE: KEY ISSUES FACING WEAR VALLEY

This section of the report presents the key issues facing Wear Valley which are considered to be most relevant to the 'Place' theme to be adopted as part of the overall Local Development Framework Spatial vision and structure. [Section 1](#) of this report identifies how these key issues were identified.

They are the issues that holistically the new plan should seek to address, influence or impact upon. They have therefore informed the development of the new plan's draft Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives which are identified for consideration in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

The key issues identified as being most relevant to the 'Place' theme of the new district plan and the related spatial objectives are:

- KI (21) Reducing the district's contribution to climate change
- KI (22) Maintaining and enhancing the quantity and quality of the district's built heritage
- KI (23) Promoting sustainable waste management within the district
- KI (24) Managing the environmental quality of Wear Valley
 - KI(24a) Biodiversity and Geodiversity
 - KI(24b) Landscape
 - KI(24c) Quality of Natural Resources: Air, Water and Land

What we need you to tell us

- Whether you consider that all the key issues facing the district have been identified.
- Whether you consider all the key issues identified have been appropriately reflected in the draft Spatial Vision or the draft Spatial Objectives as set out in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

KI (21) Reducing the district's contribution to climate change

Issues surrounding climate change have become more apparent and recognised since the adoption of the current [Local Plan](#); furthermore, climate change is likely to have an increasing impact upon the environment both on a global level and at a local level. There is evidence that life within Wear Valley has already been affected by climate change; examples include the mild weather being experienced over the past few years and the increase in incidents of serious flooding in the Bishop Auckland area. There is an increasing level of evidence which suggests that climate change is at least in part being brought about by the activities of the human race; activities which include the production of greenhouse gases.

One Government response to climate change has been to seek a reduction in the UK's carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by 2050 and have 20% of electricity produced by renewable energy by 2020. Furthermore, the government are currently preparing national planning policy statement relating to climate change, to ensure that key objectives relating to the issue are adequately addressed through the planning process. The draft document seeks to deliver measures which mitigate the effects of and adapt to the impacts of climate change as well as reducing the contribution of new development towards climate change; it is anticipated that the final document will be adopted in time to inform the preparation of the [Core Strategy and Generic Development Control Policies](#) documents.

At the local level, the Council is currently preparing a [Climate Change Strategy](#) which looks into the whole issue of climate change, how it will impact upon the district and what the Council and its partners are able to do about it. The actions, targets and objectives included within this strategy can be reflected through the new district plan.

Both national and regional planning policy require local authorities to prepare and implement policies through their new district plans; this can be delivered through, for example, policies which control the location and distribution of new development to reduce the need to travel by private motor-car; policies reducing the need to travel; policies which reduce energy use or improve energy efficiency; or policies which encourage developments which are adapting to the changes resulting from climate change. It is imperative that, through the new district plan, the Council encourage and promote development which mitigates the effects of and adapts to the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, national and regional planning policy encourage local authorities promote and support the development of renewable energy sources to reduce dependence upon non-renewable, finite energy sources.

All potential policy options are required to be the subject of Sustainability Appraisal in order that the likely social, economic and environmental impact may be identified and thus avoided through the selection of more appropriate policy options or mitigated. This will assist in ensuring that the new plan contributes positively to tackling this global issue.

KI (22) Maintaining and enhancing the quantity and quality of the district's built heritage

The built environment includes a rich and varied heritage, reflecting the historical origins and past trends of development within the district and giving the area its distinctive character. The built environment represents an irreplaceable record which contributes to our understanding of the past and the present. It adds to the quality of people's lives in terms of its contribution to the townscape and landscape.

Wear Valley contains both nationally designated sites and sites of local significance. Nationally designated sites which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment include the following:-

- 20 Conservation Areas, which is high in proportion to the number of settlements within the district,
- 517 listed buildings, including 16 Grade 1 Listed Buildings (3 Grade I or II* buildings are at risk).
- The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- 16 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and
- Historic Parks and Gardens

Furthermore beyond these designated areas there is an array of additional features which are not recognised nationally but greatly contribute towards the historic environment within the district and create local distinctiveness, including 601 Sites of Archaeological Interest.

The new district plan has an important role in the delivery of the Council's statutory duty to preserve and enhance the built heritage. This will include ensuring that important sites are preserved and /or reused in an appropriate manner. Securing quality design of new development should be a major consideration when formulating new policies.

The issue of the protection and enhancement of the built environment has significant implications for the economy of the district. The historic built heritage and cultural assets are a potential catalyst for regeneration. It is considered that the maintenance and improvement to the quality of the built environment has a role to play in respect of the tourism industry by providing places to see along with attractive townscapes and landscapes which attract

visitors into the district and thus benefiting the local economy and can play a vital role in the future of towns and villages. The importance and potential of heritage and culture in the regeneration of towns and villages is reflected through the [Bishop Auckland Urban Renaissance Master Plan](#) whose vision seeks to build upon the character and heritage of the town centre to enhance its competitive as a place to shop, work, visit and live. Through the new district plan the approach taken in the [Bishop Auckland Urban Renaissance Master Plan](#) could be promoted within other settlements where the heritage or cultural assets are considered to merit such an approach.

National planning policy encourages local authorities to prepare assessments of their conservation areas which detail those features and buildings of special architectural or historic interest which justify the designation; these assessments are now known as Conservation Area Character Appraisals. One role of Conservation Area Character Appraisals is to ensure Conservation Area Management Plans are developed based upon credible evidence; this in turn will ensure the actions contained in the management plan actually work towards the protection and enhancement of those features of special architectural or historic importance. At present no conservation areas within the district have either a Conservation Area Character Appraisal or a related Management Plan. In the absence of these documents it is difficult to quantify the condition of the environment within these areas, or to identify what improvements the Council should be seeking to gain through developments within the conservation areas. In addition, Conservation Area Character Appraisals and their Management Plans can be used to inform the new district plan by identifying where public realm and building enhancement schemes are required. The identification of such potential/schemes will provide justification to seek external funding to implement enhancement schemes.

Regional planning policy requires local authorities to prepare a Grade II listed buildings at risk register; the 'Listed Building at Risk Register' prepared by English Heritage only relates to Grade I and II* buildings. Furthermore, regional planning policy encourages local authorities to prepare and maintain lists of locally important buildings in their areas. The purpose of both is to enable the council to prepare and pursue policies which relate to protecting and enhancing historic buildings of both national and local importance; these policies can direct development or funding towards those buildings and features identified as being in need or valuable to the local area. At present the Council does not hold either a register of Grade II listed buildings at risk or a list of locally important buildings.

KI (23) Promoting sustainable waste management within the district

The district is characterised by low levels of reuse, recovery and recycling of waste in comparison to the national average. Whilst the amount of recycling within the district has improved significantly from 3.1% of total waste in 2000/01 to 15.8% in 2005/06 this level is still 2.2% below the national target. The national target rises to 26% by 2008/2009. It should be borne in mind however that the national target should not be a maximum target to aspire to given that technically a much higher percentage of waste is recyclable.

Waste proposals will be dealt with through the [County Durham Minerals and Waste Development Framework](#). However, there is scope for the new district plan to require that adequate provision of recycling facilities in respect of waste storage as part of new developments is made. This could be achieved through the development of relevant generic development control policies and clearly setting out relevant requirements in relation to new land use allocations.

Regional planning policy encourages local planning authorities to request waste management audits to accompany all major development control applications; these audits detail how the waste resulting from the construction of the site will be managed in relation to the waste hierarchy. The implications of this would be greater efficiency in the use of resources as well as reducing the requirements for landfill allocation in the county.

Furthermore, a generic development control policy could, if considered appropriate, require all new development to be designed in a manner which considers the management of waste during the construction and operation of the development, for example by encouraging the use and accreditation to environmental design standards.

KI (24) Managing the environmental quality of Wear Valley

The Council plays a crucial role in the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, a duty and role which should be reflected through the new district plan. There are many issues relating to the natural environment which contribute towards the environmental quality of Wear Valley. These have been broken up into three distinct parts, all of which contribute towards the environmental quality of the district: biodiversity and geodiversity; landscapes; and natural resources.

KI(24a) Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Biodiversity describes the biological diversity of life which includes all living things from plants to mammals, insects and bacteria. Changing land management practices and increases in the level of development are both factors which have contributed to a decline in the biodiversity across the country. The [Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#) placed a new duty on local authorities to protect biodiversity; this has significant implications for the new district plan, and the operation of the Council's services in general.

Geodiversity describes geological diversity and is fundamental to the character and diversity of the landscape, influencing both the physical form and the natural vegetation, which have in turn shaped patterns of development throughout the district. The exploration of minerals has had a profound effect on both the natural and built aspects of the landscape across the county; the variety of materials won are an essential part of the local distinctiveness of the county's buildings and townscapes.

Both national and regional planning policy requires local authorities to prepare policies which seek to maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation within their locality; this reflects the role of local authorities in the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity. National planning policy sets out three levels of sites designated for their biodiversity or geological features of interest, each with a differing level of importance, namely: international, national and regional or local, with international sites being awarded the highest level of importance and thus protection. Within the district there are four sites designated for their features of international importance (1 Special Protection Area and 3 Special Area of Conservation). In addition there are also 19 sites (including the four internationally designated sites) identified as being of national importance and as such designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. At the regional or local level there are an additional 79 sites designated as being of regional or local importance. These designations and the features of importance contained within them should be awarded an appropriate level of protection through the new district plan.

The condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest is monitored through a Public Service Agreement, which has a target of 95% of the area of a Site for Special Scientific Interest to be in a favourable or recovering condition by 2010. Currently only 9 out of 19 such sites in the district meet this target. Through the new district plan the Council could seek development, or contributions from developers, to improve the quality of these designated areas to increase the proportion of sites meeting this target.

In addition to these designated sites there are also a number of protected species which are present within the district; due to their status national planning policy requires local authorities to ensure that these species and their habitats are protected from the adverse effects of development. The [County Durham Biodiversity Action Plan](#) identifies that within the district there are 9 priority habitats and 20 priority species. Furthermore, the west of the district falls within the biodiversity target zone which is identified within the regional spatial

strategy; this zone identifies a priority area for the management and enhancement of existing biodiversity resources and for targeting the reversal of habitat fragmentation. The planning process plays a fundamental role in the protection and enhancement of these species, habitats and areas and as such due consideration should be given to the impact of new development upon them. The spatial approach of the new district plan would allow for the inclusion of enhancement schemes for specific areas, habitats or species or priorities relating to them to be included within the plan where appropriate.

Whilst the protection and enhancement of designated sites, habitats and species is an essential task, the quality of habitats and features throughout the wider landscape also need to be preserved and enhanced. With nearly half the district falling within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, an area which is rich in biodiversity and has a long history of mining and associated mineral extraction which provides one of the many geological interests in the area, this is an issue which needs to be given due consideration through the new district plan. The policies of the new plan should therefore be developed in a manner to assist in the delivery of **the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan and the Biodiversity Action Plan** for the County. Furthermore, there is scope for green corridors to be established and or improved, specific sites to be allocated for improvement as well as biodiversity requirements to be factored into new land use allocations and windfall developments.

The condition of key geological landforms and features often deteriorates through neglect or poor or inappropriate management; in many instances these features require conservation. Increasing public awareness, understanding and enjoyment of geodiversity is central to its conservation; it also presents opportunities to increase understanding of the landscape as a whole and the physical factors that underpin local distinctiveness and biodiversity. The GEOPARK status of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty recognises the geological importance of the area; this should also help promote this engagement with geodiversity and its conservation. Regional planning policies encourage local authorities, through their sustainable community plans to prepare a local geodiversity action plan; at present the Council does not have such an action plan.

Trees are valued features of towns and the countryside and make an important contribution towards the character of the local environment. Local authorities have a power to protect trees and woodland in the interests of amenity by making Tree Preservation Orders. In addition to this general power, local authorities are under a duty to make adequate provision for the preservation and planting of trees when granting planning permission for the development of land. As trees are natural living features it is important to plan for their succession, so when they reach the end of their life, there are other well established trees within the vicinity to replace the amenity value lost through the loss of that tree. This is particularly important within conservation areas, where trees often add to their special character. These are all elements which could be incorporated or required through appropriate policies within the new district plan.

Ancient woodland is a valuable biodiversity resource both for its diversity of species and for its longevity as woodland; once lost it cannot be recreated. There are a number of areas of ancient woodland identified for protection within the current Local Plan. Commercial forestry is also a common economical practice within the district; the biodiversity interest in ancient woodland is greater than that in commercial forest.

KI(24b) Landscape

The term landscape extends beyond the countryside and can include urban areas as well as designated landscapes. It is about the relationship between people and place and is influenced by both natural (e.g. geology, climate, soils, flora and fauna) and cultural (e.g. historic and current land use, enclosure) elements. The high quality of the landscape to the west of the district is recognised through its designation as the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Regional planning policy encourages local planning authorities to reflect the objectives and actions contained in Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Management Plans through their new district plans; this is, for instance, to ensure the special qualities present within the area are safeguarded from the impacts of new development.

In addition to this national designation, there is a local landscape designation which basically covers the valley of the river Wear from Page Bank in the east to Eastgate in the west. Within this area there are two historic parklands – Auckland Castle Park and Harperley Park – which have a distinct character which differs from the surrounding agricultural landscape. Both national and regional planning policy encourages local planning authorities to move away from the use of local landscape designations which, in practice, place undue restrictions on development within those areas; national policy promotes the use of creatively worded policies based upon landscape character assessments in place of local designations.

Landscape Character Assessment is the tool that is used to help understand, and articulate, the character of the landscape. It helps to identify the features that give a locality its 'sense of place' and pinpoints what makes it different from neighbouring areas. They can be used in many other situations, for example, in devising indicators to gauge countryside change, in helping local people prepare Village Design Statements, Parish Plans and Market Towns Health-checks and in devising environmental improvement strategies for places undergoing regeneration, all of which relate to or can be reflected through the new district plan. Durham County Council has carried out a countywide landscape character assessment which identified that three different broad landscape areas cover the district; these reflect the diversity of landscape within the district. A [Landscape Strategy](#) building upon the results of the [Landscape Character Assessment](#) has been developed by the county council; this strategy identifies priorities and targets for each of the landscape areas identified. The three broad landscape areas identified within the district are: West Durham Coalfields (covering Bishop Auckland and its outlying settlements, Crook and Tow Law); North Pennines (covering Weardale) and the Wear Lowlands (covering Willington).

In many instances, due to the impact that a new development would have upon its surrounding area, requirements are placed upon developers to implement and establish landscaping schemes around the development to mitigate against these impacts. These schemes present an opportunity for increasing the level of green space or features within both urban and rural areas, thus improving their environmental quality. In addition they can be utilised to develop green corridors or networks which allow for the natural movement of species. An issue surrounding the use of landscaping schemes is, however, their establishment and maintenance. In many cases the initial landscaping scheme fails for numerous reasons providing an insufficient screen. Furthermore, once the scheme is established it will require on going maintenance to ensure it does not become overgrown. How the establishment and maintenance of these schemes is funded is a key issue for the new district plan to address.

KI(24c) Quality of Natural Resources: Air, Water and Land

There are no areas within the district identified as requiring an air quality management scheme and as such it is considered that the district has a good air quality. Furthermore, both the biological and chemical quality of river water within the district is also good. It is therefore important that the new district plan seeks to maintain the quality of both air and river water. Within the district there is also a below average use of drinking water, however there is a slightly above average level of water supply leakage. The efficiency of water use within the district could therefore be improved.

The district wide [Contaminated Land Register](#) identifies that there are 534 sites of potential concern throughout the district; however at present these sites have not been graded or prioritised. In the absence of this information and a related [Contaminated Land Strategy](#) it is difficult to provide a full picture regarding the issues surrounding and the severity of contamination within the district. National planning policy encourages local authorities with a high proportion of contaminated land to develop an appropriate policy within the [Core](#)

Strategy document to ensure the matter is addressed at a strategic level. It is anticipated that the relevant data and strategy will be in prepared in time to inform the preparation of the preferred options reports for both the Core Strategy and the Generic Development Control Policies documents.

The Council, as the local planning authority, plays a key role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment, public health and safety and local and residential amenity, all of which can be adversely effected by pollution of land, water and air. New development can contribute to the pollution of the air, water and land, and also contribute towards noise and light pollution, either directly, through the activities undertaken at the site, or indirectly, for example from the additional traffic generated. For this reason the consideration of the quality of land, air or water and the potential impacts arising from new development should be addressed within the new district plan.

Due to the presence of a number of national designations within the district, including the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the 19 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, there are many areas which are potentially more sensitive to the adverse effects of pollution resulting from the impacts of new development. Other areas of potential sensitivity within the district relate to the quality of soil, air and ground and surface waters. National planning policy identifies that the impacts of pollution producing activity upon these sensitive areas is a key planning consideration.

SECTION 5

PLANNING FOR PROSPERITY: KEY ISSUES FACING WEAR VALLEY

This section of the report presents the key issues facing Wear Valley which are considered to be most relevant to the 'Prosperity' theme to be adopted as part of the overall Local Development Framework Spatial vision and structure. [Section 1](#) of this report identifies how these key issues were identified.

They are the issues that holistically the new plan should seek to address, influence or impact upon. They have therefore informed the development of the new plan's draft Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives which are identified for consideration in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

The key issues identified as being most relevant to the 'Prosperity' theme of the new district plan and the related spatial objectives are:

- KI (25) Meeting local transport and access needs
- KI (26) Managing changes in the district's employment base
- KI (27) Overcoming physical constraints to employment sites and premises and addressing the shortages and quality of existing premises
- KI (28) Addressing economic disparities within Wear Valley.
- KI (29) Creating sustainable employment opportunities within the District.
- KI (30) Maximising the untapped economic potential of Wear Valley
- KI (31) Achieving the retail needs of the district within the confines of national planning policy
- KI (32) Maintaining and strengthening the vitality and viability of the district's shopping centres
- KI (33) Maintaining Bishop Auckland's role as a primary shopping destination
- KI (34) Increasing retention spending levels for both comparison goods and convenience goods
- KI (35) Anticipating future retail trends and floorspace provision requirements.
- KI (36) Making better use of the untapped evening economy
- KI (37) Addressing the implications of changing retail patterns

What we need you to tell us

- Whether you consider that all the key issues facing the district have been identified and interpreted.
- Whether you consider all the key issues identified have been appropriately reflected in the draft Spatial Vision or the draft Spatial Objectives as set out in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

KI (25) Meeting local transport and access needs

The new district plan has the scope to directly influence the degree to which the delivery of better transport integration and accessibility can be achieved given it will determine the geographical distribution, type and scale of new development. To conform to current national and regional policies the new plan should adopt the key sustainability principle of minimising the need to travel and facilitate improved accessibility between where the district population lives, works, and accesses community facilities.

One of the key challenges facing the district is that of public access to transport and its impact on social exclusion and isolation. As mentioned previously the district has an ageing population, there is also severe deprivation within parts of Wear Valley. Furthermore, the geography and rural nature means that there are isolated settlements with little access to public transport. This has been exacerbated with the decline of local services through the closure of many rural shops and banks, along with problems in gaining access to health facilities and education opportunities. There is scope for the new plan to provide a mechanism to alleviate accessibility problems for some of those living in rural and or deprived areas. There is potential for policies in the new plan to help to retain and/or promote basic services for isolated communities. The plan could also be seen as a means to promote the regeneration of an area with the subsequent spin-offs in the form of improvements to public transport connections and local services.

In respect of new development proposals the new plan presents an opportunity to direct any new development to the most appropriate locations that are well served by public transport so as to address existing accessibility issues; for example new land allocations need to be accessible both within the district and from the district to other areas. Having regard to the location of development there is a need to translate land use requirements of the [Local Transport Plan 2](#) into the new plan; for example it could encourage the incorporation of elements to improve sustainable modes of transport e.g. cycle racks and footpath connections with bus routes and the encouragement of the implementation of Green Transport Plans to ensure the sustainability of major developments.

Also of significance is the fact that the existing [Local Plan](#) identifies a number of road schemes to improve connectivity within the district, make some employment allocation more attractive or viable. However, these have not been prioritised in the [Local Transport Plan 2](#) and with the governments approach to car-free alternatives forthcoming funding opportunities for these road schemes are doubtful. Through the preparation of the new plan there will need to be a review as to whether or not the schemes are still required and if they are still required how they can be delivered.

KI (26) Managing changes in the district's employment base

The district's economy has experienced significant changes over the years. An example of this is the fact that manufacturing employment has declined significantly from 4,090 in 1999 to 2,949 in 2004. It operates from a very narrow base and has failed to diversify quickly enough to respond to changes. Manufacturing now only accounts for 15% of jobs in the district. The economy is now dominated by health and social work (16% of jobs); retailing (15% of jobs); education (11% of jobs) and construction (7%). The public sector in total accounts for 33% of total jobs. Only 10% of the district's business stock operates in the knowledge-based sectors, compared to a regional average of 15%.

There is scope to improve enterprise and entrepreneurship. In 2004, there were 28 VAT registered business start-ups per 10,000 adult population in the district. This is significantly below the England average of 38 start-ups per 10,000 populations.

Diversification of the economic base, whilst still supporting the manufacturing sector, is essential if the district's economy is to be able to provide a greater range of jobs in the key growth sectors. Such sectors which are particularly under represented but are appropriate to the district include the knowledge-based sector, financial services, research and development, hotels and catering along with cultural, sporting and recreational activities.

Diversification requires long-term action to support these key growth sectors, improve the range and quality of business infrastructure, promote entrepreneurship and rates of business start-ups and capture higher rates of inward investment. The new plan has an important role in facilitating this. The Council needs to ensure that it identifies a supply of employment land which is appropriately located, capable of being developed and meets the

needs of these key growth sectors and existing businesses wishing to expand within the district, whilst at the same time safeguarding existing employment areas from non-economic uses. Resulting policies will need to be sufficiently flexible to respond to changes in the manner in which businesses operate.

KI (27) Overcoming physical constraints to employment sites and premises and addressing the shortages and quality of existing premises

The draft [Regional Spatial Strategy](#) states that the new district plan will need to make provision for 105 ha of new employment land for the period up to 2021, implying take-up of around 6-7 hectares per annum.

The current [Local Plan](#) identifies 103 hectares of undeveloped employment sites within the district. However, a recent [Employment Land Review](#) concluded only 21 hectares of land is readily available for employment use in the short term with a further 42 hectares available for development in the longer term once access, ownership and physical condition are addressed. The review highlighted that 40 hectares of the land has significant barriers to development, as a result 16 hectares are proposed for de-allocation, with numerous recommendations relating to the remaining sites. The main conclusion of the [Employment Land Review](#) is that there is a particular shortfall of employment land and premises within the Bishop Auckland sub-area; the sub-area with the greatest demand. The [Employment Land Review](#) suggests that 60% of employment land should be located in Bishop Auckland. The current supply in the Bishop Auckland Area is only sufficient for the next 3 to 4 years.

Notwithstanding the above economic land supply is not the only challenge. Many existing premises are of a low quality. There is also a lack of modern work space coupled with a prevalence of life expired premises. Additionally, there is a shortage of existing general industrial premises (particularly in the 1,000 – 5,000 sq ft range), reflecting market failure; rents have not yet reached a sufficient level to provide an incentive to the private sector to build speculatively. The [Employment Land Review](#) highlights that this shortage is particularly relevant in the Bishop Auckland sub area.

Having regard to the above the recent [Employment Land Review](#) has suggested a pipeline approach to the provision of employment land and suitable premises which equates to a steady flow in the delivery of premises. It is important to achieve the correct balance between demand and supply to stimulate developer interest without swamping the market with sites; this approach may help alleviate any market failure. The mechanism for this approach would be in part by means of the emerging new district plan.

In certain parts of the district there are a significant number of lower value manufacturing businesses. The new plan presents an opportunity to facilitate the relocation of these businesses to more suitable sites that are more suitable both in terms of location and quality of accommodation. This would allow the more efficient use of the vacated land and premises for future redevelopment.

The new district plan also presents an opportunity to reconsider the use and roles of existing employment areas. Some current employment land allocations are under pressure from alternative uses. There is a need to reconsider the appropriateness of carrying some of the allocations forward into the new plan whilst protecting those sites, where appropriate, against alternative uses. Furthermore, development control policies could be strengthened, creating a presumption against alternative uses for employment land in anticipation of future demand.

A further issue in respect of employment land is that a large number of the district's existing allocated sites would benefit from qualitative improvements to their physical environment, rationalisation of existing layouts and infrastructure and connectivity improvements. The new plan may present an opportunity to provide a means to address this issue.

An important consideration in respect of identifying future employment sites is the availability of broadband services. Many of the current [Local Plan](#) employment land allocations are not served by broadband. Currently, limited broadband availability in the district is a weakness, and is limiting the ability to attract and retain high-valued businesses into the district. In the more rural areas, broadband availability is either none existent, or of poor quality. Even in the more urbanised areas to the east the nature of exchanges is such that the capacity of some networks for upload / download is limited, and in some cases connectivity is dependent on levels of activity across a range of broadband users. A study has recently been commissioned to investigate this issue and potential solutions in more detail. The new district plan is a mechanism which could seek to assist in addressing this issue by providing a policy framework which requires developers contributions in relation to particular developments.

KI (28) Addressing economic disparities within Wear Valley

KI (29) Creating sustainable employment opportunities within the district

Rates of inward investment are low. There is scope in the future to create sustainable employment opportunities by capturing inward investment, as well as facilitating development and growth of businesses already located within the district.

The [Employment Land Review](#) has highlighted that there is likely to be demand from existing businesses within the district for land for expansion. Given the low rates of inward investment it is therefore important that the new plan can accommodate any growth aspirations of those businesses already located in the district. The new district plan can present an opportunity to support an increase in such investment through the identification of a portfolio of appropriate, deliverable potential employment sites which are well related to the main centres of the population and transport networks, as well as through policies to encourage improvements to the quality of the existing employment premises stock including their surroundings. The [Employment Land Review](#) has confirmed that the new plan should seek to identify a new strategic employment site within the Bishop Auckland area to meet likely future demand.

Rates of self employment in the district are equivalent to national averages. This is due in part to the fact that the agricultural sector accounts for a significant proportion of our self-employed. However, the reality is that self-employment rates are lower in Wear Valley than one would expect. This is partly due to low levels of entrepreneurship and it is also due in part to a lack of awareness of the opportunities and the demands of setting up as self-employed.

In view of the above, given the existing business premises portfolio in the district there is a need to improve access to workspace and incubator accommodation to support growth in this sector of the economy. The new district plan is a mechanism which can identify and promote the most suitable areas for this provision.

Home working can provide significant local benefits, particularly in more remote rural locations. These include: providing employment opportunities for less mobile people in remote areas, those without access and transport, reduced congestion, increased viability of local services and opportunities for diversification of agricultural businesses.

Recent research for One North East indicates that around 2,400 people, representing almost 10% of the workforce, work from home in Wear Valley. The report indicates that the levels of home working are likely to increase in the future. Moreover, the report recommends that Wear Valley should be one of 2 pilot locations for promoting rural home working.

The new district plan is a mechanism which could be encourage home based working, for example by the development of policies to encourage developers to make provision for live/work units within certain new housing schemes. Furthermore, acting on the results of the [Employment Land Review](#) there is a need to ensure that suitable premises and land are identified in the new district plan in suitable locations for home workers when the time comes for them to expand.

KI (30) Maximising the untapped economic potential of Wear Valley

Wear Valley has untapped economic potential in terms of tourism. Whilst there has been a small growth in income within the district it is considered that there is potential to increase the level of revenue from tourism particularly when the quality of the built and natural environment is taken into consideration. Much of Wear Valley is rural in nature, in particular Weardale. The economy of Weardale has been affected by the decline in the traditional rural economy. In order to address decline a strategy [Renewing Weardale](#) has been developed identifying a number of flagship projects to establish a sustainable rural community with an emphasis of economic diversification. One such project is the redevelopment of the Eastgate Cement Works site to provide an exemplary sustainable model village, visitor and business environment, with rail connection.

There is scope to encourage the vibrancy and sustainability of the district's rural settlements and further support their role as a location for tourism and business. Stanhope for instance has a key role as a market town and gateway to the 'dale'.

The Eastgate development along with other flagship projects including the Stanhope Market Town Initiative are to be principle drivers in the regeneration of Weardale. However, whilst the successful implementation of projects such as at Eastgate would put Weardale on the map for many visitors the chief attraction is Weardale's rural scenery which includes part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Weardale can provide the opportunity for walking, cycling and solitude. However, there is a lack of sites and premises in Weardale that provide for tourism which is impacting on the economic growth potential.

A key challenge for the new district plan relates to developing a framework that achieves the right balance between appropriate and sustainable development whilst at the same time protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of Weardale's sensitive environment so as to ensure the district assets which make it distinctive are not compromised.

Tourism should not be referred to purely in the context of Weardale; the rest of the district also has tourism potential. The tourism potential of Bishop Auckland should not be ignored especially in view of the Auckland Park project (refers to the restoration of Auckland Park). The Park and Auckland Castle, the seat of the Bishops of Durham, can provide an attraction to the area. Bishop Auckland itself has an attractive market place with a largely untapped evening economy; indeed this could be stated in respect of other towns and rural centres throughout the district. With this in mind, the new plan could encourage a range of complementary evening and night time economy uses, at appropriate scales and locations, which appeal to a wide range of age and social groups. There is also potential for provision to be made for additional visitor accommodation in Bishop Auckland.

Much of Wear Valley is rural in character, in particular the Weardale sub-district. Traditionally Weardale's key economic driver has been agriculture although this like many other traditional industries has suffered a decline. In the past five years the Weardale sub-area has been faced with the aftermath of the foot and mouth epidemic as well as the loss of Eastgate Cement Works and the forthcoming closure of Wolsingham Steelworks. Agriculture and fisheries now account for 1.6% (2004) of the total jobs within the district as a whole. Whilst the percentage of those employed within the industry is relatively small the industry still has a crucial role to play in respect of the economic well-being of Weardale and the district as a whole.

The role of agriculture within the district can be considered in the context of the natural and built environments, the local economy, sustainability and tourism. Having regard to the above a Weardale Task Force has been established to provide a holistic approach with the aim of creating a sustainable rural community. The resulting [Renewing Weardale Strategy](#) identifies several flagship projects to deliver this. The new plan needs to embrace the planning requirements of these.

Good farming practice and the maintenance of important traditional agricultural buildings, including their re-use where appropriate, helps to make the district attractive to visitors bringing income to the district. However, farming needs to have the ability to diversify in view of ever changing markets. With this in mind the new district plan, while needing to have robust policies to protect the landscape, can provide a mechanism to allow for change and diversification. However, it is also crucial that the new plan while providing a mechanism for changes also provides strong protection for the character and appearance of the rural nature of the district as well as promoting environmental friendly practice. This protection would help retain both the built and natural environment that in turn makes the district so attractive to visitors.

KI (31) Achieving the retail needs of the district within the confines of national planning policy

Since the current retail policies were adopted in 1997 national policy on retailing and town centres has evolved. The result of this is that the adopted local plan policies do not reflect the [Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres](#) emphasis on other town centre uses and a positive planning approach to town centre growth. Therefore, the existing shopping allocations and policies will need to be reconsidered to reflect this approach.

However, notwithstanding the above a key challenge for the new district plan will remain that of identifying deliverable sites within existing town centres to cater for retail development requirements, as well as other uses if appropriate. In delivering sites regard should be given to the physical nature of the district's centres.

In regards to the identification of any new floorspace care must be taken to ensure that there would not be an adverse impact upon the vitality and viability of the town centres as existing.

KI (32) Maintaining and strengthening the vitality and viability of the district's shopping centres

A recent [Retail Study](#) included an assessment of the vitality and viability of all the retail centres in the district thus helping in the identification of the key issues.

Bishop Auckland

Bishop Auckland is the largest centre in the district and it performs well in terms of the number and type of shops, cultural attractions, community facilities and the availability of food shopping. The [Retail Study](#) awarded it a relative good health check score, reflecting the town's role as an important shopping destination. Comparing this health check appraisal with one that was carried out in 2002 it is evident that the overall vitality and viability has consistently improved over the past five years.

Crook

The overall vitality and viability for Crook is considered to be fair, reflecting Crook's secondary position to Bishop Auckland. But whilst convenience shopping is considered to be well-catered for the level of comparison-shopping has been found to be poor. The study has raised the issue that there is scope through the new plan for Crook to maintain and improve upon its comparison shopping and encourage more shoppers to visit the town centre through further environmental improvements.

Local Centres

Of significance is the fact that whilst Wolsingham and Stanhope have a fair rating for viability and vitality the remainder of local centres including Cockton Hill in Bishop Auckland, Coundon, Tow Law, West Auckland and Willington have below average level of vitality and viability. The problem is compounded in the Willington and Coundon local centres due to above national average vacancy rates which, along with the general condition of the properties, are a cause for concern.

Whilst the apparently stronger centres of Stanhope and Wolsingham have indicated the highest levels of shopper satisfaction amongst the local centres, these only have an average level of vitality and viability. It is considered that the new plan could also seek ways to encourage further investment to enable these centres to maintain their role. There is scope for the new plan to identify ways to revitalise these centres so as to ensure that the needs of the local communities which they serve are met.

KI (33) Maintaining Bishop Auckland's role as a primary shopping destination

Whilst Bishop Auckland town centre has a reasonable level of vitality and viability there are still a number of opportunities that could be realised. [Bishop Auckland Urban Renaissance Master Plan](#) has recently been prepared, which illustrated that there is scope for further environmental improvements to the public realm and buildings within the centre.

Of significance is the fact that the secondary sub-centre, comprising of the northern end of Newgate Street, Fore Bondgate and the Market Place, shows symptoms of retail decline despite its pleasant built environment. The higher level of vacancy rates amongst retail units in the Fore Bondgate and the Market Place area is seen partly as being caused by retailers wanting to relocate to more modern premises. What is also apparent is that this secondary centre is becoming increasingly characterised by bars / restaurants.

The [Retail Study](#) has identified the need to improve the range and quality of shopping provision and the need for more hotel and office space to be provided in this centre. Whilst it is apparent that Bishop Auckland as a whole meets the needs of the convenience shopper very well it's role for comparison goods is less dominant. The study has confirmed that shoppers require a better choice, a better quality of shops and new shops. However, given the physical constraints of the centre of Bishop Auckland town centre it is unlikely that this centre can accommodate a major increase in further shopping floorspace. This in turn may increase pressure in relation to the release of out-of-centre sites. This is an issue that the new plan will need to address through the identification of further site allocations to accommodate retail development especially in the comparison goods sector.

KI (34) Increasing retention spending levels for both comparison goods and convenience goods

The district has experienced a significant increase in bulky goods comparison shopping provision over the past 5 years (electricals, DIY etc) especially in the Tindale Crescent Area which is located approximately 1.8km to the south of Bishop Auckland town centre. Notwithstanding this increase in local provision much of this type of comparison goods shopping of Wear Valley resident population takes place at larger regional centres such as Darlington, Durham and the Metro Centre (Gateshead). This lost potential is known as 'leakage'. The retail study provides further evidence for this leakage in that the district continues to experience high levels of spending leakage to other centres, in particular to Darlington. The most recent figures (2004) show a leakage of 42% on convenience goods and a leakage of 65% of comparison goods. Whilst it is to be expected that consumers will travel for the best choice or price, over time this has implications for the range of choice locally available and for sustainable travel patterns.

There is potential to encourage a reversal in this spending leakage through the new plan by providing suitable well-located site allocations for retail purposes. Although it is important to stress that this provision should not be to the expense of employment land, otherwise there is a danger that the district's dependence on jobs within the retail sector would get at a level that is unsustainable.

KI (35) Anticipating future retail trends and floorspace provision requirements

The [Retail Study](#) has provided a quantitative need assessment for future retail requirements in the district. This information is based upon data relating to population and expenditure, expenditure flow analysis, shopping patterns, turnover of centres and capacity analysis.

The [Retail Study](#) has confirmed that during the period 2004 to 2021 it is anticipated that the growth in convenience goods shopping will be 15% in value, with a growth in comparison goods of 104%. These levels of growth, in particular for comparison goods, have implications for future retail land requirement. It is estimated that by 2021 an additional 1ha of land will be required for convenience goods whilst an additional 14ha of land is required for comparison goods.

The new plan will be challenged with identifying appropriate new retail sites for both convenience and comparison goods given a shortage of suitable and available land in the existing centres of Crook, Willington and Bishop Auckland. Related to this is the issue of achieving the right balance in terms of the allocation of any new floor space between convenience and comparison goods and where to locate. The new plan can provide a policy framework to ensure there is scope to deliver further retail developments of the right quality, quantity and location.

KI (36) Making better use of the untapped evening economy

Whilst it is important that a sound retail base is maintained within the different retail centres of the district it is considered important that a mixture of uses, apart those limited to retail, are secured in order that the economic usage of centres is maintained through to the evening and does not just stop once the retail units have closed for the day. Evening opening times for restaurants & cafes, drinking establishments and hot food takeaway usage can maintain the vitality and vibrancy of a centre.

Having regard to the above the new plan should encourage a range of complementary evening and night time economy uses, at appropriate scales and locations, which appeal to a wide range of age and social groups. However, the promotion of increased evening uses within centres must be assessed against the impact on nearby residential use and implications for policies to encourage more residential usage within the centre.

KI (37) Addressing the implications of changing retail patterns

From a general national perspective it must be recognised that the proportion of total shopping which is undertaken over the internet is increasing. Whilst no figures for the district are readily available given the period that the new plan will cover there is a need for it to provide a robust policy framework which is flexible enough to allow for such change and maintain a role for these centres.

CORE STRATEGY: ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS REPORT

FOREWORD

What is the purpose of this report?

This Issues and Alternative Options Report relates to the Core Strategy, the first of two policy documents under preparation that will form part of the new district plan, the Local Development Framework. All Local Development Frameworks must contain a Core Strategy. The government has advised that this should normally be the first document that a Council produces.

A Core Strategy should set out the overall Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives of the proposed Local Development Framework. All policies to be contained in subsequent Local Development Framework documents will need to accord with these in order to be approved by the Secretary of State. It should also include a strategy setting out in broad terms the scale and location of new development for the area which in this case will cover the period up to 2021. This will be known as the 'Locational Strategy'. It should be noted that the resulting Locational Strategy will guide the direction that site specific land use allocations should take. A subsequent 'Major Allocations' document will set out site specific land use proposals that will enable the implementation of the Locational Strategy. Therefore it is important to note that site specific issues and options cannot be a focus of the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy should also contain a set of high level strategic policies.

This particular report represents the first stage in preparing the Core Strategy document, being a consultation document whose main purpose is to stimulate debate upon the content and direction that the Core Strategy should take. This report should be read in conjunction with the [Creating a New District Plan; Setting the Context](#)¹ document which provides an overview of the key statistical data and key issues that face the district, setting out the context and key issues within which the Core Strategy and subsequent Local Development Framework documents will operate. This in turn has informed the preparation of this Issues and Alternative Options Report and The findings upon which this context document is based have been verified at a series of workshops held in 2006 and attended by Members of the Council and key stakeholders.

This particular Issues and Alternative Options Report gives the Council, community, stakeholders and other third parties the ability to consider the key issues that face the district which have been identified so far. It proposes a Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives which all documents that will form the Wear Valley Local Development Framework would strive to work towards. The strategic policy aspects which the Council considers the Core Strategy document should focus upon and the potential policy options for doing so are also presented for consideration. These have been selected having had regard to national and regional planning policy, contextual information, relevant plans and strategies and emerging central government advice.

This report is a mechanism that gives all parties the opportunity for comment upon the scope, appropriateness and relevance of these at the earliest possible time.

¹ Creating a New District Plan; Setting the Context can be viewed and downloaded by visiting www.wearvalley.gov.uk Alternatively hard copies are available upon request from the Environment and Regeneration Department, Civic Centre Crook (01388 765555).

The responses received in response to this report will therefore inform the next stage of the plan preparation process; determining the preferred options for the Core Strategy which in turn will be developed into a Locational Strategy and detailed strategic policies.

What is the content of this report?

The identification of key issues facing the district as set out in [Creating a New District Plan; Setting the Context](#) has informed the formulation of a draft Spatial Vision and a set of draft Spatial Objectives for the Local Development Framework documents to strive to meet collectively. Again these were the focus of the aforementioned workshops. These are set out respectively in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of this report.

The planning related issues and potential alternative policy options that may address these issues through the resulting Core Strategy document are detailed in [Sections 4 to 7](#) of this report. Finally the report concludes with the consideration of issues relating to the implementation and monitoring arrangements in [Section 8](#).

What do I need to do next?

The publication of this report for third party comment represents the first stage in preparing the Core Strategy document for the district. This report is subject to consultation for a period of 6 weeks from [XX July 2007](#) until [XX August 2007](#). Having considered the content of this report in terms of its proposed scope, priorities, potential policy options, accuracy and appropriateness any representations should be made by completing the Consultation Response Form which accompanies this report and submitted to the Council by **no later than XX August 2007**.

Any representations received in respect to this report will be considered and where deemed justifiable used to inform the finalisation of the draft Strategic Vision, Strategic Objectives and identification of the preferred policy options for the Core Strategy. It is important to note that all alternative options identified through this first stage of plan preparation will undergo Sustainability Appraisal². The appraisal process will identify the likely social, economic and environmental impacts of a given policy option and will inform the selection of the preferred options to be developed into new planning policies. These preferred options will be the subject of further third party engagement in due course.

² The draft Sustainability Appraisal Framework which has been prepared for the purposes of appraising the Core Strategy alternative options is set out in the *Wear Valley District Joint Core Strategy and Generic Development Control Policies Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report*. This is the subject of 5 weeks public consultation between XX May 2007 and XX June 2007. The report and supporting documents are available to view and download at www.wearvalley.gov.uk. Hard copies of the document are also available upon request from the Environment and Regeneration Department, Civic Centre, Crook (01388 765555).

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SECTION 1

DEVELOPING A SPATIAL VISION FOR THE DISTRICT

A key difference between the emerging new district plan and the current Local Plan is the fact that it needs to be 'spatial' in its approach. Old style development plans tend to be based upon traditional land use topics focusing upon regulation and the control of land use. The new plan needs to go beyond this narrow land use focus to provide a mechanism for delivering sustainable development. It will do this by addressing social, environmental and economic issues and relating them to the use of land. It needs to take account of and integrate with the delivery of other strategies and plans including those of other agencies not traditionally involved in the land use planning system but who also have an impact upon spatial development. The new plan should also be a delivery mechanism for the spatial dimensions of the district's **Community Plan**. When preparing the new plan there is also a need to avoid the formulation of undeliverable 'wish lists' and proposals which require unrealistic levels of resources.

The Spatial Vision draws upon the issues facing the district and identifies how the district will have changed by the end of the plan period in physical, environmental, social and economic terms. The Spatial Vision needs to articulate a sense of local identity and be specific to Wear Valley.

A Local Development Framework needs to have a clear and distinctive Spatial Vision from which Spatial Objectives, Strategic Policies, and a monitoring and implementation framework flow. This Spatial Vision must be contained within the Core Strategy document.

An audit of relevant plans and strategies relating to the district has been undertaken, which has provided the Council with an understanding of the key aims of these plans and strategies. This will assist in developing a new plan which will compliment and co-ordinate with their delivery. The scope of the audit has included:-

- Submission Draft Regional Spatial; Strategy for the North East.
- Wear Valley District Community Plan³
- Wear Valley District Council Plan
- Dale & Valley Homes Strategic Objectives
- Wear Valley District Local Plan
- District Housing Strategy
- District Economic Strategy (draft)
- Renewing Weardale
- Regional Economic Strategy
- District Open Spaces Strategy (draft)
- Bishop Auckland Town Master Plan
- North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan.

³ produced in partnership with the Local Strategic Partnership and embraces strategies of key stakeholders.

ISSUE 1: Appropriateness of the draft Spatial Vision

The audit has informed the preparation of the following draft Spatial Vision for the district:

Planning for People, Place and Prosperity...

“By 2021 Wear Valley will offer an improved quality of life for those who live, work and visit the District. This will be inherited by and continued for future generations and delivered without compromising the District’s environmental assets.

***People:** Wear Valley will have a growing, vibrant, healthy population which is creating a confident community motivated by self-worth, in which each individual is able to achieve a collective improvement in the District. Opportunities will be available for living in an affordable decent home.*

***Place:** Those qualities that make the district special and distinctive will be well managed and well protected where necessary.*

***Prosperity:** The district’s economy will be a major driving force in the sub-regional economy and will be witnessing rapid growth in educational attainment, employment and business start-ups.”*

Questions

- Do you consider that the draft Spatial Vision is appropriate to the district bearing in mind the key issues identified in ‘Creating a new district plan; Setting the context?’

When considering the above please advise us of:-

- any aspects that you consider are appropriate but are omitted from the draft Spatial Vision.
- suggested re –wording of the draft Spatial Vision.

SECTION 2

ESTABLISHING DRAFT SPATIAL OBJECTIVES

In order to deliver the new district plan's Spatial Vision by 2021 a set of Spatial Objectives needs to be established; these Spatial Objectives must be contained within the Core Strategy document. The Spatial Objectives will provide a framework for the formulation of policies, which will be contained within the Core Strategy document and its subsidiary documents. These Spatial Objectives will also define the desired direction of travel of the new plan for the purposes of monitoring policy performance.

A set of draft Spatial Objectives was initially developed through Member, officer and stakeholder workshops in November 2006. These evolved having had regard to the following;

- the key district issues as identified in the [Creating a new district plan; Setting the context](#) document which supplements this report
- the three components of sustainable development; social, environment and economic
- national and regional planning policies and guidance
- the District's Community Plan
- the Council Plan
- the Audit Commission's 'Quality of Life' themes.

[Table 1](#) contained in [Appendix 1](#) of this report demonstrates the linkages which have been identified between the above elements and the resulting draft Spatial Objectives which have been developed so far.

ISSUE 2: Appropriateness of the draft Spatial Objectives

An initial set of draft Spatial Objectives which have the subject of workshop discussion and an assessment against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework are set out in [Table 1](#) contained in [Appendix 2](#) of this report. The final draft Spatial Objectives, which have evolved from this development process, and which are the subject of this consultation, are contained within [Table A](#) overleaf. The Spatial Objectives have been grouped under the themes adopted in the draft Spatial Vision, presented in [Section 2](#) of this report: *People, Place, Prosperity*.

Questions

Do you consider that the scope of the draft Spatial Objectives is appropriate:-

- a) In relation to the key issues which face the district as identified in '[Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#)'?
- b) To delivering the draft Spatial Vision as set out in [Section 1](#) of this report?

When considering the above please advise us of:-

- Any aspects you consider have been omitted from the draft Spatial Objectives.
- Suggested re-wording of any of the draft objectives.
- Any additional objectives which you consider are necessary
- Any draft Spatial Objectives which you consider should be deleted.

Table A: final draft Spatial Objectives

| LDF Theme | Ref ⁴ | Draft Spatial Objectives to be contained in the Core Strategy |
|------------|------------------|---|
| PEOPLE | SO1 | To reduce health deprivation and improve the social well-being of the district's population. |
| | SO2 | To support the provision of and accessibility to existing and new services and facilities that meets the needs of the district's population. |
| | SO3 | To deliver well designed sustainable, cleaner and safer local environments within the district. |
| | SO4 | To promote equality and inclusive communities within the district. |
| | SO5 | To assist and promote lifelong learning opportunities for the population of Wear Valley. |
| | SO6 | To increase the potential for the district's current and future population to have the opportunity of living in a decent and affordable home and choice of type and tenure. |
| PLACE | SO7 | To minimize the amount of waste produced and encourage sustainable waste management within the district. |
| | SO8 | To maintain and enhance the quality of the district's natural resources, including land, water and air. |
| | SO9 | To protect and enhance the geological, bio-diversity and conservation interests within the district and beyond |
| | SO10 | To manage the built and natural environment to reduce the causes and minimise the impacts of climate change |
| | SO11 | To make sustainable use of natural resources, energy and land. |
| | SO12 | To protect and enhance the quality of the district's landscapes and townscapes. |
| | SO13 | To preserve and enhance the district's cultural and historic heritage. |
| | SO14 | To ensure the use of sustainable design and construction throughout the district. |
| PROSPERITY | SO15 | To develop and retain a flexible and higher skilled workforce through training and education. |
| | SO16 | To facilitate the development of an economically sustainable and prosperous area where investment is encouraged and retained and new and existing businesses are supported. |
| | SO17 | To strengthen the role, vitality and viability of the district's market towns and villages whilst respecting their individual character. |
| | SO18 | Reduce the need to travel and provide access to sustainable modes of transport for those who live, work or visit the district. |

⁴ The sustainability appraisal of the draft spatial objectives has resulted in the initial list of 21 spatial objectives being refined to 18 Spatial Objectives. Therefore as such the Spatial Objectives have been re-numbered accordingly.

SECTION 3

ESTABLISHING THE FOCUS OF THE CORE STRATEGY

In addition to containing a clear Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives, the Core Strategy document should also contain a strategy to manage major social, economic and physical change through determining the broad location and scale of new strategic development, including provision for land requirements in respect to new housing, employment, retail leisure, community and transport developments. These requirements have been derived from regional planning policy and local needs assessments. This strategy should reflect regional and national planning policy principles. For the purposes of this report this strategy will be referred to as a 'Locational Strategy'; [Section 5](#) of this report presents the issues and alternative options related to the potential 'Locational Strategy'.

There is also a need to develop a range of strategic policies which are developed to deliver the new plan's Spatial Objectives. These strategic policies will therefore work in the long term towards delivering the new plan's Spatial Vision. The strategic policies should be 'higher level', none site specific in their nature, applying to the whole of the district or to broad locations within it. They may include criteria based policies to establish a framework for assessing any unforeseen proposals, such as windfall development i.e. development of unexpected sites which have come forward for residential development as the result of a factory closure or housing clearance.

ISSUE 3: Appropriateness of proposed scope of strategic policies

The Council, having considered the key issues facing the district together with the requirements of current national and regional planning policy, have identified a range of potential policy areas in addition to the Locational Strategy for which a framework of strategic policies would be appropriate for the Core Strategy. These additional strategic policy areas are as follows:

- [Planning for People:](#)
 - Meeting local needs;
 - Delivering a sequential approach;
- [Planning for Place:](#)
 - Mitigating and Adapting to climate change;
 - Protecting and enhancing the district's environment;
- [Planning for Prosperity:](#)
 - Delivering a sustainable and prosperous district economy
 - Declaring Area Action Plans.

Each of these strategic policy areas gives rise to a range of issues and alternative options for consideration. These issues and alternative options are presented in [Sections 5, 6 & 7](#) of this report. The alternative options that have been generated so far are based upon a range of potential strategic planning approaches. The majority of these approaches were identified through the workshops held in November 2006. They are based upon fundamental planning and sustainability principles and have been identified having had regard to the district profile and issues set out in [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#), an audit of current strategies and programmes and regard to the international/national designations that exist within the district. These strategic planning approaches are:-

- Population growth
- Housing led regeneration
- Economic led regeneration
- Retail led regeneration
- Built environment and heritage led regeneration
- Protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment
- Countryside protection.

A more detailed explanation of these strategic planning approaches is contained within [Appendix 3](#).

Although the Council would welcome representations to be made in respect to all strategic policy areas, these sections are structured in a manner which enables you to only consider the strategic policy areas which you are most interested in, if you so wish. This consultation may identify a requirement for further policy areas to be pursued.

Question

Do you consider that the scope of strategic policies proposed above covers all of the necessary strategic policy aspects in relation to:-

- a) Current national and regional planning policy;
- b) The key issues facing the district as set out in '[Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#)'; and
- c) The draft Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives contained in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of this report?

The Core Strategy needs to be concise and clear about what is being delivered through such policies, who is delivering them, by when and how. All policies must be linked to the Spatial Objectives set out in the Core Strategy as well as having output targets and indicators to enable the Council to measure the success of their implementation and effectiveness linked to the objectives; the requirement for an implementation and monitoring framework is discussed further in [Section 8](#).

SECTION 4

DEVELOPING A LOCATIONAL STRATEGY

Determining The Broad Distribution And Scale Of New Development Within The District

National and Regional Policy Context

The role of and need for a locational strategy is discussed in [Section 3](#) of this report. In relation to the location of new development [Planning Policy Statement 1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' \(PPS1\)](#) requires councils to promote urban and rural regeneration to improve the well-being of communities, bring forward sufficient land of a suitable quality in appropriate locations to meet expected need. In doing so there is a need to take into account issues such as accessibility and sustainable transport needs and focus developments that attract a large number of people (including retail, leisure and office developments) into existing centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of development. These principles are generally echoed through other Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements which relate to specific types of land uses and more generic policy aspects. The resulting Locational Strategy for the district will need to embrace these principles in order to be in conformity with national planning policy. This will ensure that, through the implementation of the new district plan, the sustainability of the district is secured, that it contributes positively to reducing climate change and the prudent use of natural resources.

Emerging regional planning policy contained within the [Submission Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East \(2006\)](#) is based upon a Locational Strategy (Policy 5) for the north east region which supports the concentration of new development in the core urban areas of the conurbations situated within Tyne & Wear and Tees Valley City Regions; of which the eastern part of Wear Valley currently straddles both. From a Wear Valley perspective this equates to development being supported from a regional perspective at Bishop Auckland (Policy 7) and Crook (Policy 6). In addition Policy 8 lends support to directing development to Stanhope as a main rural service centre which is of an appropriate scale and is sufficient to sustain rural settlements and a vibrant rural economy.

This draft regional plan underwent Examination In Public in 2006; the panel supported the principles of the Locational Strategy but considered that Policy 3 (entitled 'Sequential Approach to Development') should be strengthened to ensure that new development is well related to homes, jobs and services by all modes of transport, particularly public transport, walking and cycling. This has been carried on into the modifications of the Regional Spatial Strategy as released by Government Office for the North East in May 2007. One of the tests of 'soundness' that the Planning Inspectorate will apply when considering the acceptability of the new district plan at Examination In Public is whether it is in conformity with regional planning policy. The resulting Locational Strategy will therefore need to reflect the principles of this emerging regional plan.

Current approach at local level

Part 1 of the current [Wear Valley District Local Plan \(1997\)](#) contains a Development Strategy upon which the plan policies and allocations are based. This seeks to attain levels of development which are consistent with the aim of regenerating and revitalising the district and meeting the land supply in relation to housing and employment uses required by the [County Durham Structure Plan](#). From a locational point of view it was proposed that this would be attained by:-

- Seeking to support the role of Bishop Auckland and Crook as the major housing, employment and commercial centres of the district.
- Establishing Willington and Coundon/ Leeholme as new areas of growth
- Regenerating and revitalising the existing communities at Witton Park, Stanley/Mount Pleasant and the Dene Valley.

This Development Strategy also includes a number of sustainable development principles including recognising the need to direct new development to areas where there is an adequate range of services and facilities and which reduces the need to travel. This was translated into the identification a hierarchy of settlements for which boundaries which determine the 'Limits to Development' (Policy H3) were established. This Development Strategy also recognises the need to make the most efficient use of land by reusing previously developed 'brownfield' sites wherever possible and protecting and enhancing the district's landscape and wildlife.

Key Issues Identified

The emerging Locational Strategy will be a key component which will underpin the direction of the new plan. In view of the national and regional planning context and key district issues identified so far, this element of the plan presents 3 key challenges, namely the ability to;

- Identify the most appropriate approach to enable the development of a sustainable, deliverable and effective strategy that co ordinates with other strategies and plans and will afford all parts of the district the potential to benefit from an appropriate scale of regeneration, growth and prosperity in a regional planning policy context where priority is afforded to the main urban areas of the north east.
- Devise a strategy that will facilitate fulfilment of the Community Plan's aspiration for population growth and diversifying the age structure whilst meeting the existing and future needs of the existing population in a national context of an ageing and declining population base.
- Physically accommodate the projected land requirements for net additional dwellings, economic development, leisure and community facilities in a deliverable, appropriate and sustainable manner without compromising the district's environmental assets and in a current local context where existing 'limits to development' are tightly drawn around settlements.

There are several key components of the Locational Strategy which present issues within themselves. These are:-

- **The future role of the district within the region and sub region**
- **The future role of settlements within the district**
This will require a reconsideration of the settlement hierarchy and Limits to Development.
- **The identification of areas for future growth, regeneration, conservation, enhancement and protection**
Facilitating the delivery of existing and emerging strategies, plans and programmes operating within the District. This includes the Economic Strategy, emerging Open Spaces Strategy, North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, the Durham Coalfields Programme and Local Enterprise Growth Initiative.
- **The proportionate distribution of the required housing, employment and retailing land supply within the district.**

Alternative Options for the Locational Strategy

There are four possible steps that could be taken to assist in developing a Locational Strategy for the district, namely establishing:-

- The role of the district within the region and sub region.
- The role of settlements within the district
- The geographical distribution of growth within the hierarchy.
- The scale of growth through new development.

These steps and the options relating to them are detailed below.

Step 1: Establishing the role of the district within the region and sub region

The district is afforded numerous roles which are either historic, relate to existing physical assets, national or international designations or are proposed in a range of existing and emerging strategies and plans. These should be used to inform the direction of the new plan to ensure that it supports existing and future activity by the Council and stakeholders. These roles include:-

- **South and east Bishop Auckland: a key location for business growth and investment**
This is justified through the identification of the opportunity for promoting a Bishop Auckland – Darlington Corridor employment growth area in the Regional Economic Strategy and TeesValley City Region Plan and whose delivery will be supported by the County Economic Strategy, the District Economic Strategy, the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative and Durham Coalfields Programme.
- **Bishop Auckland: the second major town centre serving the Durham sub region**
Historically the second major retail commercial, residential and employment centre to Durham City in the County and support a wider hinterland extending into Teesdale, Sedgfield and the remainder of the district. The Council considers it important to maintain this role. This may be delivered through the implementation of the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Master Plan supported through the Regional Economic Strategy Urban Renaissance Programme.
- **Weardale sub area: An international and nationally important tourism, informal recreation and educational destination**
This opportunity emanates from the work of the Eastgate Taskforce in relation to the Eastgate Master Plan (as supported in the Regional Economic Strategy, the Renewing Weardale Strategy), alongside the North Pennines AONB and Geo Park designation, and is based on existing built and industrial heritage assets and existing tourist attractions.

Question

Are there any other potential strategic roles for the district that you consider are appropriate but have not been identified?

Step 2: Determining the role of settlements within the district

It is necessary to identify a settlement hierarchy as part of the Locational Strategy for the purposes of determining the scale and geographical distribution of new development throughout the district. The resulting hierarchy will also inform the review of the existing adopted 'Limits to Development' in terms of which settlements these limits should be applicable to. The proposed criteria, as set out below, have been developed to enable the ranking of settlements to be conducted in a transparent and consistent manner. These criteria are based upon sustainable development principles that underpin good planning

practice, current national and emerging regional planning policies and take into account the local characteristics of the existing settlements within the district.

- **Towns identified for growth in the Regional Spatial Strategy**
Bishop Auckland, Crook and Stanhope

These towns that are considered to play a primary role relative to their scale in the **wider district and/ or respective sub area** and are easily accessible by alternative modes of transport. They offer a **wide range** of housing, employment, retail, leisure and community facilities and as such have been identified by the Regional Spatial Strategy as suitable for growth.

- **Towns identified as in need of Regeneration or have inter-dependencies upon a town identified within the Regional Spatial Strategy**
Coundon, Willington, Tow Law and Wolsingham

These are settlements that play (or have the potential to play) a supporting role to or inter-dependencies with settlements identified within the Regional Spatial Strategy, or have been identified through the Durham Coalfields Initiative as towns in great need of regeneration. In general these settlements are easily accessible by alternative modes of transport but offer a more **limited range** of housing, employment, retail, leisure and community facilities.

- **Other Settlements**
All other established settlements within the district which are not mentioned above.

In general these are settlements that have **no or very few** retail or community facilities that supports the immediate locality only.

Questions

- Do you consider that the draft criteria adequately describe the district's settlements?
- Do you consider the number of tiers proposed is appropriate for Wear Valley?
- Are the settlements identified under each heading appropriate?

As mentioned above, the resulting settlement hierarchy will inform the review of the existing adopted 'Limits to Development' in terms of which settlements these should be applicable to. It is important to recognise that given the fact that the new plan will be continually monitored, updated and further documents added to it then the actual position of the new 'Limits to Development' which are deemed appropriate through the Core Strategy may alter over time, for example to accommodate new land use allocations proposed through subsequent policy documents. It may therefore be necessary to develop a criteria based policy within the Core Strategy upon which the 'Limits to Development' are based, and subsequently identify the 'Limits to Development' on the proposals map. It is considered that this approach would allow a greater degree of flexibility to be awarded to the 'Limits to Development', so they can be altered to reflect changing circumstances. The proposed criteria, which have been developed from the criteria used in the Local Plan and reflecting other planning considerations are identified for consideration below:

- **Position of settlement in hierarchy**
'Limits to Development' should only normally be established for those settlements where growth is to be acceptable in principle; these settlements will be identified through the preparation of the 'Locational Strategy'.

- **Lines of communication**
Boundaries should be on the side of the built up area so excluding roads, paths, railways and other lines of communication;
- **Physical features**
Boundaries should follow physical features, field boundaries or curtilages, although this may not always be practical.
- **Land with planning permission**
The boundaries should include land with extant planning permission, whether or not development has commenced.
- **Site allocations**
Boundaries should include allocated sites which have not yet obtained planning permission, unless there are sound planning reasons to justify a change from this approach.
- **Areas of open land on the edge of built up areas**
A “25metre rule” should be applied, whereby the maximum garden length is 25 metres. If the curtilage is just beyond 25 metres this should normally be used instead. Where a narrow row of gardens are different lengths the mean length of 25 metres should be used.
- **Large institutional buildings and associated grounds**
In relation to institutional buildings, such as hospitals, schools and village halls, the boundaries should be drawn tightly around existing buildings excluding playing fields, sports pitches and hard standings, unless they are enclosed by the built-up area.
- **Farm Buildings**
All farm buildings on the periphery of the settlement should be excluded from the built-up area unless they are seen to have development potential in association with their proximity to the urban area.
- **Caravan sites**
Sites on the edge of settlements will be excluded from the built-up area, unless there is a specific intention to allow development for other purposes.

Question

- Do you consider that the draft criteria adequately reflect the character of the district's settlements and are an appropriate means of determining the 'Limits to Development' in a transparent and consistent manner?

Step 3: Determining the geographical distribution of growth within the hierarchy

Once the hierarchy is established the geographical distribution of growth in terms of housing, employment, retail, community facilities and leisure needs to be established. Three alternative options for doing so are presented below.

It is important to note that the new plan must be in general conformity with emerging regional policy. Therefore the hierarchy must reflect the status that the draft Regional Spatial Strategy places on Bishop Auckland, Crook and Stanhope. However the view may be taken that emerging regional policy does not adequately reflect actual local issues regarding roles and relationships between these key settlements and others or the potential physical constraints surrounding the ability of these settlements to accommodate additional

development. Additionally it may be considered that it does not adequately reflect and provide for more localise issues faced by other settlements within the district to be tackled. It is a key role of the new plan to translate both national and regional policy to meet local circumstances.

Having regard to the above and the proposed criteria set out in **Step 2** above the following three alternative options for determining the broad geographical distribution of new development have been identified; in brief these are:

- **OPTION 1:** concentrate all growth in the three main towns of Bishop Auckland, Crook and Stanhope;
- **OPTION 2:** concentrate all growth in the 3 main towns and the 4 towns identified as having inter-dependencies or in need of regeneration; and
- **OPTION 3:** spread growth out across all the districts settlements.

These three approaches and their implications are discussed in greater detail below.

- **OPTION 1: Concentration of growth on towns identified in Regional Spatial Strategy as suitable for growth**

Towns identified for growth: Bishop Auckland, Crook and Stanhope

Potential Approach:

The new plan will make provision for all new growth through additional new development in respect of these elements (ie housing, employment, retailing, leisure and community facilities) to be concentrated in and immediately adjacent to these settlements. Boundaries defining the Limits to Development would be appropriate in such instances.

All other settlements not mentioned above

Potential Approach:

Provision for additional housing or employment development would not be made in these settlements except in exceptional circumstances where local need can be demonstrated and can not be addressed in the identified settlements. Boundaries defining the Limits to Development may not be appropriate.

Implications of Option 1

This option would concentrate all new growth in Bishop Auckland, Crook and Stanhope; it is a very stringent interpretation of emerging Regional Spatial Strategy.

This option does not reflect the existing interrelationships between settlements or the needs of those towns requiring regeneration. Growth beyond Bishop Auckland, Crook and Stanhope would be limited to small scale development that meets demonstrated local need that cannot be accommodated within the key settlements.

When considering this option it is important to note that Bishop Auckland and Crook have experienced the majority of economic and housing growth as the current Local Plan strategy intended. This has resulted in the take up of the most viable housing and employment land allocations. Furthermore, due to the topography of Weardale, Stanhope is relatively constrained in its ability to accommodate growth. The adoption of this option would automatically place a requirement for further development land to be identified and released in these settlements which, given their physical characteristics is likely to create pressure for green field urban extensions beyond existing 'Limits to Development'.

- **OPTION 2: Concentrate growth in towns identified by the Regional Spatial Strategy as well as other towns with an identified need for regeneration.**

Towns identified for growth or regeneration: Bishop Auckland, Crook, Stanhope, Coundon, Willington, Tow Law and Wolsingham

Potential Approach:

The new plan will make provision for appropriate opportunities for growth through additional new development in all of these elements (ie housing, employment, retail, leisure and community facilities). Boundaries defining the Limits to Development would be appropriate in such instances.

Other settlements not mentioned above

Potential Approach

Provision will be made by the new plan to accommodate limited growth through additional new development in these settlements where this is the more sustainable option as opposed to development within the towns identified for growth within that sub-area. Boundaries defining the Limits to Development may therefore be appropriate in such instances.

Implications of Option 2

This option has regard to the priority that emerging regional planning policy gives to Bishop Auckland, Crook and Stanhope. However this option also reflects the need for regeneration within other key settlements in Wear Valley and the historic inter-dependencies between these settlements. This option has the potential to reduce pressure on the release of inappropriate greenfield urban extensions to the identified towns by directing such growth to appropriate supporting other settlements. Furthermore, by regenerating and revitalising other key towns within the district, enabling them to better meet the needs of their communities and the communities within their surrounding settlements, this option could reduce the need for travel.

Whilst supporting and enhancing the roles of the key towns it allows for development to occur where appropriate in some of the outlying settlements of the district to support existing communities. This option largely reflects the development strategy of the current Local Plan.

- **OPTION 3: Dispersal of growth**

This option relates to distributing growth through additional new development to settlements regardless of their size where suitable land is available and where local needs and market demand are greatest. Local need may relate to factors such as poor accessibility or deprivation.

Potential Approach:

The new plan will make provision for growth through new development in appropriate settlements regardless of size. Such growth will be appropriate to the scale of the settlement and focused where land is available and where social, economic and physical needs are deemed greatest and where those needs cannot be addressed through the redevelopment and revitalisation of existing provision alone.

Implications of Option C

This option could be viewed as representing a challenge to the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy. However it is an alternative means to meeting the underlying principle of supporting the district's key settlements. It provides an opportunity for areas of greatest social, economic and physical need to be revitalised, grow and support the key settlements through providing for additional new development. From a geographical

perspective it may result in some smaller settlements being prioritised for new additional development, contrary to the previous options presented.

This approach could be implemented in a manner so as to provide a catalyst for encouraging wider improvements to the existing stock of housing, employment premises, community and leisure facilities which otherwise would not be viable or attractive to the market. It also offers the potential to enable brownfield sites to come forward in smaller settlements which under other circumstances would not be justifiable, thus potentially reducing the extent of greenfield releases and improving performance in meeting otherwise challenging nationally set targets.

However, given the severity and wide geographical spread of local need throughout the district there is a danger that the scale, and thus the impact, of growth would be too diluted and therefore less effective than options 1 & 2. A dispersed approach to development could also increase car dependence and average travel distance.

Question

- In your opinion are there any further implications for any of the Options which have not been identified?
- Which option do you consider most appropriate to adopt?
- Are there any additional alternative options which have not been identified?

Step 4: Determining the scale of growth through new development

The resulting Locational Strategy must identify the scale of growth through new development that is to be shared between the settlements that are identified through [step 3](#). The district's housing and employment land requirement up to 2021 is determined by the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy. The district Retail Study (2007) has confirmed the district comparison and convenience retail floor space requirements up until 2021. These known land requirements are set out in [table X](#) below.

Table X: Development requirement for the new plan

| Land use | Identified Development Requirement (net) | Outstanding Development Requirement |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Housing | 2795* additional units | -738 additional units |
| Employment | 105 hectares | 105 hectares |
| Comparison retailing | 2,966 sq.m.net | 2,966 sq.m.net |
| Convenience retailing | 37,369 sq.m.net | 37,369 sq.m.net |

* Following the outcome of the Examination in Public this figure is expected to increase to 3305, leaving a net additional requirement of -228 dwellings.

Whilst requirements in respect to future leisure and community facilities requirements are currently being calculated this does not impact upon considering avenues available for determining the proportionate share of any additional land requirements arising.

There are various ways by which the scale of land to be allocated to meet these specific known land requirements can be determined for a given area. There may be some methods that are more applicable for a particular land use than others than another. It may be appropriate to use two or more in conjunction with one another. These methods are presented below as options for consideration.

How we could do it

- Option 1: Following historic trends;
- Option 2: Determine according to nature and severity of need of communities;
- Option 3: Determine according to the size of the current population of each sub area;
- Option 4: Determine according to the size of the current population of the individual settlements identified for growth;
- Option 5: Determine in accordance with the level of available community facilities;
- Option 6: Determine according to level of accessibility within, to and from the district;
- Option 7: Determine in accordance with the level of available appropriate land, informed by the Urban Capacity Study and the Employment Land Review;
- Option 8: Determine according to the level of market demand and supply, informed by the Employment Land Review and Housing Market Assessment;
- Option 9: Determine according to whether there are appropriate, alternative opportunities by which growth can be stimulated without the need for net additions, for example redevelopment or enhancement of existing dwelling, employment or retail stock.

Question

- Are there any approaches in addition to the 9 options identified above which you consider appropriate to determining the scale of new development?
- Please indicate your preferred option(s) in order of priority in respect to determining the scale of additional:
 - Housing land (assuming scope arises for further net additions to be provided for).
 - Employment land
 - Retail floor space
 - Leisure and recreation facilities
 - Community facilities.

SECTION 5

PLANNING FOR PEOPLE: STRATEGIC POLICY ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

This section of the report presents the strategic policy areas most relevant to the 'People' theme to be adopted as part of the overall Local Development Framework Spatial Vision and structure. [Section 3](#) describes the purpose of strategic policies.

As identified in [Section 2](#) there are 6 proposed Spatial Objectives relating to this theme covering a variety of community and social issues. The proposed strategic policy areas which have been identified by the Council and are considered most relevant to the 'People' theme of the new district plan and the related Spatial Objectives are:-

- Meeting local community needs:
 - Achieving a housing mix;
 - Providing affordable homes;
 - Accommodating the needs of gypsies and travellers;
 - Providing open space and sport and recreation facilities; and
 - Delivering community facilities.

and

- Delivering a sequential approach for housing:
 - Establish a sequential approach.

Whilst the Council would welcome representations to be made in respect to all strategic policy areas identified, the remainder of this section has been structured to enable you to consider the strategic policy areas which you are most interested in, if you so wish.

For both of these Strategic Policy areas the Council has identified what it believes the new district plan needs to do in order to deliver the draft Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives as set out in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of this report. Options regarding how this could be achieved through the new district plan have been identified for your consideration.

[What we need you to tell us](#)

- Which options you consider most appropriate for the Council to pursue through the new district plan.
- Whether you consider there to be additional options available to deliver the Strategic Policy area to achieve the draft Spatial Vision; and
- Whether you consider there to be additional actions which the Core Strategy should pursue to deliver the Strategic Policies.

Strategic Policy A:

Meeting local community needs

Why have a strategic policy

There is a national, regional and local commitment to developing strong, vibrant, mixed, sustainable communities; this can only be achieved by meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion and creating equal opportunity for all citizens⁵. National planning policy⁶ identifies that a key characteristic of a sustainable, mixed community is a variety of housing, particularly in terms of the tenure and price of housing and mix of different households such as families with children, single person households and older people.

Addressing local housing need alone, however, isn't sufficient to deliver the Government's commitment and achieve objectives contained in the **Community Plan** and **Council Plan** and in the proposed Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives for the Core Strategy, to delivering sustainable and mixed communities. Other local community needs, such as the provision of open space and sport and recreation facilities as well as delivering a network community facilities which meet the needs of local community groups and individuals also plays a key role in delivering these objectives. This strategic policy area therefore seeks to ensure the new district plan meets local community needs. Meeting local community needs may also help reduce the level of deprivation experienced throughout the district.

To develop a mixed and sustainable community in Wear Valley, the district should ensure that the needs of the local community are delivered. Through its planning powers and by working with its partners the Council has the ability to ensure new development helps to meet the needs of Wear Valley's wider community.

Creating a new district plan: **Setting the context** has identified a number of issues relating to Wear Valley's population and local community needs. It is however noted that a number of key studies and assessments which will build upon these issues and identify the specific needs within Wear Valley are not yet completed; these include the **Strategic Housing Market Assessment**; the **Open Space Strategy** and a **Gypsy and Travellers Needs Assessment**. It has however been possible to generate alternative options based upon the principles of how the new district plan could meet local community needs. It is anticipated that all three of the above mentioned studies will be in place to inform the preparation of the Preferred Option for the Core Strategy document.

What We Need To Do: Achieve a housing mix

Delivering a sustainable and mixed community is partially dependant upon providing a mix of housing which meets the needs of current and future communities. In planning for achieving a mix of housing to meet these needs, the Council needs to develop a policy based upon current and future demographic trends, accommodation requirements of different groups and the diverse range of requirements across the area, including the need to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers. This information will be contained in the forthcoming Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which will then inform the policy; as such it is not appropriate at this stage to generate alternative options around the actual mix of housing required within the district. It has however, been possible to identify a number of alternative options around how in principle the new district plan should achieve an appropriate housing mix.

⁵ Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

⁶ Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

How we could do it

- **Option 1(a)** – Achieving a housing mix through site allocations, ensuring that housing allocations in the Major Allocations document clearly sets out the expected mix of housing the Council requires for each allocation;
- **Option 1(b)** – Set out in the Core Strategy the likely overall proportions of households that require market housing and affordable housing, the likely profile of household types requiring market housing and the size and type of affordable housing required. All proposals should reflect the needs identified within this policy. This approach would be more flexible, allowing the policy to be changed without having to amend the Major Allocations document to reflect changes in housing need;
- **Option 1(c)** – A combination of the above options. Identify the housing mix expected on key housing allocations informed by a strategic policy (as described in option 1(b) above). The strategic policy should be applied to other allocations, mixed use developments or windfall proposals.

However, **Creating a new district plan: Setting the context** identifies that within the district there is currently a sufficient housing land supply to satisfy the targets established in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Core Strategy will therefore need to identify how it will seek to achieve a housing mix which meets the needs of the local community in a context where large scale residential developments resulting in additional dwellings is not in conformity with regional planning policy. The following alternative options have been identified as potential ways to address this issue.

How we could do it

- **Option 1(d)** – Encourage improvement and investment in areas of low housing demand encourage vacant dwellings to be brought back into use. This option may involve either directing resources to areas of low housing demand and/or other developments (including retail, community facilities and employment) towards settlements with large areas of low housing demand to improve the sustainability and market appeal of the settlement; this in turn may result in increased interest and investment in the housing stock provided within the settlement;
- **Option 1(e)** – Encourage the redevelopment of areas of low housing demand where vacancy rates are especially high; the redevelopment of these sites should provide a housing mix which satisfies the targets set out in the Core Strategy;
- **Option 1(g)** – Through appropriate allocations, encourage the redevelopment of areas of low housing demand or poor quality housing at a lower dwelling density. The remaining 'surplus' dwelling units could be provided on a separate (allocated) site where there is a specific identified need for additional housing to achieve a housing mix. Phasing the release of these allocations would be essential.
- **Option 1(g)** – Encourage small scale residential developments within existing settlements which would provide a greater diversity of housing types within that settlement or area. Equally proposals for new residential development which would not provide a diverse mix of housing types within the settlement would be discouraged.

What We Need To Do: Provide affordable homes

Although, in the absence of the [Strategic Housing Needs Assessment](#) and an up to date Housing Needs Study, it has not been possible to identify the scale of local housing need or identify where within the district these needs are most pronounced, it is considered that there is a need to provide affordable housing within the district. The last Housing Needs Study undertaken by the Council (in 2001) identified that there was an affordability issue within the district. Since then house prices have continued to rise whilst average earnings within the district have remained low. Without actual figures relating to local housing need it is not possible to generate options around specific targets and thresholds for meeting this need at this stage. It has, however, been possible to develop a set of alternative options relating to the principles behind the delivery of affordable housing through the Core Strategy and new district plan as a whole.

To achieve this we must:

- Develop thresholds to trigger the requirement to provide affordable units;
- Develop targets to identify the proportion of affordable units required;
- Identify the delivery mechanism;
- Identify the location of provision; and
- Determine other targets relating to type and size of affordable housing.

Developing thresholds to trigger the requirement to provide affordable units

These thresholds would be based upon site size or level of units provided through the proposed development. National planning policy identifies an indicative minimum site size of 15 dwellings, however the Council could decide to set a lower threshold where it is considered appropriate and justifiable. Given the rural nature of the district, the majority of applications received by the Council for new residential development are for fewer than 15 dwellings. Therefore a threshold of 15 dwellings may result in very few affordable units being delivered. The following alternative options are therefore presented to ascertain the acceptability of establishing a threshold below 15 dwelling units.

How we could do it

- [Option 2\(a\)](#) – Establish a threshold which reflects the national indicative minimum of 15 dwellings. Any development of 15 dwellings or more should be required to provide a proportion of affordable units; OR
- [Option 2\(b\)](#) – Establish a threshold lower than 15 dwellings, to reflect the low proportion of applications submitted to the Council for 15 dwellings or above; OR
- [Option 2\(c\)](#) – Establish a sliding scale of thresholds whereby smaller sites are required to provide a smaller proportion of affordable dwellings. Sites of a larger size would be required to provide a greater proportion of affordable units.
- [Option 2\(a\)](#) – Establish a threshold which reflects the national indicative minimum of 15 dwellings. Any development of 15 dwellings or more should be required to provide a proportion of affordable units; OR
- [Option 2\(b\)](#) – Establish a threshold lower than 15 dwellings, to reflect the low proportion of applications submitted to the Council for 15 dwellings or above; OR
- [Option 2\(c\)](#) – Establish a sliding scale of thresholds whereby smaller sites are required to provide a smaller proportion of affordable dwellings. Sites of a larger size would be required to provide a greater proportion of affordable units.

Developing targets to identify the proportion of affordable units required

Such targets would identify what proportion or number of affordable housing should be provided through relevant development proposals (ie those which satisfy the threshold requirements presented above).

How we could do it

- **Option 2(d)** – Develop a blanket policy applicable to the whole district; therefore the same proportion of affordable housing would be provided through relevant proposals regardless of location. This approach would be in the interests of meeting housing need for the wider community, not just the needs of those in the local vicinity or sub-area. This option may however result in the over supply of affordable units in an area or settlement where local need is low; OR
- **Option 2(e)** – Geographical targets based upon the level of need. Areas identified as being in greatest need would require a higher proportion of affordable housing to be provided through appropriate developments within that area. However, should the level of house building be greatest in the areas of lowest need for affordable units, this option may not effectively address local affordability need in areas where affordability issues are most pronounced.

Identifying the delivery mechanism

There are several ways in which affordable housing can be delivered; a strategic policy could establish the preferred means of delivery throughout the district. Alternatively, a supplementary document providing guidance in relation to the means of delivery could be prepared and linked back to the targets contained in the meeting local needs strategic policy.

How we could do it

- **Option 2(f)** – Developer built units subsequently passed to an appropriate housing body to manage in perpetuity; OR
- **Option 2(g)** – Through a partnership between the Council, a Registered Social Landlord and the developer, where an agreement is reached that the developer will build the affordable units as an integral part of the development and subsequently pass them to the Registered Social landlord to manage in perpetuity; OR
- **Option 2(h)** – Provided through Dale and Valley homes, the Council's housing Arms Length Management Organisation.

Identifying the location of provision

In the interests of creating mixed communities national planning policy encourages local authorities to require affordable units to be provided on-site, however where it can be justified off-site provision or a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision may be acceptable as long as the agreed approach contributes to the creation of mixed communities within the area. The latter approach may be appropriate where a housing development is permitted within a settlement where there is no known affordability issues; the provision of affordable units may be more effective if supplied in a different settlement or area to address those areas with greatest need in terms of affordability, where this contributes towards the creation of a mix of housing.

How we could do it

- **Option 2(i)** – Require all affordable units to be provided on site to ensure a mix of housing is provided by each new housing development; OR
- **Option 2(j)** – To ensure local housing needs are addressed where need is greatest, require the provision of off-site units or a financial contribution where there are no or a very low affordable housing need.

Determining other targets relating to type and size of affordable housing

National planning policy also requires the new district plan to contain targets relating to the proportions of social-rented and intermediate affordable housing where appropriate and specify the size and types of affordable housing that is likely to be needed in particular locations or on specific sites. As these targets will be wholly dependant upon the nature and severity of local housing need across the district, which will be identified by the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment, it is not possible to generate alternative options in connection with these at this stage.

What We Need To Do: Accommodate the needs of gypsies and travellers

The Core Strategy should set out criteria for the location of gypsy and traveller sites which will then be used to guide the allocation of sites in the forthcoming Major Allocations document. The criteria based policy will also be used to address any unexpected demand. Furthermore, the policy should be fair, reasonable, realistic and effective in delivering sites; they should be written in a positive manner that offers some certainty that when the criteria are met, planning permission will be granted⁷. At present a countywide Gypsy and Travellers Needs Assessment is being undertaken, which will identify what the local need is within the county and district. The results of this study will be used to ascertain the number or size of sites likely to be required within the district and therefore the number and broad location of where suitable sites would be allocated. The results of the assessment will also inform whether it is appropriate to establish a maximum site size, and what that size should be in relation to the local infrastructure and population size and density. The following criteria have been identified as potentially appropriate to inform the drafting of a suitable criteria based policy:

The criteria we could include are

1. The site is an extension to an existing gypsy and traveller site;
2. The site is located within or close to a main settlement (as identified in the Locational Strategy) and as such there is good access to local and essential community facilities and services;
3. The site is able to provide a settled base which reduces the need for long-distance travelling;
4. The site provides suitable soft landscaping and planting to minimise the visual impact of the site and maintain local amenity; sites with high or hard boundaries which separate the site from the local community will not usually be acceptable.

⁷ ODPM Circular 01/2006: Planning for gypsy and traveller caravan sites

It is important to note that other considerations applicable to proposals for new sites, such as site contamination, flood risk, access and parking provision would be covered within the Generic Development Control Policies document; the policies within this document would also need to be given due consideration during the identification of site allocations.

Question:

- Are there any additional criteria which have not been identified above which are relevant to Wear Valley and should be included within a Strategic Policy?
- Are the criteria identified above appropriate for Wear Valley?

What We Need To Do: Provide open space and sport and recreation facilities

National planning policy⁸ requires the new district plan to contain local targets for the provision of open space and sport and recreation facilities. These standards should reflect the local population profile, local needs and the extent of existing built development in an area. The Council should use information gathered from an assessment of the needs and opportunities within the district to derive its standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities throughout Wear Valley. The Council has recently undertaken an assessment of its open space and sport and recreation facilities, which will inform the preparation of the district's Open Space Strategy. Local targets based upon information such as the accessibility and quality of existing provision and the level of new provision required will enable the Council to improve both the qualitative and quantitative deficiencies through the planning process. As the local targets are based upon actual need as identified through the Assessment of Needs and Opportunities, alternative options should not be generated around this aspect. Furthermore, strategic allocations for new provision and the protection of existing provision will be contained within the forthcoming Major Allocations document.

In addition to the local targets for open space and sport and recreation facilities it may also be necessary to develop a strategic policy relating to how these targets will be met, and how it is anticipated that new facilities will be maintained throughout their lifetime.

To achieve this we must:-

- Determine the type of development that the local targets are applicable to;
- Determine the thresholds to trigger provision; and
- Identify the delivery mechanisms.

Determining the type of development that the local targets are applicable to

At present the Council only requires developers of major residential proposals (22 dwellings and over) to enter in to planning obligations relating to the provision of open space and play and recreation facilities. However, it is possible to require other developers to enter into such agreements, or deliver provision through other means where their development would increase local need or where current provision is inadequate or under threat. The following alternative options have been generated to identify the potential approaches the new district plan could take to meet local targets.

⁸ Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation

How we could do it

- **Option 4(a)** – Require developers of residential developments to provide some form of open space and sport and recreation facilities to ensure that future residents have suitable access to such facilities; OR
- **Option 4(b)** – Require developers of residential, commercial and industrial development to provide some form of open space and sport and recreational facilities to ensure that future residents and employees have suitable access to such facilities; OR
- **Option 4(c)** – Require all new developments which would place a demand upon existing open spaces and sport and recreation facilities to provide some form of provision.

Determining the thresholds to trigger provision

Where either option 4(a) or 4(b) have been identified above thresholds could be developed to trigger when developers should be required to provide some form of open space or sport and recreation provision. It may not be considered appropriate, for example, to require a contribution towards play and recreation facilities from a developer building a single dwelling.

How we could do it

- **Option 4(d)** – For residential developments, establish a threshold based upon site size which trigger a requirement to provide some form of provision for open space and sport and recreation; OR
- **Option 4 (e)** – Require all residential developments, regardless of number of dwellings provided, to provide some form of provision for open space and sport and recreation;
- **Option 4(f)** – For industrial and commercial developments, establish a threshold based upon number of employees which trigger a requirement to provide some form of provision for open space.

Identifying the delivery mechanisms

The Council has identified the following methods of meeting the local targets which are to be contained within the Core Strategy, through the planning process. National planning policy emphasises the important contribution that community and green spaces and open amenity and play and recreational spaces make in delivering high quality designed residential developments and to creating sustainable and mixed communities. Provision of open space on industrial or employment sites can also create an open, attractive environment which employees can enjoy. It may therefore be appropriate to require developers to provide such spaces on-site to ensure the development makes a positive contribution towards these aims. The Council, through its planning powers, can require the developer to manage and maintain such sites in perpetuity. Alternatively, a supplementary document providing guidance in relation to the means of delivery could be prepared and linked back to the targets contained in the meeting local needs strategic policy.

How we could do it

- **Option 4(g)** – Requiring commuted sums to be retained by the Council and used to maintain existing play, sport and recreation facilities or to part fund the development of new facilities; OR
- **Option 4(h)** – Requiring on-site provision, maintained in perpetuity by the developer, where necessary. It would be up to the developer to decide how this would be delivered and maintained. In relation to residential developments it may

be appropriate to establish a criteria-based policy to determine when on site provision is required; for employment sites on site provision of open space could be identified through the Major Allocations document; OR

- **Option 4(i)** – A combination of the above to ensure the local targets contained in the Core Strategy are effectively delivered through the planning process. A criteria based policy could be developed to trigger the requirement to provide on-site facilities.

What We Need To Do: Deliver community facilities

In addition to open spaces and sport and recreation facilities as discussed above, the planning process can help address the deficiencies in other community facilities, which meet local community needs. Public and community buildings play a fundamental part in creating mixed and sustainable communities; like open spaces, they act as arenas in which members of the community and community groups can interact. The district has experienced a decrease in the number of community facilities and services provided within its settlements; public and community buildings can however be used in innovative ways to provide these services. There are several options which the Core Strategy could pursue to ensure community facilities are delivered or used to help meet local community needs; a single option or a combination of options could be pursued through a strategic policy to ensure community facilities which meet local needs are delivered across the district.

How we could do it

- **Option 5(a)** – Work with community groups to develop a network of linked community facilities across the district which provide services which meet the needs of the local community;
- **Option 5(b)** – Identify through the new district plan, those community facilities in need of improvement and facilitate the required improvements through the planning process. This option may require a criteria-based policy to be established;
- **Option 5(c)** – Promote the dual-use of community buildings and facilities to maximise their contribution to meeting local community needs;
- **Option 5(d)** – Promote and support the dual-use of private sport and recreational developments, such as schools and private clubs to maximise their contribution to meeting local community needs.
- **Option 5(e)** – Require a financial contribution from major residential developers towards the provision of a network of suitable community facilities which meet the needs of the local community.

Strategic Policy B:

DELIVERING A SEQUENTIAL APPROACH FOR HOUSING

Why have a strategic policy

National planning policy⁹ identifies *windfall sites* as those which have not been specifically allocated for development in the plan. They comprise of previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available. These could include, for example, large sites resulting from a factory closure or small sites as a residential conversion or a new flat over a shop.

Given the current level of housing land supply, as described in [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) there is an urgent need to develop a policy against which proposals and applications for new additional housing on such unallocated sites can be assessed. Given the current levels of housing land supply within the district in relation to the targets set out in the regional Spatial Strategy, it is considered necessary to develop a policy which is robust and effective to ensure that any new sites given planning permission for housing are the most sustainable sites.

The policy should set out the circumstances in which new housing will be permitted; these circumstances should reflect the local issues which have been identified, and contribute towards local, regional and national policy objectives, such as those detailed in Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing.

What We Need To Do: Establish a sequential approach

A sequential approach prioritises sites according to their land status (ie whether they are greenfield sites) and geographical location; this is to ensure that sites granted planning permission for residential development are the most sustainable sites.

The Council currently applies a sequential search to every development proposal relating to new housing within the district. The sequential search currently applied has been adapted from Policy 3 of the [Regional Spatial Strategy](#) to reflect local circumstances and characteristics; the approach is applied regardless of size, site or scale of the proposal or application. To reflect the diversity and size of the district the extent of the search is confined to the sub-area within which the site in question is located (ie Bishop Auckland, Crook and Willington or Weardale). The current sequential approach affords greatest priority to opportunities in and around appropriate 'urban areas' within the district; these 'urban areas' consist of: main towns, towns in regeneration areas, rural service centres and other settlements which provide significant opportunities in terms of brownfield land.

Question:

- Are these categories of settlement which constitute 'urban areas' appropriate for the district?
- Is it necessary to refine or expand this list of 'urban areas' to further reflect local circumstances?
- If so, what other categories should be included? Please provide justification.

In accordance with Policy 3 of the Regional Spatial Strategy, within these 'urban areas' the following priority is currently awarded to sites:-

1. Suitable previously developed sites and buildings within urban areas, particularly around public transport nodes;

⁹ Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing available to view from www.communities.gov.uk

2. Other suitable locations within urban areas not identified to be protected for nature or heritage conservation or recreational purposes;
3. Suitable sites in locations adjoining urban areas, particularly those that involve the use of previously developed land and buildings; and
4. Suitable sites in settlements outside urban areas, particularly those that involve the use of previously developed land and buildings.

Until all priority one sites within a given sub-area are developed, consideration should not be given to proposals which come forward in priority two sites and so on.

Question:

- The adoption of a sequential approach requires the Council to assess development proposals against 'available' sites within the given area. When should a site be considered as becoming 'unavailable' and discounted from the sequential search:-
 - when planning permission is granted,
 - once development commences or
 - when a site is completed?

How we could do it

Option 1(a) - Continue current approach

- Continue to apply the sequential approach as detailed above, on a sub-area basis, to every proposal and application for new residential developments, regardless of site, size and scale of proposal.

Option 1(b) - Prioritise 'urban areas'

- Continue current approach but give priority to certain 'urban areas' within each sub-area, in accordance with the settlement hierarchy or the individual need of each settlement. This would ensure that the brownfield sites in the most sustainable locations with the greatest need are developed before brownfield sites in urban areas with less of a need. The 1-4 Ranking Framework detailed above would still be applicable (ie all previously developed sites within all the urban areas within a given sub-area prior to greenfield sites being considered). This is not a stand alone option; it can be pursued in conjunction with or instead of option 1(c) or 1(d).

Option 1(c) - District wide approach

- Continue the current sequential search approach but remove the sub-area element; therefore all proposals regardless of site, size and scale would be assessed against the availability of sites across the whole district. This is not a stand alone option; it can be pursued in conjunction with or instead of options 1(b) or 1(d).

Option 1(d) - Prioritisation of brownfield sites

- Given the Council is able to demonstrate a good housing land supply which exceeds both national and regional requirements, there is justification to only allow new housing on previously developed sites in order to manage this situation more effectively so that this excess does not continue and/or significantly increase in the future. This approach is not in strict conformity with Policy 3 of the Regional Spatial Strategy, such a departure from Regional policy is permitted where there is justification based upon local circumstances. This approach would permit development in those settlements falling outside the 'urban area' definition currently used; it would also be a stricter application of the current approach. By adopting this option the resulting priority would be:

1. Suitable previously-developed sites within the urban areas;
2. Suitable previously-developed sites adjoining these urban areas; and then
3. Suitable previously developed sites in other settlements.

This is not a stand alone option; it can be pursued in conjunction with or instead of options 1(b) or 1(c).

In addition to the above options, it is also possible to incorporate additional considerations into a policy which sets out how the sequential approach is to be applied to housing proposals in Wear Valley. The following options relate to the types of additional considerations could be integrated into a policy relating to windfall development and thus maximise the sustainability of the Council to deliver greater levels of sustainable development through new housing.

The other considerations we could include are

- **Option 2(a)** - Ability to deliver priority housing sites
This consideration relates to whether proposed housing development on unallocated sites would undermine the Council's ability to deliver wider housing objectives, such as housing market renewal in the Coalfield areas or the provision of affordable housing.
- **Option 2(b)** - The delivery of an environmentally sustainable development
There is an increasing pressure on local authorities to deliver environmentally sustainable developments¹⁰; it is possible to incorporate within this policy a requirement for the proposed development to reflect the principles of sustainable design, construction and layout. The ability of the proposal to generate a higher percentage of its electricity from renewable energy could also be required; these requirements could be above the targets set out in other policies within the new district plan.
- **Option 2(c)** - Ability of the proposal to actively build or contribute towards creating mixed, sustainable communities, including retaining a diversity of uses (such as community facilities, services and employment) within settlements and neighbourhoods.
- **Option 2(d)** - Proximity of proposed site to community facilities, public transport, cycling and walking routes
- **Option 2(e)** - Proposals resulting in the loss of employment sites
Due to the current under supply of serviced employment sites¹¹ proposals which relate to the loss of an employment use to a residential development should not usually be considered appropriate.
- **Option 2(f)** - None of these considerations
The options identified in Approach 1 are sufficient. None of the options identified in Approach 2 are necessary and should therefore not be incorporated into a strategic windfall policy.

¹⁰ For example through Planning Policy Statement 22, the draft Climate Change supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 and the Regional Spatial Strategy.

¹¹ As identified in Wear Valley in Context and by the Employment Land Review

SECTION 6

PLANNING FOR PLACE: STRATEGIC POLICY ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

This section of the report presents the strategic policy areas most relevant to the 'Place' theme to be adopted as part of the overall Local Development Framework Spatial Vision and structure. [Section 3](#) describes the purpose of strategic policies.

As identified in [Section 2](#) there are 8 proposed Strategic Objectives relating to this theme covering a variety of environmental issues. The proposed strategic policy areas which have been identified by the Council and are considered most relevant to the 'Place' theme of the new district plan are:

- Mitigating and adapting to climate change:
 - Increasing the district's renewable energy generation capacity;
 - Requiring energy efficient developments throughout the district;
 - Maximising the sustainable use of resources within the district;
 - Reducing the need to travel by car within the district;
 - Enabling the district to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

and

- Protecting and enhancing the districts environment:
 - Protect and enhance biodiversity and geological conservation;
 - Protect and enhance the district's landscape and townscape;
 - Conserve and enhance Wear valley's historic environment; and
 - Protect and make prudent use of natural resources.

Whilst the Council would welcome representations to be made in respect to all strategic policy areas identified, the remainder of this section has been structured to enable you to consider the strategic policy areas which you are most interested in, if you so wish.

For both of these Strategic Policy areas the Council has identified what it believes the new district plan needs to do in order to deliver the draft Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives as set out in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of this report. Options regarding how this could be achieved through the new district plan have been identified for your consideration.

What we need you to tell us

- Which options you consider most appropriate for the Council to pursue through the new district plan.
- Whether you consider there to be additional options available to deliver the Strategic Policy area to achieve the Spatial Vision; and
- Whether you consider there to be additional actions which the Core Strategy should pursue to deliver the Strategic Policies.

Strategic Policy C:

MITIGATING AND ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Why have a Strategic Policy

The Government believes that climate change is the greatest long-term challenge facing the world today; addressing climate change is therefore the Government's principal concern for sustainable development¹². As such emerging national and regional planning policy requires local authorities to address the mitigation and adaptation of climate change through their district plans.

The planning process plays a fundamental role in delivering national and regional targets to reduce greenhouse emissions and carbon dioxide levels. Influencing the location of development and reducing the need to travel by car are two mechanisms by which contribution towards climate change can be addressed; these principles are covered in [Section 4](#) of this report which presents the options available for the new district plan's Locational Strategy. Other ways in which a strategic policy could ensure that the Council and its partners work together to help mitigate and adapt to climate change are set out below together with alternative policy options for how the new district plan could deliver these.

What We Need To Do: Increase the district's renewable energy generation capacity

How we could do it

- **Option 1(a)** – In line with guidance contained with Planning Policy Statement 22 prepare a policy which establishes an on-site energy generation a common target for all new residential, commercial, industrial or retail development;
- **Option 1(b)** – As above but establish different targets depending upon the size and nature of the development, ensuring that a significant proportion of the energy supply of substantial new development is gained on-site and renewably and/or from a decentralised, renewable or low-carbon, energy supply. This approach would be developed in line with guidance contained in emerging national planning policy.
- **Option 1(c)** – Encourage and facilitate opportunities for utilizing and expanding existing decentralised¹³ energy supply systems and support the development of new opportunities from renewable and low-carbon energy sources to supply proposed and existing development;
- **Option 1(d)** – Create Local Development Orders for the whole or part of the district which negate the need for prior planning content so as to encourage decentralised energy supply systems and renewable energy generation. It is important to note that this approach may be less appropriate in the areas of the district covered by the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Conservation Areas.

¹² Consultation Document: Planning Policy Statement – Planning and Climate Change. Department for Communities and Local Government. Available online at www.communities.gov.uk

¹³ ie those which do not feed into the national grid eg incorporation of micro scale wind turbines and solar panels on individual residential and commercial properties

What We Need To Do: Require energy efficient developments throughout the district

How we could do it

- **Option 2(a)** – Encourage, facilitate and support proposals which would improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings.
- **Option 2(b)** – Ensure that all new developments reflect energy efficiency design principle.
- **Option 2(c)** - Secure the sustainable design and construction of new buildings. Require all new developments to meet a specified level of a design standard, regardless of the nature and scale of development.
- **Option 2(d)** - Secure the sustainable design and construction of new buildings. Require developers to design and construct their development in a sustainable manner using sustainable materials and encourage them to meet the requirements of a design standard of their choice.

What We Need To Do: Maximise the sustainable use of resources within the district

How we could do it

- **Option 3(a)** – Promote the use of secondary resources¹⁴ and the principles of the waste management hierarchy; reducing the level of primary resources¹⁵ used within the District.
- **Option 3(b)** - Encourage the implementation of new technologies and practices to secure the sustainable use of resources, for example sustainable drainage systems and high density mixed use developments.

What We Need To Do: Reduce the need to travel by car

In addition to influencing the location and improving the accessibility of new developments (as discussed in [Section 4](#) of this report) there are other policy approaches that the Council adopt to reduce the need to travel by car;

How we could do it

- **Option 4(a)** – Promoting walking and cycling as a safe and healthy alternative to the car and supporting schemes which would improve the community's ability to travel by these means.
- **Option 4(b)** – Encouraging and supporting innovative solutions to public transport across the District and promoting competitive alternatives to the car.

¹⁴ Secondary resources are those which do not involve the direct use of raw materials ; they are recycled materials or result as a waste from the use of a raw material.

¹⁵ Primary resources are raw materials or natural resources such as coal, water, air and limestone.

What We Need To Do: Enable the district to adapt to the impacts of climate change

How we could do it

- **Option 5(a)** - Minimising the threats of flooding by restricting unnecessary development in the flood plains and working with partners to formulate and implement strategies such as Flood Catchment Management Plans.
- **Option 5(b)** - Minimising the impact of damage to the natural and built environment, agriculture, water resources and energy supply through the implementation of proactive mitigation measures, for example identifying areas of floodplain currently in agricultural use which could be used as 'wetland' to reduce the impact of flooding downstream.
- **Option 5(c)** - Maximising the opportunities arising from climate change, for example the increases in temperature. This option may involve facilitating businesses to operate for an extended tourist season, changes in land management practices or the development of new or alternative land-uses.

Strategic Policy D:

PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE DISTRICT'S ENVIRONMENT

Why have a strategic policy

The Government is committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural, historic and built environment in both urban and rural areas. The planning process plays a fundamental role in delivering this commitment. The condition of our surroundings has a direct impact upon an individual's quality of life; furthermore the conservation and improvement of the natural and built environment can result in social and economic benefit for local communities¹⁶. National planning guidance encourages planning authorities to prepare planning policies which seek to protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole¹.

Wear Valley has a high quality natural, historic and built environment, with nearly half of the district falling within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are also 20 conservation areas and 19 Sites of Special Scientific Interest spread across the district. The Council already has a statutory duty to protect and enhance these and other national and regional designations as well as a duty towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. In view of this a strategic policy is required that reflects and builds upon these statutory requirements and so works towards exceeding the statutory minimum requirement. The Core Strategy could seek to do this through the adoption of the following four approaches. The alternative options the Council could pursue to deliver each approach are also set out below.

What We Need To Do: Protect and enhance Biodiversity and Geological conservation

National planning guidance advises that core strategies should embrace an integrated approach to biodiversity and geological conservation, seeking to integrate development policies and proposals with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of their places and how they function¹⁷. There are several complimentary options which could be pursued by the Council, through the Core Strategy to deliver this.

How we could do it

- **Option 1(a)** – Establish a strategic framework for the protection, restoration or creation of priority biodiversity action plan habitats and the protection and enhancement of the populations and habitats for priority biodiversity action plan species. The County Durham Biodiversity Action Plan is currently being revised; the revised version would inform the content of and localise this policy option.
- **Option 1(b)** - Recognise the environmental trends resulting from climate change and facilitate the implementation of schemes and practices for natural systems, habitats and species to adjust to these trends.
- **Option 1(c)** - Manage land use in step with naturally functioning processes and systems and align objectives for biodiversity and geological conservation of relevant plans and strategies, such as River Basin or Flood Catchment Management Plans for the River Wear.

¹⁶ Consultation Document: Planning Policy Statement – Planning and Climate Change. Department for Communities and Local Government. Available online at www.communities.gov.uk

¹⁷ Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: A guide to good practice. Department for Communities and Local Government. Available online at www.communities.gov.uk

- **Option 1(d)** - Safeguarding the biodiversity value of previously developed land through planning decisions;
- **Option 1(e)** – Promote and facilitate the reversal of habitat fragmentation and species isolation particularly in the Local Biodiversity Target Zone in the West of the district, as identified by policy 35 of the Regional Spatial Strategy (Submission Draft).
- **Option 1(f)** - Promote and support the enhancement and management of existing and the creation of new local geological sites through the planning process.
- **Option 1(g)** – Recognise and contribute towards delivering the objectives of and proposals for the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Beauty GEOPARK.

What We Need To Do: Protect and enhance the district's Landscape and Townscape

The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the only nationally designated area in relation to landscape and scenic beauty within Wear Valley; the Council has a statutory duty to protect and enhance this area. The landscape outside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, however, is also valued highly by the local communities. The diversity of the district's landscape is reflected through the Countywide Landscape Character Assessment. Through the Core Strategy the Council could pursue all or a selection of the alternative options presented below to ensure that the landscapes and townscapes that make up Wear Valley's special character are protected and enhanced.

How we could do it

- **Option 2(a)** - Promote and facilitate integrated management initiatives to sustain the nationally, regionally and locally valued landscapes within the district, for example by reflecting the requirements and policies contained within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan.
- **Option 2(b)** - Recognise and support the role of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as a living, working and vibrant countryside whilst upholding its statutory status
- **Option 2(c)** - Establish criteria for the identification of landscape areas in need of restoration or other environmental improvement schemes; these criteria should reflect the content or help implement other plans and strategies relevant to the district
- **Option 2(d)** - Support the establishment of strategic networks of green infrastructure that links existing and proposed woodland hubs with green corridors running through urban and rural areas alike.
- **Option 2(e)** - Identify and protect existing woodland of amenity and nature conservation value (particularly ancient woodlands) and encourage and facilitate the implementation of appropriate strategies to improve these and create new woodland areas, including the North East's Regional Forestry Strategy.
- **Option 2(f)** - Reflect the diversity and local value of the landscapes and townscapes within Wear Valley through reference to and promotion of the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment and its related Landscape Strategy.

- **Option 2(g)** - Promote good quality, sustainable development that respects and, where possible, enhances Wear Valley's local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of its landscapes and townscapes.

What We Need To Do: Conserve and enhance Wear Valley's Historic Environment

Wear Valley has 20 Conservation Areas, over 500 Listed Buildings and 16 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, however the historic environment is not just about the past, it is also about the present and the future. It comprises of elements of the built environment in addition to architecture, archaeology and cultural and industrial heritage. The historic environment can contribute to our quality of life by giving people a sense of place and identity; the historic environment plays a fundamental part in local distinctiveness. For this reason national planning guidance requires local authorities to protect all aspects of the historic environment. The wider built environment is, however, also important in contributing towards local distinctiveness and character. The Council, through the Core Strategy, could pursue all or a selection of the options detailed below to conserve and enhance Wear Valley's historic environment.

How we could do it

- **Option 3(a)** – Identify locally distinctive areas and characteristics that provide a context for locally distinctive developments and encourage developments which contribute towards a sense of place.
- **Option 3(b)** – Maximise the conservation benefits that business, education and tourism can deliver in relation to the historic environment and support appropriate proposals.
- **Option 3(c)** - Encourage the refurbishment and re-use of appropriate dis-used or under-used buildings and incorporate them into local regeneration schemes.
- **Option 3(d)** – Promote the regeneration benefits that the conservation of the historic environment can deliver and any area-based regeneration initiatives which build upon the district's heritage or historic environment, such as the South and West Durham Heritage Corridor Scheme.
- **Option 3(e)** – Support proposals which contribute (either directly or indirectly) towards the implementation of Conservation Area Management Plans and develop criteria to prioritise the preparation and implementation of Conservation Area Management Plans.

What We Need To Do: Protect and make prudent use of natural resources

Sustainable development is a fundamental planning principle; the protection and prudent use of natural resources are an integral element of delivering sustainable development. For the purpose of this approach natural resources relate to air, water and land.

Air and Water

Wear Valley currently has good air and river water quality; this is reflected through the fact that there is no requirement for the preparation of air quality management plans within the district and the River Wear having above average levels of chemical and biological quality.

How we could do it

- **Option 4(a)** – Maintain the current levels of air and water quality, directing potentially polluting development towards those areas which have lower air or water quality levels, for example those sites already home to ‘bad-neighbour users’.
- **Option 4(b)** – Maintain the current levels of air and water quality, directing potentially polluting development away from those areas which are more sensitive to the impacts of pollution, for example the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Conservation Areas.
- **Option 4(c)** – Seek to improve air and water quality; to deliver this, develop criteria to identify or prioritise areas which require improvement.
- **Option 4(d)** – Maximise the sustainable and beneficial use of natural resources by integrating the principle of their use in the formulation of subsequent policies and proposals, for example by promoting the widespread use of sustainable materials and through the use of sustainable drainage systems in new development.

Land

The Council’s performance in relation to housing land development targets though still below the government target has improved in recent years; it currently stands at 62%. National and regional planning policy currently establish targets in relation to the use of previously developed land and development density for residential development, which seek to improve the efficiency at which land is used. Within the district there are also issues surrounding the level of contaminated land; the Contaminated Land Register identified 534 sites of potential concern. The severity or extent of contamination on these sites and within the district is still, however unknown. It is anticipated that a Contaminated Land Strategy will identify the scale and severity of contamination and prioritise sites requiring action; this work will inform the preparation of any future work on the new district plan.

Use of previously developed land

Building upon national planning policy, the Regional Spatial Strategy (Submission Draft) sets a target for the percentage housing development to be completed on previously developed land. These targets are 60% by 2008 and 65% by 2016. National planning policy however, also encourages local planning authorities to prioritise previously developed land over undeveloped land for all new developments, however targets are not set. New national planning policy requires local planning authorities to prepare and implement a Previously Developed Land Strategy and associated trajectory to monitor and manage completions on previously developed sites, to enable these targets to be delivered.

How we could do it

- **Option 4(e)** – Through the Core Strategy establish a target of at least 65% of all new residential completions to be on previously developed land, with a more flexible, encouraging approach for other land-uses to be completed on previously developed sites; OR
- **Option 4(f)** – Through the Core Strategy extend the 65% target beyond solely residential developments to include developments of a commercial, retail or industrial nature.

Residential development density

Density and diversity are fundamental aspects to delivering sustainable settlements; the delivery of dense developments will improve the efficiency at which land is used. New national planning policy, which post-dates the Regional Spatial Strategy (Submission Draft), allows local planning authorities to develop a range of densities for new residential developments as opposed to one blanket density target of 30 dwellings per hectare.

How we could do it

- **Option 4(g)** – Develop a policy which sets a district wide minimum threshold of 30 dwelling per hectare. All residential development, regardless of the scale, size and location of the proposal, would have to be built at 30 dwelling per hectare or above; OR
- **Option 4(h)** – Develop a range of density thresholds for the district to reflect its diversity. Planning Policy Statement 3 permits this more flexible approach to lower density where a strong justification can be provided. In developing housing density targets the Council should have to have regard to, and therefore could include in the justification, the following criteria:
 1. The spatial vision and strategy for housing development in the area, including the level of housing demand and need and the availability of suitable land in the area.
 2. The current and future level and capacity of infrastructure, services and facilities such as public and private amenity space, in particular green and open space.
 3. The desirability of using land efficiently and reducing, and adapting to, the impacts of climate change.
 4. The current and future levels of accessibility, particularly public transport accessibility.
 5. The characteristics of the area, including the current and proposed mix of uses.
 6. The desirability of achieving high quality, well-designed housing having regard to the considerations in Planning Policy Statement 3.

SECTION 7

PLANNING FOR PROSPERITY: STRATEGIC POLICY ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

This section of the report presents the strategic policy areas most relevant to the 'Prosperity' theme to be adopted as part of the overall Local Development Framework Spatial Vision and structure. [Section 3](#) describes the purpose of strategic policies.

As identified in [Section 2](#) there are 4 proposed Strategic Objectives relating to this theme covering a variety of economic and access issues. The proposed strategic policy areas which have been identified by the Council and are considered most relevant to the 'Prosperity' theme of the new district plan are:

- Delivering a sustainable and prosperous district economy:
 - Delivering a diverse and competitive local economy;
 - Delivering a strong rural economy;
 - Tapping into the tourism potential of the district; and
 - Creating vibrant towns and villages.

and

- Declaring Area Action Plans:
 - Delivering a criteria based approach to identify Area Action Plan areas

Whilst the Council would welcome representations to be made in respect to all strategic policy areas identified, the remainder of this section has been structured to enable you to consider the strategic policy areas which you are most interested in, if you so wish.

For both of these Strategic Policy areas the Council has identified what it believes the new district plan needs to do in order to deliver the draft Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives as set out in [Sections 1 & 2](#) of this report. Options regarding how this could be achieved through the new district plan have been identified for your consideration.

[What we need you to tell us](#)

- Which options you consider most appropriate for the Council to pursue through the new district plan.
- Whether you consider there to be additional options available to deliver the Strategic Policy area to achieve the Spatial Vision; and
- Whether you consider there to be additional actions which the Core Strategy should pursue to deliver the Strategic Policies.

Strategic Policy E:

DELIVERING A SUSTAINABLE AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

Why have a strategic policy

The district's economy operates from a narrow employment base. The Council's aim is to diversify this so that the district's economy is able to provide a range of jobs in key growth sectors. The key challenges facing the district in relation to delivering economic diversification and growth include: a declining and ageing population, low rates of businesses in growth sectors, high levels of unemployment and worklessness and low levels of educational attainment. [Section 5 of Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) provides more detail in relation to these issues. The Council's emerging Economic Strategy identifies that, because of these fundamental issues, the district's economy is currently unsustainable.

Furthermore, regional renaissance is a central theme throughout the [Regional Spatial Strategy](#); delivering economic prosperity and growth throughout the region is fundamental if renaissance is to be delivered. The Government's commitment to promoting a strong, stable and productive economy, which brings jobs and prosperity for all is emphasised through national planning policy; [Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development](#) identifies that local authorities, through their development plans and decisions taken on planning applications must seek to contribute towards the delivery of this commitment.

For these reasons it is considered appropriate to develop a strategic policy seeking to address these issues and contribute towards the delivery of sustainable economic development. The 4 actions which the Council has identified as appropriate for the new district plan to do are set out below. Alternative policy options around how these actions could be achieved through the new district plan are set out below.

What We Need To Do: Deliver a diverse and competitive local economy

Wear Valley has a small economy (offering fewer than 20,000 jobs) which continues to suffer from declining employment in the traditional sectors; there is therefore the need to diversify the district's economy and facilitate economic growth to enable the district's economy to contribute to the regional economy.

How we could do it

- [Option 1\(a\)](#) – Work in partnership with other local and regional agencies support and facilitate the development of key flagship proposals and strategic employment sites which would revitalise and diversify the district's economy, for example the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village Project.
- [Option 1\(b\)](#) – Adopt a 'pipeline approach'¹⁸ to the provision of employment sites and premises as to stimulate developer interest without swamping the market.
- [Option 1\(c\)](#) – Work with partners and developers to ensure appropriate broadband provision is provided in those areas where there is an identified need, particularly in and around Wolsingham, South Church, New Field or in areas where enhanced capacity is desired, such as around key industrial sites.

¹⁸ This is where the Council uses its planning powers and land ownership to maintain a balance between supply and demand, sufficient to stimulate developer interest without swamping the market.

- **Option 1(d)** – Encourage and facilitate proposals which would contribute towards an increase in enterprise and entrepreneurial activity or boost productivity of local businesses, in line with the Regional Economic Strategy as priorities for the district. This option has the ability to build upon and enhance the objectives of the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative within the district.
- **Option 1(e)** – Encourage and support proposals for new economic investment to be innovative and ‘green’ in terms of their self-sufficiency and design, their use of science and local materials, goods, labour and services. To reflect the Economic Strategy’s aim of being a carbon neutral economy by 2030, renewables should play a key role new economic developments and proposals.
- **Option 1(f)** – Develop a flexible and responsive approach to assessing unforeseen economic proposals which would result in the diversification or growth of the district’s economy. To enable the Council to support potential applications and proposals for such developments it may be necessary to establish the circumstances in which such proposals would be deemed acceptable, reflecting the issues and characteristics of the district.

The criteria we could include are

1. Where the proposal would increase educational attainment or reduce the skills gap within the district’s population;
2. Where the proposal would improve access to jobs or address other accessibility issues within the district;
3. Where the proposal would result in the opening up of additional employment land;
4. Where the proposal would support the sustainability of (or help sustain and strengthen) the district’s rural communities;
5. Where the proposal would support the sustainability of (or help sustain and strengthen) the former coalfields communities;
6. Where the development would enhance Bishop Auckland’s role as a major centre in County Durham; or
7. Where the proposal involves the renewal and re-use of previously developed land and buildings.

What We Need To Do: Deliver a strong rural economy

In recent years the district’s rural economy has experienced a number of set backs: it suffered greatly through the national ‘Foot and Mouth’ epidemic in 2001 and the agricultural sector, which was already suffering decline, struggled to re-establish after the crisis; 2002 saw the closure of the Eastgate Cement works. Both these events resulted in the net loss of 10% of the jobs in Weardale; and, more recently, the announcement surrounding the imminent closure of Wolsingham Steelworks. These events highlight the need to specifically address the rural economy within a strategic policy, especially considering the Government’s commitment to delivering sustainable rural communities and economies; this commitment is reflected through both national and regional planning policy.

How we could do it

- [Option 2\(a\)](#) – Bring forward and promote the development of Eastgate Renewable Energy Village as the key driver of sustainable economic growth in Weardale and wider district, supporting proposals for economic development which link to or enhance the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village concept.
- [Option 2\(b\)](#) – Promote a sustainable, diverse and adaptable agricultural sector by supporting proposals which are environmentally led, a result of adapting to new and changing markets and legislation, diversifying into new agricultural opportunities or adding value to their primary produce.
- [Option 2 \(c\)](#) – Support well-conceived farm diversification projects which contribute towards sustaining the agricultural enterprise.
- [Option 2\(d\)](#) – Support proposals for equine related and other rural based enterprises where they strengthen the rural economy and maintain environmental quality and countryside character, such as local food initiatives.
- [Option 2\(e\)](#) – Reflect the economy based policies of the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan.

What We Need To Do: Tap into the district's tourism potential

Despite its considerable natural and cultural assets, opportunities for outdoor activities and its abundant wildlife, biodiversity and heritage the district does not enjoy a high profile as a visitor destination. There is untapped tourism potential throughout the district but particularly within Weardale. The [Regional Spatial Strategy](#) identifies that the region needs to capitalise on tourism if its overall vision for the region is to be achieved. Furthermore national planning policy emphasises the important role that tourism can play in rural economies; national best practice guidance says that, where tourism is considered to be a main contributor to the local economy, it should be addressed through policies in the [Core Strategy](#).

How we could do it

- [Option 3\(a\)](#) – Promote tourism by improving the first impressions gained by visitors arriving and passing through the district by identifying broad areas for visual improvement.
- [Option 3\(b\)](#) – Maximise the advantages which tourism can bring to the key settlements in the district by acknowledging the role it can play in supporting essential services and community facilities and in regeneration schemes or mixed-use developments.
- [Option 3\(c\)](#) – Maximise the advantages which sustainable rural tourism developments can bring to rural areas by acknowledging the role they can play in farm diversification schemes; the revitalisation of market towns and villages; supporting important rural services and facilities and in underwriting environmental schemes and improvements to the built and natural environment.
- [Option 3\(d\)](#) – Recognise that in the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the 20 Conservation Areas throughout the district, there is scope for tourist and leisure related developments, subject to appropriate control over their number, form and location to ensure the particular qualities and features which justified their designation are conserved.

- [Option 3\(e\)](#) – Build upon the tourism potential of the environmental, historical and cultural assets of Weardale and Bishop Auckland and reflect through appropriate policies and allocations within the new district plan.
- [Option 3 \(f\)](#) – Develop links within the district and to and between other tourism destinations throughout the region such as Durham City and Beamish, creating the potential for a stepping-stone approach for visitors to the district and region.

What We Need To Do: Create vibrant towns and villages

Vibrant places are vital to the well-being of the district; vibrant places act as a focal point for a variety of community activities and contribute to the sustainability of towns and villages. Where places are vibrant, this vibrancy can act as a catalyst to retain greater proportions of visitor and retail expenditure and attract further business start-up and in-migration. '[Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#)' illustrates that the many of the districts towns and villages have suffered decline in recent years and are in need of regeneration to improve their vibrancy and contribution towards the district's economy.

How we could do it

- [Option 4\(a\)](#) – Regenerate and enhance Bishop Auckland and develop its position as a key service centre for the county by delivering the land use implications of the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Master Plan within the new district plan.
- [Option 4\(b\)](#) – Reflect the Economic Strategy's commitment to delivering Stanhope's Market Town Initiative, developing its role as the rural service centre within Weardale.
- [Option 4\(c\)](#) – Tap into the regeneration benefits which retail can bring to towns, directing retail developments towards those towns in need of revitalisation; creating vibrant mixed use local centres.
- [Option 4\(d\)](#) – Support developments which enhance the evening economy in Bishop Auckland town centre, reflecting the objectives of both the Economic Strategy and the Bishop Auckland Town Master Plan.
- [Option 4\(e\)](#) – Reflect the findings of the Coalfield Settlement Study contained in the Area Development Frameworks for Tow Law and Coundon, to help revitalise these coalfield settlements.

Strategic Policy F:

DECLARING AREA ACTION PLANS

Why have a Strategic Policy

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks advises that Core Strategies should contain a criteria-based policy for identifying locations and priorities for the preparation of Area Action Plans. Such plans are a means to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed; a key feature of area action plans should be their focus on implementation. A policy to identify future Area Action Plans should build upon the above guidance but be locally distinctive, reflecting specific issues and priorities within the district. Only one potential approach to declaring Area Action Plans has been identified; this reflects the national requirement for the inclusion of such a policy within the Core Strategy.

What We Need To Do: Deliver a criteria based approach identify Area Action Plan areas

Having had regard to national planning policy potential alternative options for criteria to identify future Area Action Plans are presented below.

The criteria we could include are

1. delivering planned growth areas
It may be appropriate to prepare Area Action Plans for those areas where major growth is planned as a result of another strategy or programme to facilitate their implementation; within the District this would likely relate to extensions to or the remodeling of key settlements.
2. stimulating regeneration
The District suffers from high levels of deprivation and has a number of areas in need of regeneration. Area Action Plans could be used to stimulate regeneration by identifying implementation priorities and mechanisms. This option may be of relevance to run down shopping areas, large brownfield sites in need of redevelopment (such as Eastgate) or villages which are struggling to regenerate without major intervention.
3. protecting areas particularly sensitive to change
This approach is predominately conservation based; areas of relevance within the District could include the parts of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or any of the Conservation Areas within the District. Conservation Area Character Appraisals and their related Management Plans may identify that the area is sensitive to likely future change (for instance through increased development pressure) and as such it may be appropriate to prepare an Area Action Plan.
4. resolving conflicting objectives in areas subject to development pressures
As Action Area Plans should focus upon implementation, they are a mechanism by which conflict could be resolved; this may include development pressure in areas awarded a high level of protection or situations where development pressure is likely to result in increase levels of deprivation or the loss of jobs (ie conflict with the Spatial Objectives).

5. focusing the delivery of area based regeneration initiatives

There are a number of area based regeneration initiatives aimed at delivering change in areas with an identified need within the District; an Area Action Plan relating to these areas would coordinate and facilitate the implementation of these initiatives. The Durham Coalfields Community Initiative, Neighborhood Renewal Fund, Local Enterprise Growth Initiative and Renewing Weardale Strategy are all relevant examples for the District. The identification of the District's first Area Action Plan for South and East Bishop Auckland is based upon this criteria.

SECTION 8

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK

It is a requirement of the new district plan to have an implementation and monitoring framework which sets out clear targets and mechanisms for achieving delivery of plan policies on the ground against the plan's objectives and relevant indicators which will be a means of measuring these. In order for this implementation and monitoring framework to be effective it needs to be developed alongside the preparation of the new district plan, with clear links to the Spatial Objectives and individual policy targets.

The initial implementation and monitoring framework will be developed during the next stage of document preparation and presented for consultation within the 'Preferred Options' report relating to the Core Strategy.

Implementation

The new district plan needs to set out the means by which its objectives and policy targets will be delivered. Due to the spatial approach adopted by the new district plan, the delivery of its policies will not solely depend upon the determination of planning applications, particularly in relation to the policies contained within the Core Strategy. The Council will be responsible for working with key partners and delivery agents to help develop and prepare proposals which will result in the delivery of policies within the new district plan. The means by which the new plans objectives and targets will be implemented should be clearly set out within its policies or supporting justification.

Key partners and delivery agents will include, for example: the Local Strategic Partnership; Registered Social Landlords; Community Partnerships; Durham County Council; or the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. **If you consider your organisation would be an appropriate delivery agent who would like to work with the Council to deliver the Spatial Objectives and policy targets established in the new district plan please express your interest to the Council.**

Monitoring

National planning policy recognises that survey, monitoring and review are crucial to the successful delivery of the new district plan. Monitoring will help the Council to understand the wider social, economic and environmental issues affecting the district and the key drivers for spatial change. This framework will also identify the context in which the new district plan is operating and assess whether its policies are being implemented effectively, achieving their targets or whether they are having unintended outcomes. The outcomes of monitoring will identify where additional measures should be put in place to improve the effectiveness of policies, whether the policy targets should be altered or a review of a policy or document is necessary. The Council has a duty to prepare and publish a report detailing policy effectiveness and plan preparation on an annual basis; an annual monitoring report.

The monitoring framework should include targets relating to the intended outcome of the policy objectives contained in the new plan and indicators to monitor the performance of these policies against their targets. An effective monitoring framework should have clear links between the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives, policy targets and indicators.

In order to fulfill the statutory annual monitoring requirements established in 2004 and enable the effective monitoring of the current local plan policies it has been necessary to develop a set of local output indicators relating to the intended outcome of current Local Plan policies. It is anticipated that a number of these existing indicators will also be relevant to the policies to be contained within the new district plan. However it is likely that it will be necessary to develop additional new indicators and new policy targets alongside the formulation of the policies to be contained in the new district plan. There are four different types of indicators which will be contained in the monitoring framework: Core Output Indicators ie those set by central Government; Local Output Indicators which are developed by the Council to monitor the output of policies; Contextual Indicators, those which provide the context in which the policies work and Significant Effects or Sustainability Indicators to measure any unintended or unsustainable effects of the policies.

Links Diagram for the Core Strategy

| Shared Priorities/ LGA Priorities | LSP Community Plan | | Council Plan Objective | LDF Theme | Spatial Objective |
|---|---|---|---|--------------|---|
| | Theme | Aim | | | |
| Creating sustainable communities | Population | To work for a slowly growing and demographically balanced population | Create a vibrant and growing population across the whole district | PEOPLE | Also covered by Spatial Vision |
| | | | | | SO2 - To support the provision of and accessibility to existing and new services and facilities that meets the needs of the district's population. |
| | | | | | SO4 - To promote equality and inclusive communities within the District. |
| | Housing | To work for a significant improvement in the built environment | To secure new public and private investment to improve the built and natural environment. | | SO6 - To increase the potential for the district's current and future population to have the opportunity of living in a decent and affordable home and choice of type and tenure. |
| Raising standards across our schools | Lifelong Learning | To work for improvements in lifelong learning to exceed the national average | Encourage the development of continuous lifelong learning in Wear Valley | | SO5 - To assist and promote lifelong learning opportunities for the population of Wear Valley. |
| | | | | | SO15 - To develop and retain a flexible and higher skilled workforce through training and education. |
| Safer and stronger Communities | Community Safety | To work for a significant reduction in crime and the fear of crime | Design services to increase community safety and crime prevention and work closely with key partners to reduce crime. | | SO3 - To deliver well designed sustainable, cleaner and safer local environments within the district. |
| Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities | Health Inequalities and Quality of life | To reduce health inequalities and to improve the quality of life for the residents of Wear Valley | Improve the health and well-being of Wear Valley residents and promote healthy lifestyles. | | SO1 - To reduce health deprivation and improve the social well-being of the district's population. |

| Shared Priorities/ LGA Priorities | LSP Community Plan | | Council Plan Objective | LDF Theme | Spatial Objective |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---|---|--------------|--|
| | Theme | Aim | | | |
| Cleaner and greener neighbourhoods | Environment | To work for a significant improvement in the environment. | To secure new public and private investment to improve the built and natural environment. | PLACE | SO7 - To minimise the amount of waste produced and encourage sustainable waste management within the district. |
| | | | | | SO8 - To maintain and enhance the quality of the district's natural resources, including land, water and air. |
| | | | | | SO9 - To protect and enhance the geological, bio-diversity and conservation interests within the district and beyond |
| | | | | | SO10 - To manage the built and natural environment to reduce the causes and minimise the impacts of climate change |
| | | | | | SO11 - To make sustainable use of natural resources, energy and land. |
| | | | | | SO12 - To protect and enhance the quality of the district's landscapes and townscapes. |
| | | | | | SO14 - To ensure the use of sustainable design and construction throughout the district. |
| | Culture | To support access to and engagement in a vibrant range of positive cultural provision | | | SO13 - To preserve and enhance the district's cultural and historic heritage. |

| Shared Priorities/ LGA Priorities | LSP Community Plan | | Council Plan Objective | LDF Theme | Spatial Objective |
|---|--------------------|--|--|-------------------|--|
| | Theme | Aim | | | |
| Promoting the economic vitality of localities | Economy | To work for a significant increase in employment and business activity | Enable the development of continuously improving economic infrastructure | PROSPERITY | SO15 - To develop and retain a flexible and higher skilled workforce through training and education. |
| | | | | | SO16 - To facilitate the development of an economically sustainable and prosperous area where investment is encouraged and retained and new and existing businesses are supported. |
| | | | | | SO17 - To strengthen the role, vitality and viability of the district's market towns and villages whilst respecting their individual character. |
| | | | | | SO18 – To reduce the need to travel and provide access to sustainable modes of transport for those who live, work or visit the district. |

Alterations to Initial Spatial Objectives

| LDF Theme | Ref | Initial Spatial Objective | Suggested revisions resulting from Sustainability Appraisal | Council's Comments |
|-----------|-----|---|--|--|
| PEOPLE | SO1 | To meet the needs of those who live, work and visit the District. | Delete and combine with SO2 (as amended below) | SO1 is no longer considered necessary as it forms part of the Spatial Vision. |
| | SO2 | To improve social, economic and environmental well-being within Wear Valley | Amend to; "The Local Development Framework will improve social, economic and environmental well-being and meet the needs of those who live, work and visit the District". | Disagree. SO2 is no longer considered necessary as it forms part of the Spatial Vision. |
| | SO3 | To reduce health deprivation and improve the social well-being of the District's population | No change | Agree |
| | SO4 | To support the provision of and accessibility to existing and new services and facilities within and beyond the District. | Amend to; <i>"To improve existing facilities/services and support the provision of new facilities/services".</i> Scope narrowed as the accessibility aspect of this objective should be combined with SO21 | Disagree with Rewording reference to the district and beyond should be retained in the interests of sustainability given that many settlements have a stronger geographical relationship with other settlements providing services that are located outside the district. Reword that meets the needs of the district's population. |

| LDF Theme | Ref | Initial Spatial Objective | Suggested revisions resulting from Sustainability Appraisal | Council's Comments |
|-----------------------|-----|---|--|---|
| PEOPLE (continued) | SO5 | To deliver well designed, cleaner, safer environments within the District. | Amend to; <i>"To deliver a sustainably designed, cleaner and safer local environment"</i> . Removed the word 'well' and replaced with 'sustainably' as 'well designed' does not necessarily take in to consideration the wider sustainability issues such as biodiversity. mend to; <i>"To deliver a sustainably designed, cleaner and safer local environment"</i> . Removed the word 'well' and replaced with 'sustainably' as 'well designed' does not necessarily take in to consideration the wider sustainability issues such as biodiversity. | Agree that further clarity is required, suggested re wording to; <i>"To deliver well designed, sustainable, cleaner and safer local environments within the district."</i> * |
| | SO6 | To promote equality, protect and strengthen community cohesion and involvement | Amend to; <i>"To promote equality and inclusive communities"</i> | Agree but include; <i>"within the District"</i> * |
| | SO7 | To assist and promote the development of continuous lifelong learning opportunities for the population of Wear Valley. | Amend to; <i>"To assist and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."</i> | Agree but include; <i>"the population of Wear Valley" *</i> |
| PLACE | SO8 | To increase the potential for the District's current and future population to have the opportunity of living in a decent and affordable home and choice of type and tenure. | "To provide all current and future residents with a range of decent and affordable homes". | Disagree. The plan can only create the conditions for residents to have opportunity to access such homes. Reference should also be made to 'choice'. |
| | SO9 | To minimise the amount of waste produced and encourage sustainable waste management within the District. | No change | Agree |

| LDF Theme | Ref | Initial Spatial Objective | Suggested revisions resulting from Sustainability Appraisal | Council's Comments |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--|--|---|
| PLACE (Continued) | SO10 | To maintain and enhance the quality of the District's natural resources, including land, water and air | No change | Agree |
| | SO11 | To protect and enhance the geological, bio-diversity and conservation interests within the District and beyond | No change | Agree |
| | SO12 | To guide changes in the built and natural environment in a manner which avoids the causes, and minimises the impacts, of climate change. | Amend to; <i>"To ensure all development reduces the causes, minimises the impacts and adapts to climate change"</i> . Does the core strategy not go beyond 'all development'? | Disagree - The being spatial in its approach the new plan's focus must be wider than land use. Amend to: <i>"To manage the built and natural environment to reduce the causes and minimise the impacts of climate change"</i> |
| | SO13 | To make prudent use of natural resources | Amend to; <i>"To make sustainable use of natural resources, energy and land"</i> . | Agree |
| | SO14 | To pay special attention to the protection and enhancement of the scenic quality and distinctiveness of the North Pennines AONB and wider landscapes and townscapes of the District. | Amend to: "To protect and enhance the landscape quality of the district's landscapes and townscapes" | Agree but remove duplication of the word 'landscape and refer to the quality of the landscapes and townscapes. |
| | SO15 | To preserve and enhance the District's cultural and historic heritage. | No change | Agree |

| LDF Theme | Ref | Initial Spatial Objective | Suggested revisions resulting from Sustainability Appraisal | Council's Comments |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---|---|--|
| PLACE (Continued) | SO16 | To promote the efficient use of land within the district | Combine with SO13 | Agree |
| | SO17 | To promote the principles of sustainable design and construction in new developments. | Amend to; <i>"To ensure the use of sustainable design and construction".</i> | Agree But include; <i>"throughout the District"</i> |
| PROSPERITY | SO18 | To develop and retain a flexible and higher skilled workforce through training and education | Combine with SO7 | Disagree. Whilst there may be some repetition given the severity of issues which exist regarding the labour force it is considered necessary to retain this objective independently. |
| | SO19 | To facilitate the development of an economically sustainable and prosperous area where investment is encouraged and retained and new and existing businesses are supported. | No change | Agree |
| | SO20 | To strengthen the role, vitality and viability of the District's market towns and villages whilst respecting their individual character. | No change | Agree |
| | SO21 | To provide greater opportunities for those who live, work or visit the District to utilise sustainable modes of transport. | Amend to; <i>"Reduce the need to travel and provide access to sustainable transport for those who live, work or visit the District".</i> | Agree rewording but insert; <i>"modes"</i> |

NOTE * Given that there is a requirement for the new plan to be locally distinctive it is considered necessary to retain the geographical references as made in the initial draft Spatial Objectives.

APPENDIX 3

STRATEGIC PLANNING APPROACHES USED TO INFORM THE GENERATION OF ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIC POLICY OPTIONS

Population growth

The degree to which this strategic approach may be successful may be constrained by national population and demographic trends and is compounded by emerging regional planning policy which provides for a stable district population. Recently the district has experienced a slight increase in population which coincides with a historical high in terms of the number of dwellings completed over the past 4 years.

When considering the application of this approach it must also be recognised that the degree to which such growth can be encouraged satisfactorily across the district differs between the 3 sub areas. Sustainability issues, upon which regional planning policies are based and which will determine the level of new growth that is appropriate, include the degree of current and potential accessibility that is attainable to and from these areas and core urban areas within the City Regions by sustainable modes of transport. In addition the ability to physically accommodate the amount of additional employment and housing land and provide services required to support such growth without compromising the landscape character and quality of the district will also be a key determining factor.

Housing led regeneration

This strategic approach relates to both new build and the replacement or refurbishment of existing housing stock. The delivery of such a strategy may be facilitated at the very least through the implementation of the Durham Coalfields Programme in Coundon and Tow Law. Delivery of this approach on a wider scale would require significant pro active intervention by the Council. This approach has been successfully implemented by the Council in recent years in Willington, Bishop Auckland and St Helens Auckland. This approach would be most applicable to areas of significant housing market failure and where stock and/or environmental conditions are very poor due to age and / or design. It would however by its very nature has a limited role in the designated Conservation Areas of the district.

Emerging regional planning policy places constraints on the district in terms of net additional dwellings to the existing stock which will be permissible. The ability to greatly influence location and choice because of the extent of existing permissions will be limited, placing greater emphasis upon replacement. This strategic approach would, however, enable the Council to redress the quality and mix of the existing stock to meet local need. Thus delivering the same desired outcome by overcoming constraints placed on it by emerging regional planning policy.

Economic led regeneration

This strategic approach relates to building upon existing economic infrastructure and addressing deficiencies to enable the local economy to move forward and grow. This would support addressing the need to diversify existing employment sectors, poor educational attainment, low skills and high levels of worklessness. In turn this should provide social spin offs and improve resident's choice and access to opportunities in housing and leisure. However, the successful delivery of such a strategic approach will require an adequate supply of accessible employment land and premises and an appropriate supply of local labour. Given the variations between the 3 sub areas of the district the degree to which economic growth can be accommodated in a sustainable manner will vary according to these factors.

Again this approach is applicable to certain geographical area. It is supported by the Regional Economic Strategy, the Wear Valley District Economic Strategy and Renewing Weardale Strategy. It has the potential at the very least to be delivered in specific parts of the district through the implementation of current initiatives including the Durham Coalfields

Retail led regeneration

Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres (2005) suggests that this strategic approach may be as applicable to secondary retail centres as it is to main centres such as Bishop Auckland. The application of such an approach would enable smaller centres to become more sustainable and better serve the immediate local need, thus minimising the need to travel. This would be particularly relevant to areas of the district identified for population growth. However, balancing market demand with needs within the district and viability of existing shopping areas is a significant factor in the successful delivery of this approach. In more recent years the Council has witnessed greater developer interest outside the established town centres in the Crook and Bishop Auckland areas.

Built environment and heritage led regeneration

Over the current Local Plan period this strategic approach has been adopted throughout the district with the implementation of a range of public realm and building improvement schemes. There is a wealth of historic fabric that exists across the district. The Council has a statutory duty to protect and enhance its designated Conservation Areas. There is potential to support this approach in the future in certain parts of the district, particularly within designated Conservation Areas, the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and town and local centres

Protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment

The district has an abundance of areas of international and national nature conservation importance. Furthermore there is a wide array of biodiversity assets across the district outside of these designated areas. This strategic approach is also relevant to designated Conservation Areas and the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Council has a statutory duty to protect and enhance all of these. Planning is a primary council function in which the statutory duty of protection can be exercised proactive in all instances through the consistent application of robust policies. The degree to which the council can be pro active in enhancing all of these areas is however limited to the availability of financial resources and opportunities borne out of related development proposals. Notwithstanding this given the statutory requirements placed upon the council it is essential that this approach is adopted within the new plan.

Countryside protection

This strategic approach is effectively relates to adopting a protectionist principle. A blanket approach for the whole district is not practicable if the district is to grow and be more prosperous as the key issues that currently prevail within the district would otherwise continue.

The character of the district is one of a series of towns, villages and hamlets which are interspersed by a backdrop of large attractive areas of open countryside; a significant proportion of this land in the eastern part of the district does not enjoy any special statutory designation but is nonetheless an important asset and valued locally. The current plan largely adopted the approach of maintaining the status quo in respect to these areas, making certain exceptions with respect to essential rural activities. This strategic approach still reflects national planning policy and emerging regional policy.

Limits to development appropriate to the settlement hierarchy will be need to be delineated in the new plan in order to safeguard against urban sprawl. However, it must be recognised that it will not be feasible to proactively enhance all of the countryside that surrounds these limits. However, a key tool to facilitate the protection of these areas is The Countywide Landscape Character Assessment. This will assist the Council in determining the key attributes that make the district's landscape distinctive and that should be maintained.

GENERIC DEVELOPMENT CONTROL DOCUMENT: ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS REPORT

FOREWORD

What is the purpose of this report?

This Issues and Alternative Options Report relates to the [Generic Development Control Policies](#) document, the second of the two policy documents under preparation that will form part of the new district plan, the Local Development Framework.

This particular report represents the first stage in preparing the [Generic Development Control Policies](#) document, being a consultation document whose main purpose is to stimulate debate upon the content and direction that the [Generic Development Control Policies](#) document should take. This report should be read in conjunction with [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) document which provides an overview of the statistical data and key issues that face Wear Valley, which has informed the preparation of this report. A key objective of the forthcoming [Generic Development Control Policies](#) document is to ensure that all new development within Wear Valley contributes towards the delivery of the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives for the district, which are to be contained in the [Core Strategy](#) document. The [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) presents the draft Spatial Vision and Spatial objectives for consideration.

What does this report contain?

Prior to writing this report the Council undertook extensive research to establish a statistical profile of the district. The results of this research are contained within the [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) document which supplements this report. These district issues have been verified at a series of workshops, held last year attended by Members of the council and key stakeholders. The resulting Generic Development Control Policies must conform to and contribute collectively towards the delivery of the new plan's vision and objectives as set out in the Core Strategy Document therefore they will work to address the district issues which have been identified.

The key issues and alternative options relating to the focus, appropriateness and scope of the Generic Development Control Policies document are set out in [Section 1](#) of this report. The options presented within [Section 1](#) will help to ascertain the purpose and coverage of the Generic Development Control Policies document. The generic themes which could be addressed by the document are discussed in [Sections 2, 3 & 4](#) of this report. For each generic theme, alternative options have been generated around the potential approach a generic policy could pursue to address the identified issues.

What do I need to do next?

This report is subject to consultation for a period of 6 weeks from [XX July 2007 until XX August 2007](#). Having considered the content of this report in terms of its proposed scope, priorities, potential policy options, accuracy and appropriateness any representations should be made by completing the Consultation Response Form which accompanies this report and submitted to the Council by **no later than XX August 2007**.

Any representations received in respect of this report will be considered and where deemed justifiable used to inform the finalisation of the issues relating to Generic Development

Control Policies and identification of the preferred options for such policies. It is important to note that all alternative options identified through this first stage of plan preparation will undergo Sustainability Appraisal¹. The appraisal process will identify the likely social, economic and environmental impacts of a given policy option and will inform the selection of the preferred options to be developed into new planning policies. These preferred options will be the subject of further third party engagement in due course.

¹ The draft Sustainability Appraisal Framework which has been prepared for the purposes of appraising the Core Strategy alternative options is set out in the *Wear Valley District Joint Core Strategy and Generic Development Control Policies Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report*. This is the subject of 5 weeks public consultation between XX May 2007 and XX June 2007. The report and supporting documents are available to view and download at www.wearvalley.gov.uk. Hard copies of the document are also available upon request from the Environment and Regeneration Department, Civic Centre, Crook (01388 765555).

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| Section 1 | Key Issues and Alternative Options for the document <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriateness of the proposed document• Prioritising the proposed focus of the document• Determining the nature of the purpose of the document• Determining the scope of the document |
| Section 2 | Planning for People: Generic Themes and Options <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Safety and Health• Residential Amenity• Building Communities• Accessibility |
| Section 3 | Planning for Place: Generic Themes and Options <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highway Safety• Local Amenity• Efficient use of land• Risks of and from pollution• Heritage and Culture• Risks of and from flooding• Biodiversity and Geodiversity• Landscape and Townscape• Design• Waste Management |
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| Section 5 | Monitoring and Implementation Framework |

SECTION 1

DETERMINING THE DOCUMENT'S FOCUS, APPROPRIATENESS AND SCOPE

ISSUE 1: Appropriateness of purpose

The **purpose** of this document is to provide a limited suite of development control policies, against which every planning application will be determined. In order to be 'generic' the policies contained within the document will be based upon themes which are not related to a location, specific use or type of development; they will cover generic themes including local amenity, highway safety and design rather than more specific land based uses such as retail, housing or tourism.

It is anticipated that the policies within the Generic Development Control Policies document will be an expression of national and regional policy at the local level, taking account of local circumstances. In some instances the policies may also set out criteria for specific development requirements; examples include Green Travel Plans or landscaping schemes. The final document will become a tool for planning officers during their determination of applications submitted to the Council. It is also anticipated that the document could be used by potential applicants, developers, agents or third parties as a guidebook to inform their forthcoming application or representation.

There is, however, an issue surrounding whether taking a purely 'generic' approach is appropriate to the district's needs. Although not strictly in conformity with guidance provided in current national policy and good practice the alternative would be to include non-site specific land use based policies, either for general developments or where there is locally distinctive justification. The options surrounding this issue are presented below:

| | |
|---------|---|
| Options | <p>a) No land-use based policies – all policies should be generic, in line with guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks and the companion guide.</p> <p>b) Limited use of land-use based policies – maintain the Generic Development Control Policies document, but have a limited number of non-site specific, land-use based policies, where there is strong, locally distinctive justification (please state any types of land use based policies considered appropriate and justify).</p> <p>c) An even split between generic policies and land-use specific policies - the use of non-site specific land use based policies is just as important as developing generic policies. It is considered necessary to have these for the following types of development: (please identify which)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. residential extensionsb. shop frontsc. re-use of buildings in the countrysided. taxi rankse. hot food takeawaysf. stable developmentsg. caravan parksh. employment usesi. tourismj. Other (please specify) <p>d) No use of generic development control policies – a purely land-use topic based approach e.g. residential extensions which establishes the specific requirements for each development type.</p> |
|---------|---|

ISSUE 2: Appropriateness of the proposed focus

The planning process is one of the primary mechanisms by which the new district plan as a whole will be implemented and therefore how it will contribute towards these Spatial Objectives and Spatial Vision; it is therefore imperative that the priorities and focus of this document are agreed at the outset.

The [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) sets out draft Strategic Objectives which provide a focus for the new district plan which the development control policies should seek to address. Key stakeholders have already been given the opportunity to comment upon this focus; no comments were received. It has also been subject to a sustainability appraisal. [Table 1](#), below, contains the resulting final draft focus for consultation.

Table 1 – Final Draft focus for the Generic Development Control Policies document

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| People | |
| a) | Ensuring all new development contributes towards creating sustainable communities. |
| Place | |
| b) | Ensuring all new development delivers a cleaner, safer and sustainable local environment |
| c) | Protecting and enhancing the quality of Wear Valley's natural and built environment by managing the impacts of new development. |
| Prosperity | |
| d) | Managing new development in a manner that delivers a sustainable, prosperous and viable district economy. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Questions | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you agree with the draft focus, as contained in table 1?• Is it necessary to make any further amendments or additions to the focus? | |

ISSUE 3: Prioritising the proposed focus

A second issue surrounding the focus of this document is the weight or priority that is awarded to each of the four components identified in [Table 1](#). Awarding differing weights to one or more of the components would result in the Generic Development Control Policies document contributing towards individual Spatial Objectives of the new plan to differing extents. The options relating to this issue are presented below;

| | |
|---------|--|
| Options | a) Equal weight - each component should be awarded the same priority and weight. This would result in no single component taking priority, during the determination of development control applications. |
| | b) Differing priorities – The components are ranked in priority order; the outcome would be one component being awarded more weight during the determination of all development control applications and therefore policies contributing to the spatial objectives to differing degrees. Please state priority order. |

Question

- How do you consider the four components that make up the draft focus, together with any other that you have suggested, should be ranked? (If selecting option b please state priority order.)
- Should all elements of the focus be given equal weight? If not please state priority order.

ISSUE 4: Determining the scope

There are numerous themes which are relevant to the development control process which could be addressed by generic policies; this would ensure that they are considered during the determination of every development control application.

The options for the **scope** of the document that have been developed so far have been identified through the following activities:

- An audit of the Local Plan;
- An audit of National and Regional policy;
- Consideration of the Community Strategy and Council Plan objectives;
- Links to Spatial Objectives;
- Referring to the 'Moving Forward' Issues document (2004); and
- Stakeholder Involvement.

From the above the generic themes identified are presented as potential options for the **scope** of the forthcoming Generic Development Control Policies.

Table 2 – List of policy themes identified

| | |
|---|--|
| A | Community Safety and Health |
| B | Residential Amenity |
| C | Building Communities |
| D | Accessibility |
| E | Highway Safety |
| F | Local Amenity |
| G | Efficient use of land |
| H | Risks of and from pollution |
| I | Heritage and Culture |
| J | Risks of and from flooding |
| K | Biodiversity and Geodiversity |
| L | Landscape and townscape |
| M | Design |
| N | Waste Management |
| O | Sustainable Economy |
| P | The rural economy |
| Q | Town Centres and Rural Service centres |
| R | Economic Activity |

In respect to these the following options are available:-

| | |
|----------|--|
| Options: | <p>a) Full Coverage – The scope of the document should cover all of the themes mentioned in table 2.</p> <p>b) A Select Coverage – The scope of the document should only cover a selection of the themes in table 2. (please identify)</p> <p>c) Inclusion of additional themes – please state and provide justification.</p> |
|----------|--|

[Sections 2, 3 and 4](#) of this report present the alternative policy options in respect to the 18 generic themes identified in Table 2, above; the Council would welcome your views on these. These options have been developed having regard to the variety of ways which that are available to construct a given policy, namely:

- Level of detail included within a policy;
- Geographical coverage;
- Policy scope;
- Phrasing of the policy;
- Sub-division or combination of generic themes; and
- Additional developer requirements

Further detail in respect to this is provided in [Technical Appendix B](#).

SECTION 2

PLANNING FOR PEOPLE: GENERIC THEMES AND OPTIONS

This section of the report presents the generic themes most relevant to the 'People' theme to be adopted as part of the overall Local Development Framework Spatial Vision and structure. As discussed in [Section 1](#) the suggested focus for the Generic Development Control Policies document from this perspective is:

"To ensure all new development contributes towards creating sustainable communities."

The potential generic policy themes that have been identified which are considered most relevant to the 'People' theme are:

- Community Safety and Health;
- Residential Amenity;
- Building Communities; and
- Accessibility.

In the interests of brevity, this section presents the key issues relating to each generic theme the Council has identified so far. A more detailed background to each generic theme, together with a national and regional planning context and the current local approach are contained within [Technical Appendix C](#). For each generic theme, alternative options have been generated around the potential approach a generic policy could pursue to address the identified issues. Should you consider that there are additional options available in relation to any of the generic themes, the Council would welcome your suggestions in relation to these.

Whilst the Council would welcome representations to be made in respect to all generic themes identified, the remainder of this report has been structured in a manner to enable you to consider the generic policy themes which you have selected as preferred options from [table 2](#) only if you so wish.

What we need you to tell us :

- After reading and considering the background information and key issues for each policy theme please identify on the response form which options presented you consider most appropriate for the Council to take forward into the forthcoming [Generic Development Control Policies](#) document.
- If you consider that there are alternative policy options available which the Council has not identified please inform us.

Policy Theme A

Community Safety and Health

Background

Community Safety and Health relates to the safety, the perception of safety and the health inequalities which the community of Wear Valley currently experiences. A clean, safe environment is key in delivering sustainable communities²; the planning process can help deliver cleaner, safer environments by managing new development. Key Issues 4, 5 & 9 of **Creating a new district plan: Setting the Context** describes how community safety and health related issues affect Wear Valley. Spatial Objectives 1 and 3 contained in Section 2 of the **Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report** reflect the new district plan's commitment to addressing these issues.

The aspects of community safety and health which have been identified as appropriate for a generic policy to address are:

- Fear of crime and crime rates
- Public Safety
- Health

There are clear links between community safety, health, crime and sustainable communities; the healthier and safer the community feels, the more sustainable, in theory, the community should be. Health is therefore also discussed as part of this generic policy theme.

Key Issues Identified

- Fear of crime is disproportionately high in the district and as such community safety is a key issue which needs to be addressed.
- The district's population is generally in poor health in comparison to the regional and national averages. Addressing health inequalities have therefore been identified as key objectives within the **Council Plan** and **Community Plan**.
- Clean, safe environments are a key aspect of sustainable communities. Both national and regional planning policy emphasis the importance of considering the impact of the development on community safety during the assessment of proposals.
- 'Secured by Design' can reduce crime rates and the fear of crime which currently exist throughout the district.
- There is already a mechanism in place to ensure that Community Safety is a consideration during the design of the majority of new developments, however the new plan's policies need to illustrate how this can be delivered through the planning process.
- A generic development control policy could ensure that community safety and community health are considered and influenced during the determination of **all** development control applications, and potentially contribute towards delivering improved community safety and health throughout the district.

² Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister available at www.communities.gov.uk

Community Safety and Health Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Option A1 | Develop a generic policy which ensures that no new development undermines the health inequalities, crime rates and fear of crime levels currently experienced in Wear Valley. |
| Option A2 | Develop a generic policy which ensures that new development delivers a reduction in the health inequalities, crime rates and fear of crime levels currently experienced in Wear Valley. |
| Option A3 | Develop a generic policy which encourages the principles of 'Secured by Design' to be reflected in new development. |

Policy Theme B

Residential Amenity

Background

Planning Portal defines amenity as 'a positive element or elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area. For example, open land, trees, historic buildings and the inter-relationship between them, or less tangible factors such as tranquillity'³. The Council has identified two categories of 'amenity' which could be addressed in the Generic Development Control Policies document, namely local amenity and residential amenity; [this section concentrates on residential amenity](#).

Residential amenity has a direct impact on the quality of life people enjoy; improving the quality of life of the district's residents is a key aim of the new district plan, which is reflected through the proposed Spatial Vision and a number of the Spatial Objectives contained in Sections 1 & 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

Although the planning process does not protect private interests (eg loss of view, devaluation of property) there is a public interest in protecting the amenity of residential property as a whole, and as such residential amenity is a material consideration in the determination of development control applications. Factors relevant to residential amenity include loss of privacy by excessive overlooking of windows or gardens, loss of light and overbearing given the scale and, or relationship of the new development to residential properties. Odour, tranquillity, noise and vibration are also key aspects.

Key Issues Identified

- Residential amenity is a subjective issue; the degree of importance that each individual/household place on the different elements of residential amenity will vary. Any policy response will need to reflect this.
- There is scope through the planning process to become proactive by enhancing current residential amenity as well as safeguarding it.
- Residential amenity is a key consideration relating to the majority of planning proposals considered by this authority. 62% of all applications received over the past two years directly related to householder developments or the construction of new dwellings.
- Residential amenity is not directly addressed in either national or regional planning policy.

³ Definition available from www.planningportal.gov.uk. Accessed 31/08/06.

Residential Amenity Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Option B1 | Develop a generic policy which safeguards current levels of residential amenity to ensure that the existing level is not compromised. |
| Option B2 | Develop a generic policy which safeguards current levels of residential amenity and seeks to enhance residential amenity where there is an identified or known local need. |
| Option B3 | Any generic policy developed to address residential amenity issues should bring forward the standards adopted in policy H24 of the current Local Plan into the new district plan to ensure that all new development accords with these standards to safeguard residential amenity; OR |
| Option B4 | Any generic policy developed to address residential amenity issues should be flexible in its approach to safeguarding residential amenity to ensure that local characteristics and development patterns can be reflected in new development, as specified standards may result in a less dense development in a traditionally dense street or conservation areas. |

Policy Theme C

Building Communities

Background

The Government is committed to delivering sustainable communities; for a community to be sustainable it must offer:

- Decent homes at prices people can afford;
- Good public transport;
- Community facilities such as schools, hospitals and shops;
- Clean, safe environments; and
- Public open space where people can relax and interact⁴.

Research has identified that the district has an ageing and declining population with high levels of deprivation. In addition, away from the key settlements many villages have experienced reductions in the level of service provision and community facilities. The People Section of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) describes these issues in more detail. Building communities is a fundamental aim of the new district plan, and as such, this issue is encapsulated within the proposed Spatial Vision, contained in [Section 1](#) of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

The planning process has the potential to contribute towards the delivery of sustainable communities; a generic policy could be developed to ensure that every application is assessed in terms of its potential impact on delivering sustainable communities. This 'Building Communities' generic policy theme relates to the following aspects:

- Open spaces and play and recreation provision;
- Community facilities and services; and
- Community spirit and cohesion.

⁴ From the Department of Communities and Local Government website (www.communities.gov.uk) accessed 04/09/06

Key Issues Identified

- The district has an ageing, declining population which suffers from high levels of deprivation and health inequalities.
- Many settlements have experienced reductions in the level and range of community facilities they provide.
- There is a recognised need that the district's communities need protecting from further decline as well as being strengthened.
- Open space, and play and recreation facilities can contribute towards improvements in community health.
- New development can be managed in a manner which helps to strengthen communities.
- Both national and regional planning policy encourage local planning authorities to prepare policies which contribute towards delivering community cohesion and social inclusion.

Building Communities Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Option C1 | Develop a generic policy which ensures that new development does not undermine the new district plan's ability to sustain and strengthen the district's communities. |
| Option C2 | Develop a generic policy which seeks new development to contribute positively towards strengthening and sustaining the district's communities. |
| Option C3 | Develop a generic policy which both protects areas of open space, play and recreation from new development and maximises the benefits which new development can bring to enhance the quality of these areas. |
| Option C4 | Any generic policy developed to address the building communities issue should seek to protect the last community facility within each settlement; OR |
| Option C5 | Any generic policy developed to address the building communities issue should seek to maintain a range and diversity of community facilities and services within each settlement. |

Policy Theme D

Accessibility

Background

Quality of life is dependent upon people's ability to access services and facilities; improved accessibility can result in reducing social exclusion and deprivation. Furthermore, improving accessibility can also reduce the district's contribution to climate change; reducing the need to travel by car via the provision of alternative modes of transport and influencing the location of development, will also reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Key Issue 25 of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) describes how accessibility issues affect Wear Valley. The new district plan's commitment to addressing accessibility issues is reflected through Spatial Objectives 2 & 18, contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

The following three aspects of accessibility have been identified as relevant to this generic theme:-

- Influencing access to developments;
- Providing suitable access for all; and
- Access to Information and Communications Technology

Climate change is addressed in Section 6 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

Key Issues Identified

- Quality of Life is dependant upon people's access to services and facilities;
- There are two components of accessibility: access to the site and providing access for all;
- Addressing accessibility issues can reduce the need to travel by car and therefore the district's contribution to climate change;
- Accessibility is difficult to address in rural areas as the limited number of potential service users can result in schemes not being economically viable.
- National and regional planning guidance promote the use of Green Transport Plans and the innovative use of public transport, especially in rural areas.
- The information and communications technology network also plays a key role in improving accessibility; the information and communications network within the district is poor.
- The district suffers from a lower level of inter and intra accessibility compared with urban areas throughout the region.

Accessibility Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Option D1 | Develop a generic policy which ensures new developments have suitable access by modes other than the private car . |
| Option D2 | Develop a generic policy which ensures new development is accessible for and by all . |
| Option D3 | Develop a generic policy which seeks new major development to contribute improvements to the Information and Communications Technology Networks , such as broadband. |
| Option D4 | Develop a generic policy which promotes and supports innovative public transport solutions . |
| Option D5 | Develop a generic policy which requires major new developments to provide access by cycle and pedestrian routes and the appropriate facilities. |

SECTION 3

PLANNING FOR PLACE: GENERIC THEMES AND OPTIONS

This section of the report presents the generic themes most relevant to the 'Place' theme to be adopted as part of the overall Local Development Framework Spatial Vision and structure. As discussed in [Section 1](#) the suggested focus for the Generic Development Control Policies document from this perspective is:

"To ensure all new development delivers a cleaner, safer and sustainable local environment"

and

"To protect and enhance the quality of Wear Valley's natural and built environment by managing the impacts of new development"

The potential generic policy themes that have been identified which are considered most relevant to the 'Place' theme are:

- Highway Safety;
- Local Amenity;
- Efficient use of land;
- Risks of and from pollution;
- Heritage and Culture;
- Risks of and from flooding;
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Landscape and Townscape;
- Design; and
- Waste Management.

In the interests of brevity, this section presents the key issues relating to each generic theme the Council has identified so far. A more detailed background to each generic theme, together with a national and regional planning context and the current local approach are contained within [Technical Appendix D](#). For each generic theme, alternative options have been generated around the potential approach a generic policy could pursue to address the identified issues. Should you consider that there are additional options available in relation to any of the generic themes, the Council would welcome your suggestions in relation to these.

Whilst the Council would welcome representations to be made in respect to all generic themes identified, the remainder of this report has been structured in a manner to enable you to consider the generic policy themes which you have selected as preferred options from [table 2](#) only if you so wish.

What we need you to tell us :

- After reading and considering the background information and key issues for each policy theme please identify on the response form which options presented you consider most appropriate for the Council to take forward into the forthcoming [Generic Development Control Policies](#) document.
- If you consider that there are alternative policy options available which the Council has not identified please inform us.

Policy Theme E

Highway Safety

Background

Our quality of life depends on transport and easy access to services; we need a safe, efficient and integrated transport system, but the way we travel and the continued growth in road traffic is damaging our towns and villages, harming our countryside and contributing towards global warming.

Key issue 10 of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the Context](#) describes the nature of highway safety issues facing the district. Spatial Objective 3, contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) identifies the new district plan's commitment to delivering safer local environments; addressing highway safety issues is key to delivering this objective.

All new development generates or attracts traffic and as such it is essential that any increases in traffic caused by a development are safely catered for. The impact of traffic on the highway is therefore a material consideration during the determination of all development control applications. Access from the public highway to the development and vice-versa, is also a key consideration. Suitable and safe access must be provided for all new development to ensure that existing levels of highway safety are maintained, or improved. A number of different considerations relating to this generic theme have been identified:-

- Traffic Management;
- Capacity of the existing Infrastructure and Congestion;
- Safe and Suitable Access to Developments; and
- Adequate Parking Facilities

Key Issues Identified

- Highway safety is a material planning consideration;
- The planning process can help minimise and prevent additional conflicts between highway users;
- The rural nature of the district is a predominant reason for the level of road traffic accidents experienced within the district;
- Suitable and safe access should be provided as part of all new development to ensure that existing standards of highway safety are maintained or improved;
- The provision of adequate car parking facilities needs to be balanced with the wider sustainability objectives as parking plays a key role in people's decisions regarding travel behaviour.
- There are no clear policy statements within either national or regional planning policy which could adequately be referred to during the determination of development control applications; it is therefore considered appropriate to develop a generic development control policy, reflecting local circumstances, to be used at local level.

Highway Safety Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Option E1 | Develop a generic policy which seeks new development to deliver improvements in highway safety where there is a known or identified local need. |
| Option E2 | Develop a generic policy which safeguards current levels of safety on the highway by ensuring traffic management, infrastructure capacity and access considerations are appropriately provided through new developments. |
| Option E3 | Develop a generic policy which ensures all new development conforms to parking standards established through the County Durham Local Transport Plan. |
| Option E4 | Develop a generic policy which acknowledges the specific highway safety issues resulting from the rural nature of the district and seeks to ensure that new development within the rural areas pays due consideration to these specific issues. |

Policy Theme F

Local Amenity

Background

Planning Portal defines amenity as ‘a positive element or elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area. For example, open land, trees, historic buildings and the inter-relationship between, or less tangible factors such as tranquillity’⁵. This generic theme addresses the second category of amenity identified by the Council; [local amenity](#).

Local amenity is a general term that is used to describe the character of a place: its appearance, environmental quality and even its ambience. Factors that can affect local amenity include the existing landscape or townscape of the area, land use, the siting, layout and external appearance of new development, and the design and landscaping of buildings. Although the visual aspects play a significant role in local amenity, noise and odour are also contributory factors which should be considered.

Spatial Objective 3, contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) identifies the new district plan’s commitment to delivering well designed, sustainable, cleaner local environments; local amenity is a key aspect of all local environments. The aspects of local amenity which have been identified as appropriate for this generic theme are:-

- Public Realm;
- Design and Setting;
- Open Space; and
- Noise and Odour.

⁵ Planning Portal definitions available from www.planningportal.gov.uk. Definition accessed 31/08/06

Key Issues Identified

- Local amenity is a subjective issue, with each person or group placing a differing level of importance on the issue and its various components. The Council should therefore acknowledge through a generic policy the level of importance that the community place on local amenity.
- Public realm plays a vital role in the quality or level of local amenity. The quality and type of public amenity differs throughout the district; reflecting locally distinctive qualities throughout the district.
- New developments offer the potential to create new public realm.
- Ability to effectively control the scale, mass, density, form, layout and materials used in new developments play a significant role in the contribution that a development would make to the local amenity.
- Open space provides a level of openness and character to the local amenity; currently these spaces are not necessarily identified by policy BE14 of the Local Plan for protection from development.
- Noise and odour contribute towards the level of quality of local amenity; this could be controlled to a large degree through appropriate generic policies.

Local Amenity Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Option F1 | Develop a generic policy which ensures that local amenity is protected from the adverse impacts of new development. |
| Option F2 | Develop generic policy which seeks new development to enhance local amenity where there is a known or identified need. |
| Option F3 | Any generic policy developed to address local amenity issues should adopt a flexible approach to addressing local amenity issues to ensure local characteristics and circumstances can appropriately be considered; OR |
| Option F4 | Any generic policy developed to address local amenity issues should establish thresholds and standards for new development to accord to provide increased certainty for those involved. |

Policy Theme G

Efficient use of land

Background

One of the Government's key sustainable development objectives is to ensure the prudent use of natural resources. Land is one natural resource, which is currently under 'threat' from development pressure. To fulfil this requirement and make the prudent, or efficient, use of land the Council needs to manage the land it releases through the planning process.

Key issue 20 of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the Context](#) describes the issues surrounding securing the efficient use of land for the district. Spatial Objectives 8 and 11, contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) reflect the new district plan's commitment to delivering the efficient use of land.

The planning process is responsible for managing the release of land; a generic development control policy could ensure that the land which is released is used to its full potential. Within Section 6 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) proposes a number of delivery mechanisms are proposed which will help

ensure the efficient use of land, including a Locational Strategy. There are however additional controls which could be used to maximise land use efficiency.

Key Issues Identified

- National and regional planning policy encourage the prudent use of natural resources, the broad aim of this principle is to maximise output whilst minimising the resources used. In the case of this generic theme, the natural resource is land.
- The national and regional planning policy context requires that preference should be the development of *suitably located* previously developed land.
- Mixed-use developments are one mechanism for delivering efficient land-use, but can also be beneficial in delivering sustainable communities.
- National and regional targets for development on previously developed land and dwelling densities should be delivered through the new district plan and development control process. These issues will be addressed through the [Core Strategy](#).
- Any targets and thresholds in relation to development densities are a strategic issue and should therefore be addressed within the [Core Strategy](#).
- The Locational Strategy of the [Core Strategy](#) document will play a key role in directing developments to the most appropriate settlements and those locations where the outcomes of development will be maximised.
- Site allocations for key development will safeguard the important sites from adverse developments. Actual allocations will be addressed in subsequent policy documents.
- Much of the content relating to efficient use of land is strategic; it may therefore be appropriate to address this issue in the [Core Strategy](#).

Efficient Use of Land Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Option G1 | Develop a generic policy which ensures the efficient use of land is secured through new development by encouraging mixed use developments . |
| Option G2 | Develop a generic policy which encourages the use of previously developed land over greenfield sites for all land uses, not just residential developments. |
| Option G3 | There is no need to develop a generic policy relating to the efficient use of land as it is a strategic matter which is adequately addressed in the Core Strategy: issues and Alternative Options Report. |

Policy Theme H

Risks of and from pollution

Background

The Council, as the local planning authority, plays a key role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment, public health and safety and local and residential amenity, all of which can be adversely effected by pollution of land, water and air. For this reason any consideration of the quality of land, air or water and the potential impacts arising from new development is a material planning consideration⁶.

Key issue 24c of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) describes how issues relating to environmental quality and pollution currently affect Wear Valley. Spatial Objectives 8 & 11 contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) reflect the new district plan's commitment to addressing these issues.

New development can contribute to the pollution of the air, water and land, and also contribute towards noise and light pollution, either directly, through the activities undertaken at the site, or indirectly, for example from the additional traffic generated. The planning process can seek to manage and reduce the risks of pollution being generated and from the adverse impacts which pollution may cause.

Key issues identified

- Pollution of land, air and water can adversely affect the natural and built environment, public safety and health and local and residential amenity.
- The importance of the 'precautionary principle' should be emphasised.
- The district currently has good water and air quality standards. The level of contaminated land at present is unknown; this issue will be resolved prior to the formulation of a preferred option.
- There are a number of areas and features within the district which are sensitive to and could be damaged by pollution, including the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other nationally designated sites.
- Planning Policy Statement 23 requires the new district plan to develop a policy against which potentially polluting activities can be assessed.

Risks of and from pollution Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Option H1 | Develop a generic policy which ensures that the risks of (ie contribution towards) and risks from (ie impacts caused by) pollution resulting from new development are kept to a minimum . |
| Option H2 | Develop a generic policy which establishes the criteria against which all potentially polluting developments will be assessed. |
| Option H3 | Develop a generic policy which reflects the precautionary principle to ensure that appropriate consideration is awarded to the issue during the determination of all planning applications. |
| Option H4 | Develop a generic policy which acknowledges the sensitive nature of the district's environment to pollution to ensure pollution issues are given an appropriate level of consideration. |

⁶ Planning Policy Statement 23: Planning and Pollution Control. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004). Available from www.communities.gov.uk

Policy Theme I

Heritage and Culture

Background

The physical survivals of our past, which should be valued and protected for their own sake, are a central part of our cultural heritage and sense of national identity. They are an irreplaceable record which contributes to our understanding of both the present and the past. Their presence adds to the quality of our lives, by enhancing the familiar and cherished local scene and sustaining the sense of local distinctiveness which is so important an aspect of the character and appearance of our towns, villages and countryside⁷.

[Creating a new district plan: setting the context](#) has identified that the district has a high quality historic environment; this is reflected through the level of nationally designated sites throughout the district. In addition to these designated sites there are also a number of features within the wider historic and cultural environment which have local significance and contribute towards the district's local distinctiveness. Key issue 22 of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) describes how heritage and culture issues currently affect Wear Valley. Spatial Objectives 10 & 13 contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) reflects the new district plan's commitment to addressing these issues.

Three key aspects of heritage and culture have been identified as appropriate for this generic theme, namely:

- Designated Areas
- Wider Historical Environment and Local Distinctiveness
- Potential of Education, Leisure and Economy

Key Issues Identified

- Wear Valley has a high quality historic and cultural environment which is reflected through the abundance of nationally designated areas;
- Features outside designated sites also contribute towards the district's historic environment and help create local distinctiveness;
- The promotion of educational, leisure and economic activities can help preserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment;
- Archaeology and archaeological features can teach us a lot about our civilisation and contribute towards the historic environment;
- National guidance states that development plans should have positive or innovative policies which seek to preserve and enhance the historic environment;
- There is a strong emphasis on protecting and enhancing the historic and cultural environment at both the local and regional level.

⁷ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment available from www.communities.gov.uk

Heritage and Culture Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Option I1 | Develop a generic policy which seeks to protect heritage and culture from the adverse impacts of new development, and maximises the benefits which new development can bring to enhance the quality of these assets. |
| Option I2 | Develop a generic policy which promotes the potential economic and educational benefits that the historic environment has and supports relevant planning proposals and applications. |
| Option I3 | Develop a generic policy which seeks to protect the district's local distinctiveness from new development and ensure that locally distinctive features are appropriately incorporated into new development. |

Policy Theme J

Risks of and from flooding

Background

Flooding can have an adverse impact upon public health, the operation of businesses and people's day-to-day lives. Flooding can result in temporary road closures, which can adversely affect business operation and, in a rural district, can isolate communities. Furthermore flooding can, and has in the past, caused substantial damage to property. It is also a threat to human life. For these reasons flooding is a material planning consideration.

In recent years the level and nature of flooding within the district has changed; in 2000 the district suffered a series of severe floods, and for this reason flooding is a major concern among local communities. These changes in the nature and severity flooding have been experienced throughout the country; the key causes are climate change and past development trends and decisions. Key issue 11 of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) describes in greater detail how flooding currently affects Wear Valley. The following areas have been identified as appropriate for a generic policy to address:

- Risks of Flooding;
- Risks from Flooding; and
- The role of Flood Risk Assessments

Key Issues Identified

- Flooding can adversely affect people's property and health as well as the district's businesses and economy.
- There is a strong emphasis through both national and regional planning policy for the new district plan to address the issues of and from flooding; it is considered that the Generic Development Control Policies document is an appropriate means for the Council to satisfy these requirements.
- The level and nature of flooding within the district has altered over recent years.
- Flood Risk Assessments, Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and flooding related strategies and plans can inform decision making in terms of selecting the location of new development.
- Land management practices and new development (e.g. through a change in surface materials) can affect the level and scale of flooding, either positively or negatively.
- There are a number of design solutions, including sustainable drainage systems, which can be incorporated into new developments to minimise its contribution to flooding.

Risks of and from flooding Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Option J1 | Develop a generic policy which ensures that the risks of (ie contribution towards) and risks from (ie impacts caused by) flooding resulting from new development are kept to a minimum . |
| Option J2 | Develop a generic policy which promotes and secures the use of sustainable drainage systems and suitable ground surfacing materials in appropriate cases. |
| Option J3 | Develop a generic policy which requires developers when appropriate to enter into 'flood risk management arrangements' or provide additional flood defences or mitigation measures when considered necessary in the wider interests of the local community, economy or environment. |

Policy Theme K

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Background

Biodiversity describes the biological diversity of life which includes all living things from plants to mammals, insects and bacteria. The character and biodiversity of the landscape are closely linked with many of the features which contribute towards the appreciation of the landscape being an essential part of its biodiversity. Geodiversity is fundamental to the character and diversity of the landscape, influencing both the physical form and the natural vegetation, which have in turn shaped the patterns of development. The exploration of minerals has had a profound effect on both the natural and built aspects of the landscape across County Durham; the variety of materials won are an essential part of the local distinctiveness of its buildings and townscapes⁸.

There are a high number of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites for biodiversity and geological conservation in the district which seek to protect and enhance features of interest, however biodiversity and geological features which fall beyond these areas also contribute towards the wider environmental quality within the district. Key issue 24 of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) describes how these currently affect Wear Valley. Spatial Objectives 9 contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) reflects the new district plan's commitment to addressing these issues.

Key Issues Identified

- Increased pressure from development can result in the decline of biodiversity and geological features.
- The west of the district falls within [Upland Biodiversity Target Zone](#); there is the requirement to expand and link key habitats and species identified.
- The Local Authority now has a duty to conserve biodiversity. The planning process can help fulfil this duty through the exercise of its planning function.
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty now enjoys international GEOPARK status.
- Designated sites can contribute towards the well-being of the community,

⁸ County Durham Landscape Strategy. Durham County Council available from www.durham.gov.uk

education and research. Public awareness and enjoyment of geodiversity and biodiversity are central to their conservation.

- There is a requirement through national and regional planning policy to develop policies relating to a hierarchy of designated sites which details the level of protection awarded to each tier.
- Biodiversity and geodiversity should be considered at the design formulation stage of development proposals to maximise the potential contribution the development could make.

| Biodiversity and Geodiversity Policy Options | |
|---|--|
| Option K1 | Develop a generic policy which seeks to protect biodiversity and geodiversity from the adverse impacts of new development, and maximises the benefits which new development can bring to enhance the quality or condition of biodiversity and geodiversity. |
| Option K2 | Develop a generic policy which addresses the importance of incorporating biodiversity and geological features into new developments and promotes the benefits that public awareness and enjoyment of these assets can bring to conservation. |
| Option K3 | Any generic policy developed relating to biodiversity and geodiversity should relate to the whole district with a blanket approach; OR |
| Option K4 | Any generic policy developed to address biodiversity and geodiversity should be based on geographical areas which seek to address specific biodiversity and geodiversity issues within those areas in an appropriate manner. |

Policy Theme L

Landscape and Townscape

Background

The protection of the landscape is a fundamental planning principle. Development needs to be managed in a manner which minimises the adverse effects of development on the landscape, whilst enhancing those areas which require it. This is also applicable for townscape; the way in which new developments sit within the existing built-up area and its 'skyline' also needs to be managed.

All the district's settlements, although varying in size, are surrounded by open countryside. The positioning of these settlements within the wider landscape adds to the district's scenic quality. It is therefore important that the impact of new development within settlements is considered in terms of its impact upon the wider landscape, as well as its effect on the surrounding townscape. Key Issue 24 of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) describes the issues relating to landscape within Wear Valley. Spatial Objectives 12 contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) reflects the new district plan's commitment to addressing these issues.

Key Issues Identified

- Wear Valley has a diverse landscape; the quality of the landscape to the west of the district is reflected through its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- National policy encourages local planning authorities to adopt landscape policies based upon Landscape Character Assessment in place of locally designated landscape areas. This varies from the approach of the current local plan. The Landscape Character Assessment and its related Landscape

Strategy identify priority targets and key assets for each landscape area; these could be incorporated into a generic policy to reflect local character and issues.

- It is considered appropriate to consider local townscapes and how settlements sit within the wider landscape, as well as addressing landscape issues.
- The new district plan should reflect the [North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan](#); aspects of which are relevant to this generic theme.
- Both national and regional planning policy recognise that the countryside consists of living, working communities and as such encourage local authorities to develop policies which protect key, locally valued features of the landscape without placing unnecessary or inappropriate restrictions upon development.

| Landscape and Townscape Policy Options | |
|--|--|
| Option L1 | Develop a generic policy which seeks to protect landscape and townscape from the adverse impacts of new development, and maximises the benefits which new development can bring to enhance the quality or condition of the landscape. |
| Option L2 | Develop a generic policy which recognises that the district's countryside consists of living, working communities and ensures that inappropriate restrictions resulting from landscape protection are not placed upon new development. |
| Option L3 | Any generic policy developed relating to landscape issues should relate to the whole district with a blanket approach ; OR |
| Option L4 | Any generic policy developed to address landscape issues should reflect the geographical diversity within the district. The policy could be based upon the broad landscape areas identified through the Countywide Landscape Character Assessment. |

Policy Theme M

Design

Background

The importance of delivering high quality design through the planning process has been growing for a number of years, so much so that it has reached a point now where design can be used as a primary reason for the refusal of any development control application. One of the primary reasons for this is that the relationship between a variety of social and environmental issues and the design quality of new developments has become increasingly apparent.

These social and environmental issues relate to a number of themes raised in the [Creating a new district plan: setting the context](#) document as matters which the new district plan needs to address in order to create sustainable communities. Due to these links, and the growing importance of the issue, it may be appropriate to have a specific generic policy to encourage the principles of high quality, inclusive design throughout all new developments within the district. The new district plan's commitment to delivering high quality design throughout the district, in an effort to address a number of these issues, is reflected through Spatial Objective 14, contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

Key Issues Identified

- Delivering high quality and inclusive design is becoming increasingly important;
- High quality design goes beyond the aesthetics and visual appearance of the development;
- Increased pressure to deliver developments of sustainable design and construction;
- Other issues such as 'Secured by Design' and local distinctiveness could be incorporated into a generic policy relating to this theme to reflect local issues;
- There is a national and regional requirement for the Local Development Framework to contain a specific policy or policies relating to the delivery of high quality design;
- The current district plan approach is weak in terms of delivering high quality, inclusive design at a level required by Planning Policy Statement 1;
- Design codes can be prepared for larger developments as part of the development control proposals or for areas in need of regeneration or change through the development plan process.

Design Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Option M1 | Develop a generic policy which ensures that all new developments are of a high quality and inclusive design to ensure the quality of the built environment within the district is maintained and/or improved. |
| Option M2 | Develop a generic policy which ensures that new developments incorporate sustainable design and construction and secured by design principles to ensure that new development contributes towards addressing wider environmental and social issues facing the district. |
| Option M3 | Develop a generic policy which encourages developers of major proposals or planning applications to work towards and secure accreditation to design standards such as BREEAM. |
| Option M4 | Develop a generic policy which places a requirement upon developers to prepare, implement and maintain appropriate landscaping schemes where there is an identified need. |
| Option M5 | Develop a generic policy which places a requirement on developers of strategic or important developments within the district to prepare and implement design codes approved by the Council. |

Policy Theme N

Waste Management

Background

Nationally waste management is facing a period of unprecedented change; the amount of waste produced in the region continues to grow with consequential environmental, social and economic costs⁹. There is a need to limit and eventually reverse this trend, decoupling the link between economic growth and the growth in waste arising. Driven by European legislation, Government targets, environmental concerns, public expectations and rising financial costs there is an urgent need to reduce the region's dependence on landfill disposal and to move towards more sustainable methods of managing waste.

⁹ Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East (Submission Draft). North East Assembly available from www.northeastassembly.gov.uk

Creating a new district plan: setting the context identified that the level of waste recycled has increased by nearly 10% over the past five years; the district is still however not meeting the national target for the level of waste recycled per household. This illustrates that waste management practices within the district are currently not sustainable. Furthermore, it is important to note that waste management practices go beyond domestic practices; commercial and industrial waste management must also be considered. Key issue 23 of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) describes waste management issues in greater detail. The new district plan's commitment to improving waste management and addressing these issues is reflected through Spatial Objective 7 contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

Key Issues Identified

- The district is currently performing below the national target in relation to household waste recycled. There is room for improvement in relation to securing more sustainable waste management practices.
- National and regional planning policy encourage local planning authorities to drive waste management up the waste hierarchy;
- It is important to ensure the design and layout of new development supports sustainable waste management;
- Regional planning policy encourages local authorities to require major planning applications to be accompanied by a waste audit.
- There is scope for influencing the management of waste during the construction of the site and its operation.

Waste Management Policy Options

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Option N1 | Develop a generic policy which encourages waste management to be considered during the formulation of design to ensure the design and layout of new development support sustainable waste management practices. |
| Option N2 | Develop a generic policy which establishes thresholds for when recycling schemes or facilities should be incorporated into the site layout. |
| Option N3 | Any generic policy developed to address waste management issues should require the developers of all major developments to prepare, submit and implement waste audits detailing in-house or on-site waste management practices; OR |
| Option N4 | Any generic policy developed to address waste management issues should establish thresholds which trigger the requirement for the developers of all major developments to prepare, submit and implement waste audits detailing in-house or on-site waste management practices. |

SECTION 4

PLANNING FOR PROSPERITY: GENERIC THEMES AND OPTIONS

This section of the report presents the generic themes most relevant to the 'Prosperity' theme to be adopted as part of the overall Local Development Framework Spatial Vision and structure. As discussed in [Section 1](#) the suggested focus for the Generic Development Control Policies document from this perspective is:

"To manage new development in a manner that delivers a sustainable, prosperous and viable District economy."

The potential generic policy themes that have been identified which are considered most relevant to the 'Prosperity' theme are:

- Sustainable Economy;
- Rural Economy;
- Town Centres and Rural Service Centres; and
- Economic Activity,

In the interests of brevity, this section presents the key issues relating to each generic theme the Council has identified so far. A more detailed background to each generic theme, together with a national and regional planning context and the current local approach are contained within [Technical Appendix E](#). For each generic theme, alternative options have been generated around the potential approach a generic policy could pursue to address the identified issues. Should you consider that there are additional options available in relation to any of the generic themes, the Council would welcome your suggestions in relation to these.

Whilst the Council would welcome representations to be made in respect to all generic themes identified, the remainder of this report has been structured in a manner to enable you to consider the generic policy themes which you have selected as preferred options from [table 2](#) only if you so wish.

What we need you to tell us :

- After reading and considering the background information and key issues for each policy theme please identify on the response form which options presented you consider most appropriate for the Council to take forward into the forthcoming [Generic Development Control Policies](#) document.
- If you consider that there are alternative policy options available which the Council has not identified please inform us.

Policy Theme O

Sustainable Economy

Background

Creating a new district plan: setting the context identified that the district's economy is changing; historically there has been a high dependency on industries such as manufacturing, mining and agriculture but these are now in decline. For this reason both [Core Strategy Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) and the [Community Plan](#) have identified the need to deliver a more sustainable economy which also meets the needs of the district's communities. The emerging Locational Strategy will play a fundamental role in delivering a sustainable economy, but there are other mechanisms by which the development control process can deliver a sustainable economy.

The Prosperity Section of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the Context](#) describes the variety and nature of the economic issues facing the district. Delivering a sustainable economy is a fundamental aim of the new district plan, and as such this issue is encapsulated within the proposed Spatial Vision for the new district plan and in a number of Spatial Objectives, as contained in Sections 1 & 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#).

The following aspects have been identified as fundamental to delivering a sustainable economy in Wear Valley:

- Delivering the objectives of the Wear Valley Economic Strategy;
- Retaining employment and commercial uses;
- Compatibility of economic and commercial uses with other land uses; and
- Role of under-used or redundant buildings in addressing the employment premises shortfall.

Key Issues Identified

- The district's economy is changing; many of the industries which historically were highly depended upon are now in decline.
- Different areas of the district have differing economic priorities; these are identified within the [Economic Strategy](#).
- Economic developments can contribute towards environmental and social objectives.
- The more dense and diverse a settlement is, the more sustainable it will be; providing a range and mix of land-uses within a settlement is now an acceptable and sustainable approach.
- There is a known under supply of employment land and premises across the district; there is the potential for a generic policy to be formulated to influence new development proposals in a manner which addresses this short-fall.
- The forthcoming Planning Policy Statement 4 may contain additional policy requirements which are of potential relevance to this generic theme; the formulation of any proposed policy will have to bear this in mind.
- The importance of the Information and Communications Technology Network to the economy and the local communities is growing.

Sustainable Economy Policy Options

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| Option O1 | Develop a generic policy which supports new developments which diversify and strengthen the district's economy and supports proposals for the expansion or relocation of indigenous businesses uses within the district. |
| Option O2 | Develop a generic policy which seeks to address the current under supply of employment premises which discourages change of use of existing employment and community uses to residential use, and encourages the conversion of under-used or redundant premises to employment uses before residential uses. |
| Option O3 | Develop a generic policy that recognises that industrial and commercial developments are becoming increasingly compatible with both rural and residential land-uses. |

Policy Theme P

Rural Economy

Background

Wear Valley is rural in its character. The rural nature of the district is most pronounced to the west of the former coalfield communities; settlements are small and dispersed, access and local service provision are key issues and land-based industries have traditionally been the driving force behind the economy. As a result of several rural economic events early in the new century the Weardale Taskforce was established whom subsequently prepared a strategy entitled '[Renewing Weardale](#)'. The emerging [Economic Strategy](#) for the district builds upon '[Renewing Weardale](#)' and identifies that delivering a strong rural economy and a high-value tourism sector are key objectives for the district. A strong rural economy plays a key role in delivering a district wide sustainable economy; Spatial Objectives 16 and 17, contained in Section 2 of the Core Strategy: issues and Alternative Options Report reflects the new district plan's commitment to achieving this.

The following topics have been identified as being relevant to the rural economy in Wear Valley and appropriate for a generic policy to address:-

- Agriculture, farm diversification and other rural enterprises
- Tourism
- Existing businesses in the countryside
- Home and tele-working.

Key Issues Identified

- The emerging district [Economic Strategy](#) identifies delivering a strong rural economy and a high-value tourism sector as key objectives for the district.
- A generic policy could be formulated to support the two tourism related actions in the emerging [Economic Strategy](#), developing the Durham Dales brand and visitor services.
- Throughout the district there are several established businesses operating within the countryside, which contribute towards the rural economy; the Council would not want to unduly restrict these businesses from expansion.
- National guidance has identified a number of rural based enterprises which can strengthen the rural economy, promote access to the countryside and help create sustainable communities; policies should be adopted to support and control new rural based enterprises.
- The planning process has a role to play in supporting farmers and farming, and facilitating their evolution and improved environmental practices.
- The Information and Communication Technology Network (e.g. Broadband) can play a fundamental role in strengthening rural economies.

Rural Economy Policy Options

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| Option P1 | Develop a generic policy which establishes criteria that support and appropriately control well conceived rural-based enterprises and developments, including farm diversification, leisure and tourism developments and other countryside based businesses. |
| Option P2 | Develop a generic policy which addresses the local issue of supporting established businesses in the countryside , facilitating appropriate growth and expansion. |
| Option P3 | Any generic policy developed relating to the rural economy should be a blanket policy which is applicable to the whole district as development within the urban areas may undermine the delivery of a strong rural economy; OR |
| Option P4 | Any generic policy developed relating to the rural economy should only be applicable to new development within the rural areas , building upon the generic policy developed for the 'Sustainable Economy'. |

Policy Theme Q

Town Centres and Rural Service Centres

Background

The vitality and viability of key settlements is a material planning consideration; new developments can either have a positive and enhancing impact or a negative or diminishing impact upon the vitality and viability of a settlement. There are a number of issues which can affect the vitality and viability, including the mix and range of land-uses available, visual appearance and attractiveness and social issues such as crime rates.

The Government is committed to developing and supporting successful, thriving, safer and inclusive communities in both urban and rural areas¹⁰. Vibrant places act as a focal point for a variety of community activities and contribute to the sustainability of towns and villages. The vibrancy of places can have either self reinforcing positive effects or lead to cycles of decline¹¹.

Vitality and viability are particularly important in deprived areas and, as Wear Valley is the most deprived rural district in England, it is an issue which warrants due consideration. Deprived areas often have poor access to local shops and services; to tackle this problem national guidance encourages local authorities to work with the local community and retailers to identify opportunities to remedy deficiencies in local provision. It is equally important to ensure that the range of facilities in local centres is consistent with their scale and function, to meet people's day to day needs, particularly in deprived areas. Key issues 25 and 31 - 36 of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) describe the issues facing Wear Valley in relation to town centres and rural service centres. Spatial Objectives 2 & 17 contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) reflects the new district plan's commitment to addressing these issues.

Key issues identified

- The emerging [Economic Strategy](#) identifies the vibrancy of the district and its settlements as a key objective;
- A generic development control policy could be formulated to compliment the locational strategy contained in the [Core Strategy](#); ensuring that the vitality and viability of the key settlements it identifies is not detrimentally affected by new development;
- Providing opportunities for a diverse range of uses is key to delivering vital and viable centres;
- Vitality and viability is dependent upon a number of factors including the diversity of uses available, visual appearance and attractiveness and the perception of a place.
- In rural or deprived areas access to facilities and services is a key issue which in turn may have implications for the vitality and viability of a settlement; a generic policy could consider accessibility issues.

¹⁰ Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres. Office for the Deputy Prime Minister available at www.communities.gov.uk

¹¹ Wear Valley District Economic Strategy

Town Centres and Rural Service Centres Policy Options

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| Option Q1 | Develop a generic policy which establishes criteria relating to the loss of key or essential community facilities and services. |
| Option Q2 | Develop a generic policy which emphasises the importance of diversity and design to the vitality and viability of settlements and promotes and supports new developments which encompass these principles. |
| Option Q3 | Any generic policy developed should only relate to the vitality and viability of the designated town or shopping areas within the district; OR |
| Option Q4 | Any generic policy developed should relate to the vitality and viability of the main towns and regeneration towns as identified in the Locational Strategy contained in the Core Strategy. |

Policy Theme R

Economic Activity

Background

Economic activity relates to the proportion of the working age population in employment. The [Community Plan](#) and [Creating a new district plan: setting the context](#) recognise that the district suffers greatly from unemployment and worklessness which result in the district having a low economic activity rate in comparison to the county or England as a whole. This in turn has contributed to the levels of deprivation suffered across the district; the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2001) identified that Wear Valley is the most deprived rural district in England.

Key issues 16 - 18 of [Creating a new district plan: Setting the context](#) describe the issues relating to economic activity within Wear Valley. Spatial Objectives 5 & 15 contained in Section 2 of the [Core Strategy: Issues and Alternative Options Report](#) reflects the new district plan's commitment to addressing these issues.

There are a number of inter-related factors contributing towards levels of economic inactivity, these include: the level of skills and training; health; and accessibility. The planning process has the potential to help address this issue through managing new development in a way which seeks to protect levels of economic activity from further decline and potentially improve them.

Key issues identified

- There are high levels of economic inactivity across the district; the district is the most deprived rural district in England.
- The Government is committed to increasing rates of economic activity across the country; the regional policy also identifies this issue as a key challenge facing the Region.
- Education, skills, health and accessibility are all factors affecting people's ability to participate within the employment market.
- Development control has the potential to manage new development in a manner which contributes towards improving economic activity.
- The role and scope of a generic policy relating to economic activity needs to be given consideration given the severity of issues facing the district.

| Economic Activity Policy Options | |
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| Option R1 | Develop a generic policy which ensures that new development does not undermine the new district plan's and the Community Plan's objective of improving economic activity within the district. |
| Option R2 | Develop a generic policy which seeks appropriate new development to contribute positively towards improving economic activity within the district. |
| Option R3 | Develop a generic policy which requires the developers of appropriate new developments to enter into schemes which train and employ local residents . |
| Option R4 | Develop a generic policy which supports new developments which would improve the quality and choice of education provided within or for the residents and employees in Wear Valley. |

SECTION 5

Implementation and Monitoring Framework

It is a requirement of the new district plan to have an implementation and monitoring framework which sets out clear targets and mechanisms for achieving delivery of plan policies on the ground against the plan's objectives and relevant indicators which will be a means of measuring these. In order for this implementation and monitoring framework to be effective it needs to be developed alongside the preparation of the new district plan, with clear links to the Spatial Objectives and individual policy targets.

The initial implementation and monitoring framework will be developed during the next stage of document preparation and presented for consultation within the 'Preferred Options' report relating to the generic development Control Policies document..

Implementation

The new district plan needs to identify the means by which the objectives and policy targets will be delivered. Due to the spatial approach adopted by the new district plan, the delivery of its policies will not solely depend upon the determination of planning applications. As the purpose of this document is to provide policies to be used to assess all planning applications against, its main implementation mechanism will be the development control process. It is anticipated that during discussions between the Council and potential developers at the pre-application advice stage, the document will also be used to identify any potential conflicts between the plan and the proposal.

Monitoring

National planning policy recognises that survey, monitoring and review are crucial to the successful delivery of the new district plan. Monitoring will help the Council to understand the wider social, economic and environmental issues affecting the district and the key drivers for spatial change. This framework will also identify the context in which the new district plan is operating and assess whether its policies are being implemented effectively, achieving their targets or whether they are having unintended outcomes. The outcomes of monitoring will identify where additional measures should be put in place to improve the effectiveness of policies, whether the policy targets should be altered or a review of a policy or document is necessary. The Council has a duty to prepare and publish a report detailing policy effectiveness and plan preparation on an annual basis; an annual monitoring report.

The monitoring framework should include targets relating to the intended outcome of the policy objectives contained in the new plan and indicators to monitor the performance of these policies against their targets. An effective monitoring framework should have clear links between the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives, policy targets and indicators.

In order to fulfill the statutory annual monitoring requirements established in 2004 and enable the effective monitoring of the current local plan policies it has been necessary to develop a set of local output indicators relating to the intended outcome of current Local Plan policies. It is anticipated that a number of these existing indicators will also be relevant to the policies contained within the new district plan. However it is likely that it will be necessary to develop additional new indicators and new policy targets alongside the formulation of the policies to be contained in the new district plan. There are four different types of indicators which will be contained in the monitoring framework: Core Output Indicators ie those set by central Government; Local Output Indicators which are developed by the Council to monitor the output of policies; Contextual Indicators, those which provide the context in which the policies work, and Significant Effects or Sustainability Indicators to measure any unintended or unsustainable effects of the policies.

Due to the nature of this Generic Development Control Policies document it is anticipated that the majority of policy targets and indicators will relate directly to the outcomes and number of implemented planning permissions.

RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

| Stakeholder | Response | |
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| One NorthEast | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One NorthEast confirm that the strategy highlights strategic fit with both County Durham's Economic Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) Action Plan, thereby demonstrating Wear Valley's contribution to the RES, and that the themes and transformational objectives "resonate with those in the RES" The strategy contributes towards the discussions on future delivery and governance arrangements and on the investments that will deliver the RES targets and objectives. | |
| | Issues to be addressed: | Action to be Taken |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No issues identified | |
| North East Assembly | Response | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NEA welcome the strategy and support the aspirations of the Council which reflect the RES aims. The five themes of the strategy draw upon the RES and Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) recognising the importance of achieving a step change in the economy By using different mechanisms to promote and encourage economic development, based upon the characteristics of Wear Valley, is consistent with the approach in both the submission Draft RSS and the SoS proposed changes | |
| | Issues | Action to be Taken |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More explicit references to the RSS and emerging Wear Valley Local Development Framework (LDF) would be welcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LDF is already mentioned at para 3.22 along with the work commissioned through this for the Employment Land Review (ELR). It is also highlighted in the Action Plan under the Transformational Objectives A3 and A4. The RSS is already mentioned at para 6.12, 6.14, 6.16, 7.15 The prominence of both the LDF and RSS can be further increased by including a reference within the Executive Summary. We can also update the work that has now been completed on the ELR |

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| Helen Goodman MP | Response | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An excellent document which covers all the main priorities | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action to be Taken |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In developing tourism the key task is to improve the quality of businesses The tourism offer should focus more on rural and historic assets To improve secondary education, links should be made with Durham University and a large regional industry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This quality issue is acknowledged at para 4.17 and 4.22 which recognise that the tourist offer is not “of high enough quality to encourage more demand.” The Action Plan at Enabling Objective B2 also recommends establishing an investment package to improve the tourism offer. This would build upon the work already undertaken through existing projects such as ‘Mine Host’ The strategy acknowledges the natural and heritage assets that Wear Valley has and the tourism potential they offer at para 4.12, 4.13, 4.14 and Annex A Enabling Objective B2 The benefit of links with Durham University are highlighted at para 5.9 in the context of developing programmes to raise awareness of the knowledge economy in deprived areas. However the full potential of such links may not have been identified and this should be included as an action at Annex A under Transformational Objective C1 |
| Bishop Auckland College | Response | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The College supports the five themes and associated objectives | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action to be Taken |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 5.11 gives only a limited outline of the College's provision in only identifying Childcare and Health as priorities and does not recognise the range of services for local | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A meeting has been held with the college and it has been agreed that this para should be amended to better reflect provision |

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| | businesses through the Train to Gain Programme | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 5.13 incorrectly refers to the Service Design Group – it should be Curriculum Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be amended |
| County Durham Tourism Partnership (CDTP) | Response | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleased to see tourism so prominently referenced and endorse this emphasis | |
| | Issues | Action to be taken |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terminology should be changed from 'tourism' to visitor economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed – this better reflects the breadth of activity |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assume that the principles of VICE model have been used as the guiding principal of sustainable tourism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking clarification from Shared Intelligence |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would be useful to be clear what Eastgate is being used for – which are the markets likely to respond to the offer. It needs a well developed and focussed offer to be successful | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are already a number of references to Eastgate, particularly in Chapter 4 – it would not be appropriate to include all references to the very significant amount of research and development that has already been undertaken. A meeting should be arranged with the CDTP Board and Executive to brief them on this |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would be beneficial to put the project (Eastgate) or significant parts of it through the ATMap process as soon as possible to help focus the proposals. One NorthEast will require this of funds are being sought from them for capital development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The benefits of the ATMap process can be discussed at the briefing session recommended above |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paragraph 4.17 + 4.18 Figures need updating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated figures to be used |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paragraph 4.19 – Concern with focus upon group travel. This low value high | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A County wide 'Travel Trade Working Group' is being established in which we will participate |

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| | <p>volume market is being targeted by many organisations. The needs of specialist and niche groups needs to be encouraged</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the context of the Durham Dales brand Wear Valley needs to work more strongly in partnership as part of the regional and county offer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential for Eastgate to provide niche appeal is recognised at para 4.0 • At para 4.21 & 4.22 the strategy already recognises the need for working across boundaries with adjoining districts and of working at a county level with the CDTP • The development of the brand emanated from the West Durham Rural Pathfinder (WDRP) initiative which identified the confusion of existing brands - GONE, DCC, ONE etc are all partners in the WDRP and have supported its piloting. The district worked with Teesdale & Derwentside in developing the brand. The brand is also strongly supported by tourism businesses. • Cross boundary work is already undertaken with both Teesdale and Sedgefield districts. • The district is active participants in the countywide Tourism Officers and Visitor Information Centre group. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear Valley needs to have a role in helping reach regional & sub regional targets. Some are addressed but many are not. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response from One NorthEast highlights that the strategy does provide strategic fit at both county and regional levels and confirms that the strategy will help achieve the RES |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy needs to ensure that tourism businesses are taking full advantage of a well resourced and targeted activity at regional and sub regional level – e.g. publications, campaigns, websites etc. It also needs to ensure that WV marketing activity is aligned with the CDTP & ONE marketing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is already being undertaken. We have actively engaged with One NorthEast through their Passionate People campaign when opportunities have arisen. We also frequently have articles featured in the ONE tourism newsletter. To ensure an effective working relationship we invited the ONE tourism marketing team and arranged a familiarisation trip for them. • We use the North East England brand on all of our marketing material. |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to work closely with CDTP to maximise marketing opportunities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the strategy contribute to the regional target of 85% of accommodation in a quality scheme by 2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This level of detail is not addressed directly in the strategy however the need to develop visitor services is recognised at para 4.22. Para 4.9 also recognises the potential for Eastgate to transform the tourism offer. The number of accommodation providers appearing in our guides that are not accredited are reducing year on year and future versions will only accept accredited businesses |
| Durham County Council (officers) | Response See issues detailed below | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action to be taken |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Plan assumes contributions from other bodies as lead partners – this cannot be assumed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is not assumed – it is recognised that the strategy can only be delivered through a wide range of partners who we will need to work with. Para 1.7 recognises that we will need to be proactive in leadership, influencing and delivery |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy would benefit from a broader policy contextualisation linking conditions to objectives and actions, and how the proposals fit with broader county , regional or sub regional policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 8 highlights the Strategic Fit between the actions and RES, CDES & N Way A significant amount of contextualisation was undertaken by DTZ in the base lining work in part I of the study |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When statistics are used there should be a footnote to show source and date and most recent data should be used. (DCC have population projections that might be useful) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree – need to update where appropriate and use footnotes |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Para 5.13 states that there has been a cessation of travel subsidy for students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed, however the scheme to be introduced in September will disadvantage young people in |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – if this is the DCC post 16 travel subsidy it is incorrect and should be deleted | <p>Weardale - discussions are ongoing to try and resolve this. Amend para to reflect this.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure is confusing – Executive summary 13 pages! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the only comment about the layout being confusing, however agree that Exec Summary too long and needs to be more concise – amend accordingly. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 1.2 – Contextual references should include Leitch, Freud & Eddington reports | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance being sought from consultants on these references |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 1.6 “holding our partners to account” should be changed to “encouraging our partners to deliver” as per Lyons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed – minor point |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.9 3rd bullet – Could refer to St John’s Chapel as an example | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 1.12 - Need to show and date data sources. For population the ONS data shows a more favourable picture in 2028 & DCC can supply more favourable projections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed regarding data sources - need guidance from consultants on population projections |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 1.12 should refer to JSA claimants rather than unemployment rates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 2.3 - important that those who are flagged as lead partners are signed up to the strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See comments above |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 3.8 Reference to Net Park should read “NetPark, DCC & Sedgefield BC high tech business park, developed with support from One NorthEast and with Durham University as a key partner and anchor tenant” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed - minor point |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 3.11 Preferred wording is “The LSC with funding support from the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed - minor point |

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| | WDRP is developing..." | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 3.13 Refer to DCC rather than County Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed – minor point |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 3.19 Reference to establishing a Growth Corridor Steering Group needs to recognise that this should evolve through engagement with Tees Valley Unlimited and their support via their Transport Innovation Fund bid which at present does not embrace the A68 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need guidance from consultants |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 3.21 & 3.37 Contains disconcerting references to intra county competition • Last bullet point should read "In the rural area in partnership with DCC we have" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intra county competition is inevitable • Agreed – minor point |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 3.23 If part of this exercise was commissioned by CDEP it should read "With our support CDEP recently built on earlier work of the WDRP and commissioned" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed - minor point |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 4.4 The reference to Weardale Taskforce should read " Weardale Taskforce was established comprising WVDC, DCC ONE and Lafarge as partners" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed - minor point |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 4.6 Should read "Through the WDRP work was commissioned and a report to map the availability ..." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • . Agreed – minor point – are they correct? |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para 4.8 There is insufficient linkages between Eastgate and Stanhope and the Synergy that can be developed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The link between Stanhope and the potential benefits from Eastgate are highlighted at Para 7.29. It could be given further emphasis through inclusion in the Action Plan at Annex A, Enabling Objective 3: Support the Sustainability of our rural communities |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.21 Insufficient reference to the County Durham Tourism Partnership (CDTP) and the value of delivering local promotion within the context of a broader marketing campaign for the county & region | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Para 4.22 already identifies the need to work closely with the partnership as it develops a marketing strategy for the County, and the need to work with other neighbouring partners. The CDTP are also highlighted as partners across a number of tasks within the Action Plan at Annex: A Enabling Objective B2: Promoting the visitor economy. The link with regional marketing is mentioned in the response to CDTP above |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Para 5.2 Does not recognise the role of DCC as the LEA or the partnership that is needed to change educational achievement levels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCC are recognised as lead partners for a number of the tasks in the Action Plan at Annex A, Enabling Objectives C1 Improving secondary education and C2 Improving post 16 education |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Para 5.13 Reference to cessation of subsidised travel for students is incorrect – DCC continues to provide – Final bullet point does not make sense | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed – however discussions are still continuing around the new tiered programme of subsidised travel to be introduced in September which could disadvantage students living in Weardale. This needs to be monitored and reflected in the strategy |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.16 There should be a reference to Severe Disability Allowance (SDA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the baseline work and statistics were included within Phase I undertaken by DTZ, which makes reference to SDA |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Para 5.20 Regional Employability Framework is now published – doesn't make reference to existing Employment Consortium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed - need to update |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 6 – If WVDC intend to exceed the Submission Draft RSS housing allocations it should refer to any implications that arise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is actively working with other County Durham authorities to influence the final RSS to the benefit of both the district and county. This work is on-going. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Para 6.7 Not clear how data in para matches with the heading – how is choice limited | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It highlights the fact that Wear Valley has a significantly higher stock of terraced houses SI to advise |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para6.12 should read “.. the submission Draft Regional Spatial ..” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed Amend |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.15 Final paragraph is difficult to understand. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend to clarify point |
| | Section7 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should refer to Rural Proofing toolkit through CDEP and supported by WVDC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reference to the toolkit can be added at para 7.39 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to Coundon & Leeholme doesn't acknowledge CDEP's SRI programme and the positive evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reference can be added at para 7.25 |

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| North Pennines AONB Partnership | Response Welcomes the strategy as it recognises the importance of landscape, natural and historic heritage to the economic wellbeing of the District | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action to be taken |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy could be made stronger by referring in the Vision to the area's high quality environment and the AONB Designation and UNESCO European and Global Geopark status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These references should be made but within para 1.9 rather than the Vision |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 3.9 – The roll out of the Green Tourism Business Scheme should be mentioned as a mechanism to encourage tourism businesses to improve their environmental performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a reference after para 3.11 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference should be made in Section 4 that much of Weardale is in an AONB area and also a Site of Special Scientific Interest(SSSI) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This reference to the AONB is already made at para 4.12, this can be expanded to also include reference to the SSSI |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy makes very little reference to land based industries or their importance in managing the high quality environment – reference should be made to the Environmental Stewardship Scheme and Higher Level Stewardship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reference to be included after para 4.12 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must ensure that the design and location of wind turbines at Eastgate does not adversely impact upon the AONB landscape | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At para 4.9 the strategy recognises that work is ongoing to refine the proposals at Eastgate within the context of the AONB designation. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Para 4.12 should include a reference to the UNESCO European and Global Geopark | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Already acknowledged above |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Para 4.14 should refer to Killhope as an award winning museum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy should recognise the risk of Eastgate drawing people away from existing attractions, initiatives and businesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy recognises the need to improve existing services at para 4.22 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Durham Dales brand is not yet proven and “we are not convinced that neighbouring areas will join the campaign.” Weardale should be identified as being part of the North Pennines AONB and UNESCO Geopark | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of the brand emanated from the West Durham Rural Pathfinder (WDRP) initiative which identified the confusion of existing brands - GONE, DCC, ONE etc are all partners in the WDRP and have supported its piloting. The district worked with Teesdale & Derwentside in developing the brand. The brand is also strongly supported by tourism businesses. An evaluation of the brand is to be undertaken |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Action Plan, Enabling Objective B2 Promoting the Visitor Economy should Include Northumberland as a ‘neighbour’ in taking forward the Durham Dales brand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Action Plan Enabling Objective 2 , Developing visitor services should include reference to tourism opportunities related to the high quality environment and encourage tourism businesses to join the GTBS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Para 7.30 should also include reference to office units at the Weardale Business Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At page 25 the reference to Welcome Host should be extended to include Cyclists and Walkers Welcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page reference incorrect |
| | | |
| Audit Commission | Response | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action to be taken |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy could better address the issues of skills and training, old people and Migrant Workers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to develop proposals to address these issues, which should then be included in the Action Plan |

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Special Regeneration Committee held on the **3rd October 2005**, endorsed the Council's proposed response to "VIEW: Shaping the North East", the submission draft of the RSS for this region.
- Members considered the Panel report recommendations at Regeneration Committees on **13th September and 1st November 2006**
- Members endorsed an MPs 'Manifest for Change' at Committee on **10th January 2007**.

The County Durham Local Authorities required that the RSS recognise the following:-

- **That there is strong economic infrastructure which encourages appropriate levels of wealth creating investment to be delivered across the region's communities – whether they are in conurbation, other urban centres or rural centres locations;**
- **That County Durham is permitted to both contribute to and benefit from regional growth;**
- **Recognition that the communities of County Durham can positively contribute to the goal of achieving a strong economic region with strong city regions through:**
 - The promotion and development of the major strategically important employment sites of NetPark, South of Seaham, Heighington Lane West, Turndale and Eastgate, to enable the creation of 20,000 jobs and secure £300m of economic investment into the regional economy;
 - Further development of Durham City's role in the regional economy;
 - Recognition of the economic offer of the County's Major Centres to each of the respective City Region areas; and
 - The value provided by the County's rural areas to regional economic growth and environmental offer.
- **That the RSS is based on updated population forecasts and projections reflecting an outcome of a growing regional population and a growing regional economy with provision made for:**
 - The ability to meet the ONS 2004 based population projection of growth in the period to 2021, in both the Region and County.
 - The allocation of at least 23,000 net additional new dwellings in County Durham to achieve population growth if the regional total is held at 112,000 ;
 - An ability to sustain market led house building investment at a level able to deliver sustainable communities throughout County Durham and to contribute to 'place shaping' activities in the management of physical change; and
 - Recognition of the need for housing market renewal interventions focussed around the Major Centres and focussed upon the delivery of a Coalfields Housing Renewal Pathfinder Programme to deliver the required sustainable change in the communities of the County.

- **The priority for regeneration within the County is directed towards specific Regeneration Areas to realise the economic potential of the County's main towns and employment centres which are connected to and which economically contribute to the renaissance of the Tyne/Wear and Tees Valley City regions. These are:**
- The Darlington - Newton Aycliffe/Spennymoor - Bishop Auckland strategic corridor;
- The Chester-le-Street –Stanley – Consett strategic corridor; and
- The East Durham A 19 strategic corridor focussed on Peterlee and Seaham.
- **Those transport and infrastructure improvements are promoted along the strategic corridors, including A19 junction improvements, A68 improvements and the East Durham Link Road (A1M – A690 – A19 link).**
- **These Regeneration Corridors will complement the role of Durham City, the identified strategic employment sites and the rural offer to the Region's economic well being.**

| Concerns raised October 2005 | Proposed Changes made May 2007 | Action |
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| That the wording of Policies 6 and 7 be aligned to strengthen support for the regeneration of Crook and Bishop Auckland respectively. | Crook and Bishop Auckland are now both clearly stated as being Regeneration Towns. | No action required. |
| That the Council objects to the wording of Policy 7 as it diminishes the scope for regeneration in Bishop Auckland and seeks to establish a relative scale of activity whose impact may not be measurable. | The wording of policies 6 & 7 have been aligned to support regeneration in the named regeneration towns 'for sustainable indigenous growth to meet local needs without adversely impacting on the regeneration initiatives within the relevant conurbation.' This change supports the regeneration of Crook and Bishop Auckland to a larger extent than in the Submission Draft. However, Policy 6 also previously contained the phrase 'to meet local needs and aspirations'. The reference to aspirations, which the Council previously wanted included in Policy 7 to permit increased growth in Bishop Auckland, has now been removed. | Council should seek 'local aspirations' to be inserted back into Policy 6 and included in Policy 7. |
| Policy 7 should also reflect the need for housing market renewal in the Durham Coalfield areas that are situated in the Tees Valley City Region. | No reference to the need for housing market renewal in the Durham Coalfield areas is made in Policy 7 as previously requested by the Council; although reference is made to this in Policy 6. | Council should strongly advocate the inclusion of the 'need for housing market renewal in the Durham Coalfield areas' into Policy 7, especially in light of the clarification made to the City Region areas. |
| Council strongly supports the redistribution of housing provision to allow 20,000 net additions to the housing stock as the minimum required to meet population stability in County Durham. | The housing apportionment for the county has decreased to 19,000; the allocation for Wear Valley has decreased by 700. | Council to object to the decrease in housing allocation for the county and district. |

| Concerns raised October 2005 | Proposed Changes made May 2007 | Action |
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| That greater flexibility be allowed in relation to housing figures and housing distribution to enable Councils to respond better to housing demand, regeneration and affordability issues as more detailed information becomes available. | <p>Policy 30: Dwelling Provision, clearly states that 'the district allocations set out above should not provide the justification for the refusal of windfall proposals which fall within the guidance set out for Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments.' This provides the Council with a greater degree of flexibility than that included within the submission draft. The guidance on Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments is due to be released in Summer 2007.</p> <p>The requirement (by Policy 29) to consider housing market areas beyond local authorities boundaries, may also allow the Council to better meet local housing needs relating to regeneration and affordability.</p> | The Council welcomes these changes; no further action required. |
| That whilst short term district housing allocations are supported early review of these is required to help meet the medium and long term needs and aspirations of the district. | The proposed changes do not make any reference to an early review of the housing allocations. Policy 29 has however been amended to ensure that any review of housing within the RSS both the NEA and LPAs should be based upon Strategic Housing Market Assessments and have regard to housing market areas. | The Council should continue to seek an early review of the housing allocation within the RSS, based upon the findings of SHMAs for the region and sub-region. |
| Council supports the flexibility allowed in pursuing nationally prescribed housing densities. | Policy 30: Dwelling Provision, in line with the recently published Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, continues to allow local authorities to establish dwelling densities below 30 dwellings per hectare, where this would provide a housing mix which meets the needs of the local community. The average dwelling density for the whole district should however be between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare. | As proposed changes reflect the Council's initial response, no further comment is considered necessary. |

| Concerns raised October 2005 | Proposed Changes made May 2007 | Action |
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| Council supports the role of Bishop Auckland and Crook and Stanhope as fundamental in supporting the rural economy of the region. | Policy 12 has been amended to provide clarification on this point. New economic activity should be encouraged in Regeneration Towns (ie Bishop Auckland and Crook for Wear Valley) to act as the stimulus for their regeneration and the regeneration of surrounding areas. Furthermore, Policy 12 continues to support the role of Rural Service Centres, and to a lesser degree other local rural centres, in supporting the rural economy. | It is considered that no further comment is necessary in relation to this point. |
| Council supports the inclusion of reference to the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village as an innovative approach to exploring and developing alternative forms of energy generation. Recognition is, however, needed to reflect its potential for the economic regeneration of rural areas, and would support its inclusion in Policy 8. | The justification to Policy 41: Planning for Renewables, continues to support the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village, however specific mention of the project is not made within the Policy. Furthermore, no changes have been proposed for Policy 8 to reflect its potential for the economic regeneration of the rural area and its potential contribution to regional prosperity. | Due to the strategic importance of the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village to Wear Valley and the wider area, it is considered that the Council should continue to advocate the inclusion of a reference to the project within Policy 8 of the RSS. |
| Council supports the recognition of community transport initiative and developments but would seek recognition of the potential development of the Weardale Railway and its potential role in regeneration. | Policy 56 relates to accessibility in rural areas. Reference continues to be made to innovative community transport schemes and developments. Reference is made in the policy justification to the potential of the Bishop Auckland branch line however the Weardale Railway is not referred to. Policy 56 does however continue to support the concept of Community Rail Developments. | As the Council's concerns are still outstanding, it is considered necessary to repeat the comments made on the Submission Draft RSS. |

| Concerns raised October 2005 | Proposed Changes made May 2007 | Action |
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| Council strongly advocates the inclusion of the A68 as a strategically important route (Policy 11) to assist in the development and regeneration of West Durham. | The A68 has not been included as a strategically important route in Policy 5A (previously Policy 11) or in Policy 56, as advocated by the Council in their initial response. | Due to the potential of the A68 to assist in the development and regeneration of West Durham, the Council should continue to strongly advocate its inclusion within both of these policies. |
| Council supports the allocation of 105ha of general industrial land within the district. | There has been no change to the district allocation of 105Ha of industrial land in Wear Valley. | The Council should continue to support this allocation. |