

Report to: Executive
Date: 8 April 2008
Report of: Executive Member for Regeneration
Subject Easington Local Development Framework : Core Strategy and Development Management - Preferred Options Document
Ward: All

Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for publication of the Easington Local Development Framework : Core Strategy and Development Management - Preferred Options document.
- 1.2 A copy of the 'Preferred Options' document is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Consultation

- 2.1 Consultation undertaken as part of plan production, is guided by a 'Statement of Community Involvement', previously approved by the Council.
- 2.2 Consultation has already taken place on the 'Issues and Options' to be considered in the Core Strategy, along with policies for Development Control. These were addressed through discussion with many community and stakeholder groups and the thematic groups of the East Durham LSP.
- 2.3 A number of internal briefings have helped to formulate the 'Preferred Options' and in order to meet government regulations, the document now needs to be published for 6 weeks to invite representations on the proposals.

Background

- 3.1 The Preferred Options is a key stage of development plan preparation. Following recent government advice, policies for Development Control must focus on managing development proposals in accordance with national planning policy statements and local priorities. Accordingly, the Core Strategy provides a local framework for development, published in a single document. It also needs to be accompanied by a formal Sustainability Appraisal (SEA Report) which considers the likely significant effects of the preferred options and other options considered. An Executive Summary of the SEA report is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.2 The Core Strategy sets out the key elements of a planning framework for the District for the next 15 years. It establishes a clear strategic direction, comprising a spatial vision, with strategies to achieve that vision, and core policies to deliver the strategies. These take account of other relevant strategies and programmes such as for regeneration, health, education, social inclusion and environmental protection.
- 3.3 The Preferred Options is the first key stage in LDF preparation. It is not now proposed to proceed beyond this stage, but publication will establish a timely statement of Easington's future planning objectives as a legacy to be taken forward by the new planning authority. This will be made explicit when representations are invited.

4. The LDF Core Strategy and Development Management Document

- 4.1 The Core Strategy identifies the opportunities afforded by Easington's location sitting within the north east's two City Regions, where the A19 trunk road offers a corridor of economic potential focused on the two main towns and linked settlements within the District. The abundant supply of previously developed land in strategic locations can

deliver development that has the potential to contribute significantly, to the delivery of sustainable communities and improve the quality of life for residents.

4.2 The vision for Easington has not changed from the LSP community strategy vision. The Core Strategy needs to provide certainty for the future over a 15-year time horizon, providing the foundation for development management decisions. Five strategic objectives are identified to deliver this vision:

- i.) to strengthen and diversify the economy;
- ii.) to create sustainable and attractive communities;
- iii.) to provide enough good quality housing to ensure residents have access to a suitable and affordable home;
- iv.) to improve accessibility throughout and beyond the District;
to protect and enhance the District's natural and built environment.

The Spatial Strategy

4.3 The spatial strategy defines where the majority of development will go, to 2024. It is focused on the two main towns in order to shape them into places that provide housing, quality services, facilities and employment accessible to more of the District's residents. Their development potential is increased by including adjacent settlements within this framework to secure growth, maximising the economic opportunities of the A19 corridor and delivering the County Durham housing renewal programme.

4.4 The strategy for the larger villages is to support development commensurate with their role as local service centres, utilising opportunities to recycle land to reshape them into more attractive places in which to live. The focus in the villages will be on physical renewal and environmental improvements

4.5 In the smaller, rural villages which do not have such challenging regeneration needs, the proposed strategy is to limit development to local needs and give priority to conservation and environmental impacts.

The economic strategy

4.6 The LDF should deliver a portfolio of employment sites and premises to cater for a range of business needs. This will be achieved by:

- re-affirming the Peterlee, South of Seaham and Hawthorn employment sites;
- maximising the development potential of existing employment locations;
- re-using of outdated sites and premises;
- providing for future demand through an Employment Land Review.

4.7 Key to delivering the economic strategy is securing improved access to and from the transport network, including public transport provision; the development of the town centres to provide appropriate retail and commercial facilities commensurate with their role; recognising the continuing role of larger office accommodation in business parks; and exploring opportunities to diversify the economic base of the District, particularly through tourism.

Delivering sustainable, attractive communities

4.8 The Core Strategy addresses future housing needs by distributing residential development to meet Easington's housing provision, as identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy and supplemented by provision arising from the Co. Durham Growth Point bid (A final decision on the bid is still awaited). Supporting studies will define an appropriate level of housing to achieve the spatial policy framework and will:

- focus the majority of development will be in Peterlee and the linked settlements;

- support the existing regeneration programmes for Seaham and linked settlements;
- make provision to maintain the larger villages role as service centres.

4.9 A separate affordable housing policy in the Core Strategy will add weight to implementation of the current policy.

4.10 The document also proposes a green space framework for the District, based on the recommendations of the Cass study previously presented to Members.

The environmental strategy

4.11 Objectives for managing the environment include promoting a higher level of design quality in development proposals and reinforcing the agenda for regeneration of sustainable and attractive communities, which is particularly important for communities where the focus is for encouraging development and renewal. A further objective is to support appropriate levels of renewable energy and carbon reduction measures, in line with the Easington climate change strategy and national targets.

4.12 Development Management (Development Control) measures in the Core Strategy include environmental protection policies. The strategy maintains the current Green Belt in the north of the District, and contains appropriate policies to manage the District's conservation areas, heritage coast and other environmentally sensitive sites.

Next steps

4.13 As a formal stage in the process of plan preparation, the Preferred Options document and the accompanying Sustainability and Environmental Appraisal must be published in accordance with the statutory regulations for a period of 6-weeks. Representations received will be addressed and reported to the Executive for consideration.

4.14 Preparation of the Preferred Options document has been informed by supporting studies which will be published shortly and by the Co. Durham Growth bid, on which a decision is still awaited. Further textual changes to the document may be necessary before publication to take account of these initiatives and the Executive is asked to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Regeneration, to agree to make appropriate changes to the document to take account of these issues. Publication of the Preferred Options will not commit the Council to any further stage of plan preparation, but will provide a clear statement of the Council's strategic objectives for the future development of Easington. By September/October, the Council will have a document that it can be recommended to the new authority for incorporation into the new planning framework for Co. Durham.

Implications

5.1 Financial

The consultation exercise will be financed from existing budgets.

5.2 Legal

There are no legal implications

5.3 Policy

The outcome of the consultation will assist in the formulation of future planning policy for the District

5.4 Risk

There are no risks associated with this report

5.5 Communications

Once published, consultation will be carried out for six weeks in accordance with statutory regulations and the Districts Statement of Community Involvement. The documents will be made widely available in each community and on the Council's Web site, and a press notice will be prepared.

5.6 Corporate Plan

The proposals contained in the report contribute to the Council's nine corporate priorities with particular emphasis on housing, employment and promotion of sustainable communities. Publication of Preferred Options is a key milestone in the Local Development Scheme and as such is a performance measure identified as a reward element of the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

5.7 LGR Implications

This report is in line with the Transitional Plan which prioritises the Local Development Framework. Production of the Preferred Options report will provide a legacy for the Council by providing an up-to-date planning framework for the District.

Recommendation

- 6.1 That the Easington Local Development Framework : Core Strategy and Development Management - Preferred Options and associated documents are approved for consultation purposes, under the terms of Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations, 2004.
- 6.2 To authorise the Director of Regeneration and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Regeneration, to make appropriate textual adjustments to update the Preferred Options document to take account of studies and government announcements prior to publication.

Background Papers/Documents referred to

LDF Issues and Options Reports
Local Development Scheme,
Statement of Community Involvement
Town and Country Planning (Local Development) Regulations 2004