

# easington 2008 regeneration statement



District of easington.

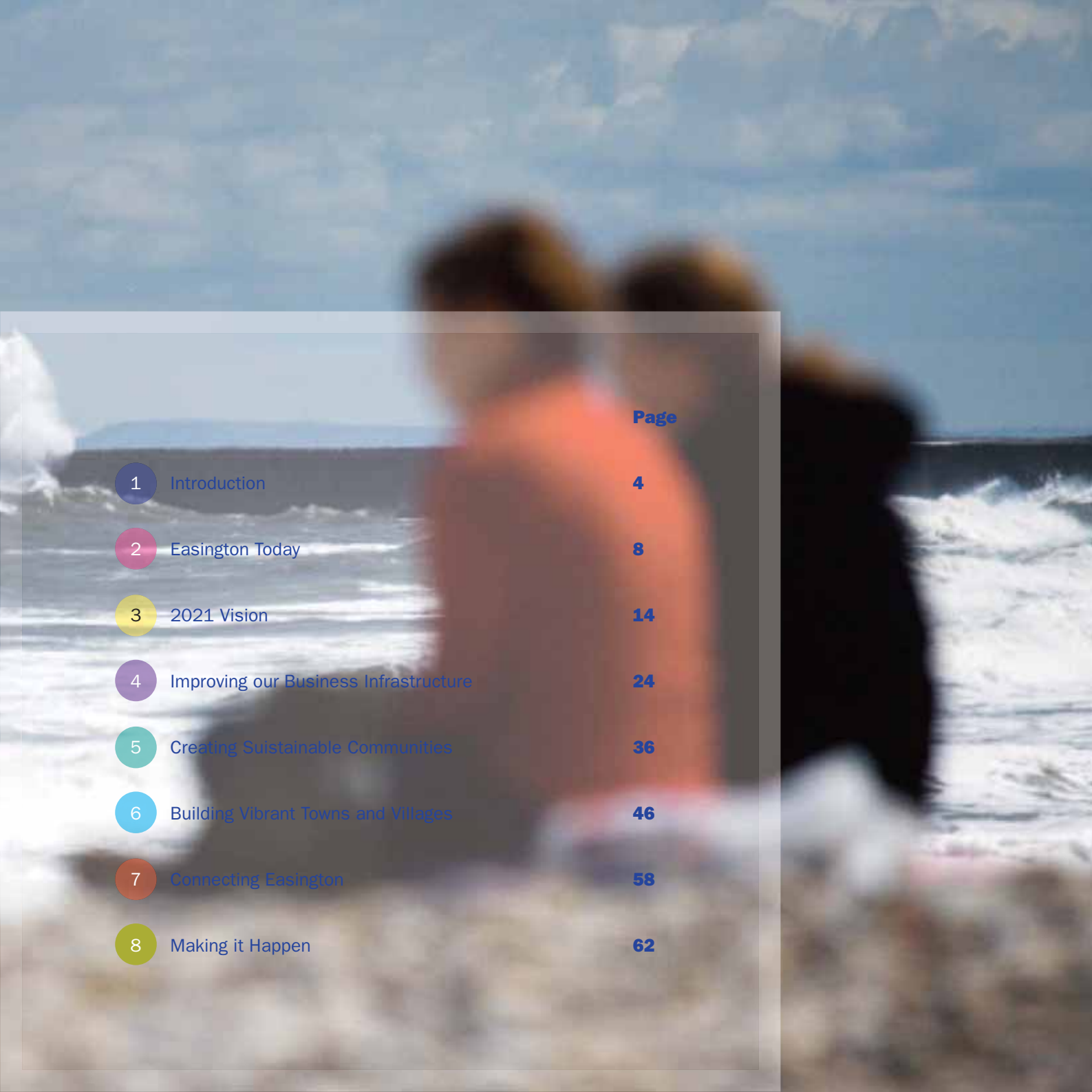


**easington  
regeneration**

**statement**

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## introduction

### Why place matters

**Successful economies are dependent on a range of factors** – economic diversity, a skilled workforce, connectivity, institutional capacity and innovation – and quality of life

**1.1** Successful economies are dependent on a range of factors – economic diversity, a skilled workforce, connectivity, institutional capacity and innovation – and quality of life <sup>1</sup>. Increasingly place is recognised as a critical factor in achieving both economic development and social inclusion.

“It is about creating the quality of life and vitality that makes urban living desirable. We must bring about a change in urban attitudes so that towns and cities once again become attractive places to live, work and socialise.”<sup>2</sup>

**1.2** A growing economy and housing choice are both key factors in creating successful places. They influence the extent to which people are able to form new households, the ability of existing households to realise their aspirations and the long-term sustainability of communities. Yet successful places also need to offer a much wider range of leisure, cultural, shopping and learning opportunities if they are to attract and retain jobs and people. Research by US urbanist Richard Florida<sup>3</sup> goes further, arguing that tolerance, diversity and an openness to change are all key characteristics of successful places.

- <sup>1</sup> Competitive European Cities: where do the Core Cities stand?, ODPM 2004.
- <sup>2</sup> Towards an urban renaissance: the report of the Urban Task Force, ODPM.
- <sup>3</sup> The Rise of the Creative Class and how its transforming work, leisure and everyday life, Richard Florida, 2002



**1.3** For some, perceptions of Easington are still rooted in the past, reflecting our proud history of coal mining but also the economic, social and environmental legacy of the industry; high levels of unemployment and worklessness, related social problems, communities dependent on the social infrastructure provided through mining and a poor quality environment. Some of this remains true – but the picture is changing quickly: today, Easington is also known for

- the redevelopment of Seaham Hall to provide the North East’s most exclusive 5 star hotel – with potential for further development including the expansion of its accommodation
- the revitalisation of the housing market in Seaham, with the East Shore Village and Parkside schemes completed and other residential development opportunities in the pipeline including the Town Centre and Seaham Colliery; demand for housing is also driving the enhancement of shopping, leisure and public service facilities in Seaham;

- the designation of Heritage Coast status following the completion of the £10 million ‘Turning the Tide’ environmental improvement programme; the relocation and expansion of the Seaham Harbour Dock Company has created a major tourism opportunity at North Dock;
- the development of Dalton Park – one of the North East’s most successful factory retail outlets - and the opportunity to create a further, regional scale leisure attraction on the site; and
- the successful development of the former Enterprise Zone site at Spectrum Business Park (formerly Dawdon and Fox Cover) which has created a market for industrial and business space in Easington.

**1.4** We are making real progress in transforming Easington into a vibrant and successful place. This Regeneration Statement sets out our long-term vision for the District and how we will build on our successes to continue Easington’s transformation.



## The Regeneration Statement

**1.5** This Regeneration Statement has been produced for the District of Easington Council in consultation with a wide range of public, private and voluntary/community sector stakeholders. It details how we will invest in place – or physical regeneration – to help realise our 2021 vision for Easington, and aims to:

- highlight progress to date in the regeneration of Easington;
- set out a long-term vision and strategy for physical regeneration and place making across the District;
- identify and justify investment priorities for the District;
- consider the relationship between key investment programmes (for example Building Schools for the Future, housing market renewal, employment sites and premises and wider neighbourhood renewal activity) and demonstrate how they reinforce each other;
- identify options for delivery of the strategy; and
- serve as a prospectus to engage public and private sector partners and support future funding bids.

**1.6** The Regeneration Statement is a non-statutory document, but has been developed in consultation with a wide range of public, private, voluntary and community sector partners. It seeks to translate our Community strategy – the overarching ‘strategy of strategies’ which sets out our broad economic, social and environmental objectives – into more detailed priorities for physical regeneration. It will inform the Council’s Local Development Framework, its housing strategy and other statutory plans.

**1.7** The Regeneration Statement also explores Easington’s relationship with and contribution to the North East’s City Regions and will feed into the emerging City Regional Development Plans and Multi Area Agreements for Tyne and Wear and the Tees Valley.

The document also provided the framework for development within the A19 corridor and is therefore a key building block of the County Durham Economic Strategy (2008 – 2013).





- 1.8** The audience for the Regeneration Statement includes our public sector partners - including One NorthEast, Government Office North East, Durham County Council the City Regional Partnerships, the new Homes and Communities Agency and private developers and investors.
- 1.9** Section 2 of the Regeneration Statement summarises the opportunities for urban renaissance in Easington – and highlights some of the challenges we face. Section 3 sets out our vision for the future – encompassing:
- a network of sustainable communities, housing a growing population;
  - a more competitive, diverse and entrepreneurial economy;
  - strong progress towards carbon neutrality and promoting Easington as a low carbon/low energy cost economy;
  - Peterlee’s growth as a thriving district shopping and administrative centre, serving a catchment which extends beyond the boundaries of the district;
  - Seaham as the North East’s top coastal visitor resort; and
  - stronger economic and transport links with the major conurbations of Durham, Tyne and Wear and the Tees Valley, centred on the growth opportunities provided by the A19 Corridor.
- 1.10** Section 4 describes our proposals to create a world class infrastructure to support new and growing businesses. Section 5 sets out how we will deliver sustainable communities across Easington, and section 6 focuses on the future role of our key towns – Peterlee and Seaham.
- 1.11** Section 7 proposes how we will improve Easington’s connections with the regional economic drivers of the Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley conurbations.
- 1.12** The Regeneration Statement highlights the priority projects that we will deliver over the next five years, in partnership with a wide range of public, private and voluntary/community sector partners. Section 8 sets out how the strategy will be delivered through strategic leadership and utilising its land and property assets.
- 1.13** Our regeneration priorities for the next year are summarised at the end of each section, and Appendix 1 provides further details of the indicative costs for key projects.



**2.1** The District of Easington lies in the eastern part of County Durham in the heart of the former coalfield. It occupies a prime location between the City of Durham and the North East's two City Regions – Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley – and on the key north-south route of the A19.

**2.2** Since the 1970s the District has witnessed a period of major economic restructuring with the decline of coal mining – Easington's last colliery closed in 1993 – and also textiles, manufacturing and heavy engineering.

### Demography

**2.3** The population of Easington is 94,000 but, like many parts of the North East, the district has experienced decline in recent years. Between 1981 and 2004 the population of the district fell by some 8,600 or 8.2% – almost twice the regional average – although it is now increasing again.

**2.4** Easington has a larger proportion of people of retirement age – 20.3% compared to the region (19.4%) and England and Wales' average (18.5%) – and below average representation of young people and people of working age.

**2.5** County Durham's population is expected to grow by some 2.9% over the period to 2021. However, Easington's population is in fact forecast to fall to 87,400 by 2026<sup>4</sup>, with a substantial reduction in the number of people aged 30-44 and a more modest increase in the population aged 65+. Changes in household composition, with household sizes now reducing, will have significant implications for the labour market, housing provision and the delivery of local services.

<sup>4</sup> 2004-based  
English Sub-National Population  
estimates, updated  
December 2006, ONS



## Housing

- 2.6** The proportion of households that are owner occupied and owned outright in Easington (24.9%) is below the regional and national average. Easington has an under-representation of detached accommodation (12.5%) compared to England and Wales (22.8%) and an over-representation of both semi-detached (38.0%) and terraced housing (44.3%) compared to England and Wales (31.6% and 26.1% respectively).
- 2.7** According to the Halifax house price index (2005), prices in Seaham increased by 213 per cent in the last five years - the biggest property value rises in Britain. The average home now costs £131,605, compared with £42,802 in 2001. The number of houses in Easington currently falling below the Decent Homes standard is 7,000. Recent research has identified more than 19,000 dwellings across the County as at risk of market failure/low demand, more than half of which are in Easington.

## Economy and enterprise

- 2.8** In 2005, there were 28,200 employee jobs in Easington. Jobs density – the ratio of jobs to the working age population - was just 54%. To achieve the regional average (75%) a further 10,190 Easington residents would need to be in work.
- 2.9** The manufacturing sector in Easington remains a major employer, accounting for almost 25% of jobs in 2006 (compared to 11% for GB as a whole), although just over 3,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in Easington between 1996-2005. The impact of the decline of local manufacturing has been offset by increases in banking, finance and insurance – where more than 4,300 jobs have been created since 1995 and public administration (2,670 jobs created 1995-2005).
- 2.10** Employment in banking, finance and insurance (17.1% of jobs) is above the regional average. Despite this, Easington is under-represented in tourism, distribution, hotels and restaurants and construction employment.
- 2.11** In Easington, the number of VAT registrations (14.1 per 10,000 adult population) is significantly below the North East (20.8 per 10,000) and England (39.3 per 10,000) averages. Between 1995-2006 the business stock in Easington grew by 18% - more than the North East but less than the GB average – although in 2006 there were just 1,295 VAT registered businesses in Easington.

**2.12** In June 2007 the rate of self-employment in Easington (4.8%) was below the regional average (6.6%) and significantly below the average for England (9.3%). The self-employment rate is below the average for the 15% of most deprived wards in England.

**2.13** There is more than half a million sq.ft of vacant industrial floorspace in Easington, much of which is of poor quality. There is a corresponding lack of good quality industrial accommodation of up to 10,000 sq.ft in size.

**2.14** Although Enterprise Zone status has resulted in the provision of good quality office developments at Peterlee and Seaham, there is almost 250,000 sq.ft. of vacant accommodation currently available. This is constraining further growth of the office market.

## Employment, worklessness and skills

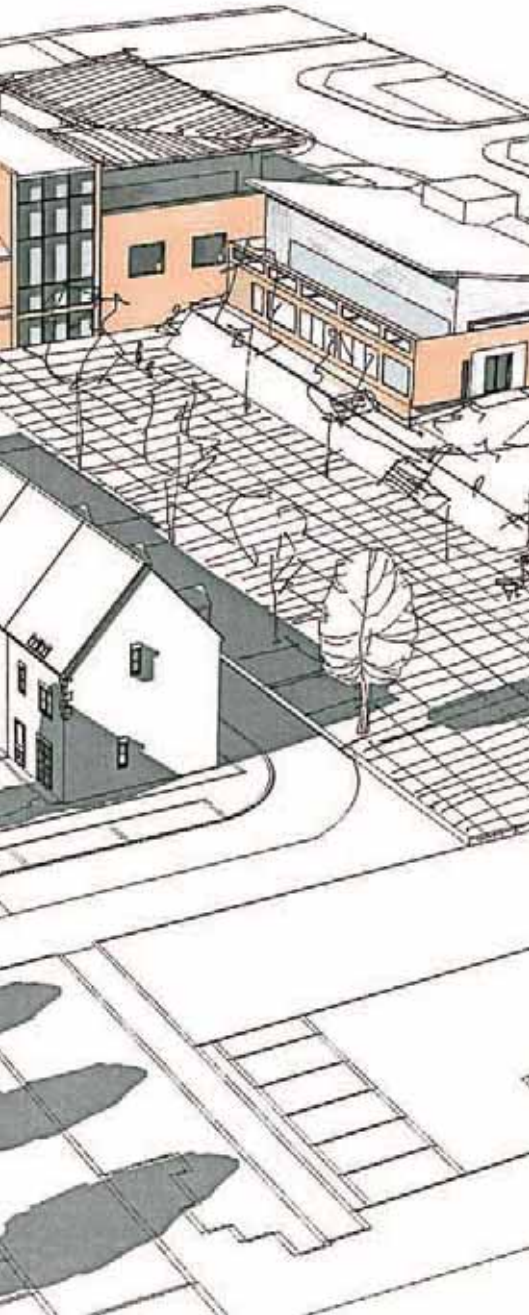
**2.15** In 2006 there were 56,600 people of working age in Easington, but just 38,400 (68.8%) were in employment – compared with 71.1% for the North East and 74.2% for Great Britain as a whole. Although the gap remains significant, Easington's employment rate is increasing more rapidly than the regional or national average.

**2.16** In January 2008 1,446 Easington residents were unemployed and in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). At 2.6% this is below the regional average (3.2%) and on a par with the national average (2.2%). The JSA claimant count has fallen by more than two-thirds over the last ten years.

**2.17** However, in May 2007 more than 10,150 Easington residents of working age were in receipt of Incapacity Benefit/Severe Disablement Allowance. At 18% of the working age population this is close to double the average for the region (10.2%) and well above the England average (7.2%), although the number of claimants is declining faster than the rate for England as a whole. There are a further 1,330 lone parents – 2.3% of the working age population compared to 2.1% for Great Britain as a whole.







**2.18** Although Easington fares comparatively well in terms of the proportion of its working age population qualified to either NVQ Level 1 or 2, less than one third (31.1%) are qualified to Level 3 (compared to 42.7% for the region and 45.3% for Great Britain) and the gap is even wider at Level 4 (14.7% compared to 22.7% and 27.4% respectively). This is also reflected in the occupational structure – in 2007 31% of working age residents were employed as process plant and machinery operatives or in elementary occupations, compared to less than 19% for Great Britain as a whole. Across the region, future employment growth is likely to be concentrated in high skilled occupations.

## Deprivation

**2.19** The index of multiple deprivation measures multiple indicators of deprivation at a local level and uses these measures to rank local authorities. Easington is the most deprived local authority in County Durham and was ranked 7th (out of 354 local authorities) in England in 2007 – although its overall position has improved since 2002, when it was ranked 3rd. The district ranks 68th in terms of Employment Deprivation placing it in the 20% most employment deprived local authorities in England.

## Travel to work

**2.20** 57% of Easington's residents work in the District, with 43% working outside it. Sunderland is the main destination for both in/out commuting, followed by Durham. Easington has a net outflow of around 6,000 commuters.

**2.21** The majority of Easington residents live near where they work – the average commuting distance is just 5 miles. The proportion of households who do not have access to a car or van in Easington (37%) is significantly above the average for England and Wales (26.8%).

## Challenges for the future



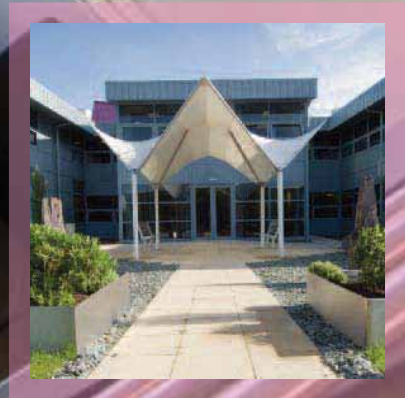
**2.22** The District of Easington faces some significant economic, social and environmental challenges over the next ten to fifteen years:

- creating a sustainable, diverse and growing economy to redress Easington's historic dependency on traditional industries and provide long-term, well-paid employment opportunities for Easington's residents
- making it easier for Easington residents to access employment and learning opportunities in both Tyne and Wear and the Tees Valley by achieving a step change in the quality of public transport provision
- attracting and retaining young people and working age families; out-migration and natural demographic changes are contributing to the long-term decline in Easington's population which has implications for our labour market, our communities and local services;
- tackling deprivation and worklessness; the legacy of Easington's industrial past is one of poor health, poverty and a high level of benefits dependency; some Easington families contain more than one generation who have become detached from the labour market;
- making Easington a more attractive location to attract and retain entrepreneurs and to encourage more local residents – particularly young people and women – to consider starting their own business
- securing the renewal of Easington's housing market, tackling problems of obsolete housing and creating safe, mixed tenure communities which provide opportunities for family housing and increasing our contribution to the Government's Sustainable Communities agenda by promoting higher levels of housing growth
- improving the supply of high quality industrial and office accommodation and tackling the market failures which have limited private investment in employment land and premises.

**2.23** In section 3 we set out our vision for urban and rural renaissance in Easington in 2021; this shows how we will address these challenges and realise the opportunities arising from Easington's strategic location between the North East's dynamic Cities.



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# section 3

## 2021 vision

### East Durham 2010

**3.1** Our Community Strategy – East Durham 2010: a great place for everybody – sets out a broad vision of

**‘A sustainable future for East Durham, with a thriving economy, an improved environment, a learning culture and strong, safe, healthy communities.’**

**3.2** This remains our overarching goal – and we are making real progress towards its achievement (see paragraph 1.3) – through diversifying our economy; revitalising the housing market; improving the quality of our environment and tackling social exclusion in our most deprived communities. We still face many challenges – summarised in paragraph 2.19 – but our achievements have created the platform for us to develop a much more aspirational and challenging vision for the future of Easington.

**3.3** In 2021, we see Easington as a much more outward-looking location, making a more distinctive contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of the region and characterised by:

- a network of sustainable communities, housing a growing population
- a more competitive, diverse and entrepreneurial economy
- strong progress towards carbon neutrality and promoting Easington as a low carbon/low energy cost location
- Peterlee’s growth as a thriving district shopping and administrative centre, serving a catchment which extends beyond the boundaries of the district;
- developing Seaham as the north east’s top coastal visitor resort; and
- stronger economic and transport links with the major city regions of Tyne and Wear, Tees Valley and Durham City.

**3.4** If we realise our ambition to make Easington a much more successful place, what will success look like? Following and overleaf, we set out a more detailed vision statement for Easington in 2021.





## Easington 2021

### A thriving community

In 2021 Easington is one of the most thriving communities in the North East of England. Our population is increasing, and increasingly diverse. Many more young people and working age families are remaining in the district, attracted by new jobs, by a wide choice of housing in safe, secure communities and by the quality of our schools.

### A growing economy

Following decades of decline, Easington's economy is now growing. Easington businesses have created 5,000 net full-time jobs since 2007 and significantly increased the district's contribution to the region's Gross Value Added (GVA). To achieve this we've strengthened our existing economic assets, diversified our economic base and developed stronger links with adjoining growth areas – creating a corridor of economic growth along the A19 Corridor stretching from Stockton's 'Green Blue Heart' through Wynyard and NetPark north through Peterlee, Seaham and Murton to Durham, Sunderland and North Tyneside.

### Developing our knowledge assets

Manufacturing and engineering remain an important part of the Easington economy and are making an important contribution to regional economic growth. Through improved collaboration, Easington businesses have moved up the value chain and are developing products and services for global markets. We've lost some low skilled, low value-added employment but now more than a third of manufacturing/engineering jobs are 'knowledge-based'.

We have sustained the growth of our financial and business services sector through major investment in upskilling the existing workforce and expanding vocational learning in our schools. Easington businesses have strengthened their links with regional centres of call centre/shared service centre activity at Doxford Park and Newcastle; some are delivering third party services to the cluster.

### A sustainable business location

Our economy is more diverse than in 2007. Easington is now at the centre of a UK-wide cluster of companies and research organisations designing, manufacturing and installing geothermal energy and other 'microgeneration' energy systems to businesses, schools and domestic customers. Centred on the GREAT Institute – a centre of excellence in geothermal energy and other renewable energy technologies Easington is the UK's foremost low energy/low carbon business location and has attracted a range of companies seeking to reduce their carbon emissions and minimise energy costs.

### An enterprising culture

Easington now has more than double the number of new businesses starting up than in 2006. We started this in 2006 through LEGI - a transformational programme to raise enterprise awareness in schools and colleges, provide support for women and those who are 'hardest to reach' and improving access to markets outside the district.



Sea Ferry link to Scandinavia  
Depart Newcastle 5 p.m.  
Arrive Amsterdam 9.30 a.m.

**Travel times from Easington to**  
Sunderland approx. 20mins  
Durham approx. 20mins  
Middlesbrough approx. 30mins  
Newcastle approx. 30mins  
Leeds approx. 1hr 50mins  
Manchester approx. 2hrs 30mins  
Edinburgh approx. 3hrs  
London approx. 4hrs 45mins

see inset above



### Seaham – the North East’s premier spa resort

Tourism is now a significant employer in Easington and Seaham is now one of County Durham’s major visitor centres. Further expansion of Seaham Hall and the regeneration of North Dock – to provide a new art gallery, industrial heritage museum and artists studios – have underpinned the attraction of new shops and a more diverse evening economy with two nationally acclaimed restaurants. Our coast forms an important part of the County’s Christian heritage and attracts many visitors.

Complementing Seaham, Dalton Park provides the North East’s most exciting environment for extreme sports, including a mix of indoor and outdoor facilities for mountain biking, BMX, leisure and other sports.

### Peterlee - a vibrant town centre

Peterlee is a vibrant town centre serving a catchment of more than 100,000 residents which extends well beyond the boundaries of the district. New housing development has been concentrated in Peterlee and its population now exceeds 30,000, supporting a range of shops and services.

The relocation of East Durham and Houghall College to a new campus in 2008 created the opportunity for the comprehensive redevelopment of the town centre to provide new retail, office and cultural facilities. The College provides a theatre, workshops and display space for a range of artists.

### Sustainable communities

Alongside new jobs, we have revitalised Easington’s housing market, creating truly sustainable communities which are safe, secure and well-managed and provide a wide range of affordable housing for sale and rent. Through the Building Schools for the Future programme, we have created new schools at the heart of our communities and they provide a range of facilities and services for all residents.

As a result families and young people are staying and moving into the District – people want to live here. This transformation began in 2008 when a major investment programme commenced to encourage private investment in new housing in Peterlee and to improve the quality of the existing housing stock in Easington Colliery and Dawdon. Based on these principles, we were successfully designated a ‘Growth Point’ - with Sedgfield and Wear Valley – and this provided further impetus for housing growth.

### Connected communities

Junction improvements have been made to the A19, to cater for growth, and the second Tyne Tunnel is now open. These, along with regular fast train services from Peterlee and Seaham, have improved access to employment opportunities and have enabled visitors to access Easington’s retail, leisure and tourism assets. Bus services between the villages and the main centres are also much improved; now almost 50% of journeys to work, school or college are made using public transport.

## Realising the vision

**3.5** Our vision is to achieve a sustainable future for Easington – to create more high quality jobs and to reverse the steady decline in population since the early 1980s. This will require a transformation of our efforts to diversify the economy, boost educational attainment and skills, create sustainable communities and improve the quality of the environment.

**3.6** The status quo is not an option. Current population projections suggest further, steady decline in the number of young people and an increasingly ageing workforce. Under this scenario, at best Easington would play the role of a dormitory location for people working outside the district – which is not sustainable

**3.7** Nor is a strategy wholly driven by population growth and without efforts to boost the Easington economy. Although population growth would generate modest additional employment (particularly increased retail and personal services jobs) it is likely that out-migration would continue, resulting in an ageing population placing increasing demands on local housing, health and social services.

**3.8** So, to realise our 2021 vision of sustainable communities across the district, we must strengthen our economic base. We must sustain the competitiveness of our existing businesses and increase the number of new firms being created in Easington. To do this, we must connect businesses in Easington to new markets elsewhere in the region and beyond – in particular to Durham and the core City Regions of Tyne and Wear and the Tees Valley – and also make it easier for Easington residents to access employment there.

**3.9** Unless we create more well paid jobs in Easington, we will not attract and retain the working age families or the mobile knowledge workers that will, in turn, support local services and facilities and sustainable communities.

**3.10** So Easington faces some important choices about its future – and only some of these opportunities can be realised by the Council or other public sector organisations. Building on our earlier successes, the District Council - and partners including the County Council, One NorthEast and the emerging Homes and Communities Agency – will create the right environment for investment in Easington. To realise our vision for Easington, we need private sector employers, developers and others to recognise the opportunities for commercial investment in Easington. The proposals set out in this Statement could realise private investment of more than £300 million over the next five years.

**3.11** The remainder of the Regeneration Statement sets out what we will do this over the next five years, describing our priorities for investment in ‘place’ – or physical regeneration - under five themes:

- improving our business infrastructure;
- creating sustainable communities;
- building vibrant towns and villages;
- connecting Easington; and
- making it happen.

**3.12** The themes are wholly inter-related and action is required across each of these areas to deliver a true renaissance in the District. In some circumstances place investments will lead the regeneration process, but in others place will support or reinforce investments in business support, skills, education or other activities.



The Economic Strategy adopts a spatial framework which reflects existing labour market/travel to work patterns and the opportunity to connect areas of economic growth with areas of need. The former County Structure Plan and 2002-2007 Economic Strategy identified 14 settlements which act as service centres across the County. All, with the exception of Barnard Castle, Middleton in Teesdale and Stanhope are in the eastern part of the County, and form the characteristic polycentric network of settlements.

This strategy signifies a clear shift in our approach to the economic role of the County's key centres, recognising that each has a distinctive role, and that some will make a stronger contribution to the economic regeneration of County Durham than others. The spatial framework comprises the following areas:

- Durham City and the A1M Corridor – a driver of regional significance with strong links to the Tyne and Wear City Region; Durham City is developing its role as a major visitor destination, retail centre and business services location alongside the key presence of Durham University; the northern A1M Corridor includes the key economic asset of the Riverside Cricket Ground
- The East Durham A19 Corridor – including the key employment centre of Peterlee, the emerging tourism and film studio opportunities at Seaham, and major efforts to promote housing market renewal;

- the Bishop Auckland to Darlington Corridor, including Bishop Auckland which has the potential to strengthen its role as a shopping/service/employment centre; NETPark and the key industrial location of Newton Aycliffe; the corridor has strong labour market and 'travel to learn' links with the Tees Valley
- North West Durham, encompassing key industrial locations in Consett, Stanley and Drum and Beamish, a regionally significant visitor centre, and with strong labour market and housing market links to the Tyneside conurbation
- Rural West Durham, including Barnard Castle which has the potential to become one of the North East's most vibrant market towns, and the major rural regeneration opportunity at Eastgate which will drive a sustainable future for Weardale

These sub-areas have been identified on the basis of the operation of labour market, housing markets and shared socio-economic characteristics, although they have not been defined precisely in spatial terms at this stage. In each of these areas, the balance of opportunity and need is quite different; some areas will make a stronger contribution to regional economic growth than others and some will develop stronger economic links with the adjoining City Regions.

Within the context of County Durham's polycentric geography, each area requires a mix of economic, social and environmental investment to ensure a sustainable future; priorities include

- bringing forward strategic employment sites and premises to meet the accommodation needs of small companies, the County's substantial manufacturing base, and medium and large sized businesses requiring high quality office space;
- unlocking the economic potential of our major centres to deliver retail, office and leisure-related employment to serve their wider hinterlands;
- developing new and existing tourism assets (see section 4);
- investment in transport and ICT infrastructure;
- local employment programmes to ensure that local residents benefit from major commercial and industrial development projects
- delivering Sustainable Communities, and housing market renewal in accord with the priorities established in the sub-regional housing strategy.

For each of the areas comprising the spatial framework the new unitary authority will aim to prepare a detailed Regeneration Investment Plan which sets out a long-term vision; demonstrates how economic regeneration and housing renewal programmes will be aligned and identifies integrated

investment proposals for Regional Development Agency, Homes and Communities Agency and other bodies. The Regeneration Investment Plans will also set out how the new unitary authority will leverage its assets to support the regeneration process, and will build, where possible, on existing strategies and plans.

### **East Durham A19 Corridor**

Centred on the A19, this area contains the important employment centres of Peterlee and Seaham, but also some of the most disadvantaged communities in the North East. The Corridor forms a 'bridge' between the Tyne and Wear City Region and the Tees Valley City Region and the northern part of the area has close labour market, housing market and 'travel to learn' links with Sunderland.

The area is an important investment location. Located only eight miles from Durham City and ten miles from Sunderland, Peterlee is home to 25% of Easington's population and a large proportion of its employment. As a New Town, designed to accommodate significant manufacturing employment, it has a number of large industrial estates which continue to attract private investment. A network of call/contact centres is evolving across East Durham and providing important local employment.

The Seaham / Murton area is in the process of economic regeneration with much progress being made to create new housing and employment sites. Seaham Hall remains the North East's only 5\* hotel and regeneration of North Dock affords the opportunity to create a major visitor hub for the East Durham Heritage Coast.



The former Enterprise Zone at Dawdon and Foxcover has resulted in the development of a critical mass of modern business, industrial and distribution space. At Hawthorn, significant investment in the creation of a new business park will be complemented by the proposals for the GREAT Institute (described in section 4).

**Investment priorities in the A19 Corridor include:**

- strategic site/premises investment: the A19 Corridor is an area of major employment concentration and provides jobs for thousands of residents from East Durham and beyond, but in some places the fabric of the existing employment sites and premises is rundown and in need of considerable investment to remain a competitive and attractive location for business; priorities include Spectrum Business Park, Hawthorn Business Park, the former Murton Colliery site; and consolidation/enhancement of the former Enterprise Zone sites in Peterlee
- developing a marketing programme to attract further investment in the area's growing cluster of call/contact centres, and the development of appropriate skills programmes
- regenerating Peterlee and Seaham; Peterlee has the scope to strengthen its retail, service and employment role alongside the expansion of its residential population; there is further potential to develop Seaham's complementary role as a visitor destination and commuter location linked to the Sunderland housing market; the opportunity to develop a major film studio/media village on the strategic site to the south of Seaham is of regional

significance; with the adjoining communities of Dawdon, Horden and Easington Colliery, both are priorities for housing market renewal

- access improvements including a range of highway improvements, the A19 connection to the Southern Sunderland radial route, the East Durham link to the A1 and the potential to enhance rail services on the Durham Coast line, including the provision of new rail halts.

The East Durham A19 Corridor forms part of the successful South East Durham Growth Point bid and, with the Bishop Auckland-Darlington Corridor will play a key role in delivering more than 4,600 additional homes over the period to 2016/17. This will afford a significant opportunity to align proposals for housing and economic growth and to ensure that economic growth in the East Durham A19 Corridor is supported by a wide range of housing provision, including both affordable and executive homes.

The Growth Point programme will also act as a catalyst for wider community regeneration proposals; support the Building Schools for the Future programme and facilitate enhanced public transport provision through the County-wide Transit 15 programme.

Easington is one of the most disadvantaged parts of England with over half of all the super output areas in the area amongst the 10% most deprived in England. It will be vital to ensure that the economic opportunities outlined here benefit local residents – and that efforts to regenerate the economy are aligned with the ongoing revitalisation of the housing market and neighbourhood renewal programmes.





**Major  
Regeneration  
Initiatives**

**Seaham**

**A19**

**Murton**

**South Hetton**

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8

9

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22

12



Seaham Hall

1

East Shore Village

2

3

4

Seaham Colliery

North Dock

St Johns Square

Byron Place

5

6

7

8

Seaham Harbour Dock Company

Dawdon & Foxcover Enterprise Zone

Murton Network Space Village

Centre for Creative Excellence

Dalton Park

East Durham Link Road

Hawthorn Prestige Business Park

GREAT

9

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11

12

## improving our business infrastructure

### Objectives

- 4.1** This statement places economic growth at the heart of our efforts to regenerate Easington. Working closely with a range of private and public sector partners, our aim is to create 5,000 net additional jobs in Easington by 2021 and significantly increase our contribution to regional Gross Value Added or GVA – representing a 19% increase in employment or some 1.1% per annum.
- 4.2** This will increase our contribution to County Durham’s GVA – which, in 2004, was just 64% of the England average – and help to narrow the gap in economic performance. This growth rate is aspirational – but is nonetheless consistent with the growth rates adopted by the Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy (2.8% per annum increase in GVA, 1% per annum growth in employment).
- 4.3** Our investments in improving Easington’s business infrastructure will play a vital role in achieving this objective - supporting our efforts to boost entrepreneurship, enhance the competitiveness and productivity of our existing businesses and tackle worklessness. This means bringing forward high quality employment land and premises to support the retention and expansion of existing businesses, promote enterprise and attract inward investment – as well as improving access to markets and employment opportunities and developing new marketing and promotional activities. We will also capitalise on our proximity to other regional economic assets including Doxford Park and NETpark.



## Our objectives are to:

- support the growth of key sectors of the Easington economy
- improve the supply of high quality industrial and office accommodation to meet the demands of developers, investors and occupiers and to support the growth of key sectors of the Easington economy
- tackle run-down industrial estates through environmental improvements, and reduce the over-supply of poor quality industrial accommodation
- enhance the marketing and promotion of employment sites and premises;
- improve access to high quality business support services available through the network of managed workspace
- pursue essential transport infrastructure, including junction improvements to the A19, links to the A1(M) and improved public transport (see section 7).

## Growing our economy

**4.4** To achieve our target of 5,000 net additional jobs by 2021, we anticipate that employment growth will take across a range of economic sectors<sup>5</sup>

- retail, distribution and hospitality (1,100 net jobs)
- public administration, education and health (1,000)
- finance and business services (1,000)
- construction (800)
- geothermal energy & microgeneration (500)
- creative industries (1,500)
- transport and communications (100)
- other services (100)

**4.5** whilst Easington's manufacturing sector could decline by up to 1,000 jobs over this period.

**4.6** With our partners, the Council will tackle the market failures – low level skills, limited access to finance and markets, lack of suitable premises - which have constrained the growth of existing businesses and acted as a barrier to enterprise.

<sup>5</sup> based on the GVA growth scenario developed by CEBR and adopted in the RES/RSS.

**This statement  
places economic  
growth at the  
heart of our  
efforts to  
regenerate  
Easington**

**4.7** In February 2006 Easington was one of four County Durham local authorities awarded more than £10 million by the Department of Communities and Local Government as part of the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative. This programme will provide a significant opportunity to transform enterprise and competitiveness in some of Easington's most deprived communities. In particular the programme will:

- invest in rebuilding a culture of enterprise in Easington through awareness raising and enterprise education, targeting young people, women, BME residents and other groups under-represented in Easington's pool of entrepreneurs;
- accelerate the rate of firms starting up and achieving VAT registration; and
- support existing businesses – particularly in manufacturing, engineering, construction and other key sectors – to sustain and enhance their competitiveness and productivity and enable them to remain and grow in Easington.

**4.8** The Leitch Review highlighted the critical importance of delivering a world class skills base if the UK is to sustain its competitiveness in the global economy. Leitch argued that the UK needs to achieve a very rapid acceleration in the proportion of the working age population qualified to NVQ Level 3 or 4 on the basis that by 2020, the majority of new jobs created will require high level skills.





**4.9** To meet the aspirational target set by Leitch would require the number of graduates living in Easington to almost treble by 2020. This is a massive challenge – and one which requires a strong focus on improving the skills of the existing workforce.

**4.10** Whilst not a core part of the Regeneration Statement, we recognise that improving the skills base of Easington residents is essential if we are to enhance the productivity of existing businesses and attract further investment and jobs – and also if Easington people are to compete for jobs in the wider labour market.

**4.11** The relocation of East Durham College to their new campus at Howletch will enable the College to play an even stronger role in developing the skills of both young people and adults, and working with companies to support investment in workforce skills. We will also explore the potential to develop new training facilities including a new Engineering Technology Centre and the development of the GREAT Institute, described later.

- 4.12** We will aim to improve access to the labour market for those Easington residents on Incapacity Benefit and other working age benefits. We are already making good progress. Existing Jobcentre Plus programmes including Action Team for Jobs and Pathways to Work provide flexible support to help unemployed or economically inactive residents re-enter the labour market.
- 4.13** The Aim High Routeback programme – funded through the Northern Way – provides health and financial assessments for existing Incapacity Benefit clients referred via their GP or engaging voluntarily with the project. Clients can also consider education and training, and other types of activity.
- 4.14** All of these programmes emphasise the importance of local capacity building which links employment opportunities for local residents with the needs of local employers to offer a potential route from inactivity to employment. Building on the Regional Employability Framework resources from the Government's new Working Neighbourhoods Fund will provide further opportunities to enhance our efforts to tackle worklessness.





## Building the knowledge economy

**4.15** In future, the Easington economy will be increasingly dependent on the skills and knowledge of its businesses and workforce. Although Easington hosts a number of international businesses including Walkers Crisps, Caterpillar, TRW, NSK Bearings, SSL International, Metromail and Pride Valley Foods – just 10% of our firms are operating in the knowledge economy.

**4.16** We will support our existing businesses to move up the value chain – particularly in the manufacturing and engineering sectors – and open up new opportunities for the growth of the knowledge economy. We will also develop two opportunity sectors –

- geothermal and renewable energy
- the creative industries – via development proposals of national significance to create a new film and media complex to the south of Seaham;

**4.17** Our aim is to make Easington the UK's leading low carbon and sustainable low cost energy location. We will do this by creating large scale, district-wide demonstration projects for geothermal energy and other microgeneration technologies – and extend the environmental, economic and social benefits across the North East. The GREAT Institute will be located on a prime site at the Hawthorn Business Park in Murton.

**4.18** New opportunities are also emerging in Easington to develop our contribution to the North East's growing creative industries cluster. Investors have planning permission for a new £300 million Film and Media Complex on the strategic site to the south of Seaham.

**4.19** This includes a film studio, film and media school – developed in partnership with the North East's Universities – workspace for creative industries businesses; four star hotel and leisure facilities, this exciting project could attract up to 8 film productions to the region per annum and create up to 2,000 new jobs. The proposals include a new Centre for Creative Excellence which will play a critical role in developing local skills and working with local businesses to maximise the benefits for the local economy.

**4.20** We set out our proposals for developing tourism – focused on Seaham – in section 6 of the Regeneration Statement.



## Improving the supply of business accommodation

### Property market overview

- 4.21** There are three main industrial sites in Peterlee – the North West, South West and North East Industrial Estates, some of which fell within the former Enterprise Zone. Together with Spectrum Business Park – formerly the Fox Cover/Dawdon EZ site at Seaham – Seaham Grange and the Port of Seaham, these sites form the majority of the supply of industrial sites and premises in Easington
- 4.22** There is more than 6.2 million sq.ft of industrial floorspace in Easington<sup>7</sup> – of which just over 840,000 sq.ft (14%) is vacant. The industrial and business property market in East Durham has been driven by the presence of the East Durham Enterprise Zone which has resulted in a wide range of tax and other benefits for investors. EZ status has now ceased although some projects continue to benefit from tax breaks.
- 4.23** Across the Enterprise Zone sites, the market has been driven by investor, rather than occupier needs – and as such there has been a lack of provision of suitable premises to meet the needs of start up and expanding businesses in the up to 10,000 sq.ft size range. Prevailing market rents are currently just over £4 per sq.ft - which at present, is too low to attract speculative development<sup>8</sup> outside the EZ sites. Nonetheless, this picture is changing and take up of employment land for new development increased from 9.7 hectares in 2005/6 to almost 18 hectares in 2006/7 with more than 10 hectares developed on the Fox Cover Enterprise Zone site.
- 4.24** The Peterlee North West industrial estate is home to occupiers including Caterpillar, BHK Gliderol and Soltralentz. With funding from the Single Programme, Objective 2 and its own resources the District Council has developed Easington's first business incubator at the North West industrial estate in a £2.5 million development which incorporates 31 business units in sizes from 100-1,000 sq.ft.
- 4.25** Peterlee South West is an established industrial estate by the A19. Current occupiers include NSK Bearings, Conder Products, USG, Philadelphia Structures and NSSE. At Peterlee North East, the District Council is supporting proposals to redevelop part of the site for housing and to relocate some occupiers to other industrial sites in Peterlee.
- 4.26** Seaham Grange Industrial Estate lies on the northern edge of Seaham immediately adjacent to the A19. Formerly an Enterprise Zone site, existing occupiers include Transfer Technology Ltd, Pride Valley Foods and Fox Mouldings Ltd.



**4.27** There are also a number of smaller industrial estates serving many of the former mining settlements.

**4.28** There is just over 450,000 sq.ft of office accommodation in Easington – much of which was provided through Enterprise Zone investments. Market rents currently average £11.50 per sq.ft.<sup>9</sup>

**4.29** The former Enterprise Zone sites in Peterlee have been successful in attracting a wide range of office occupiers. Bracken Hill Business Park is almost fully occupied and is focused on call centre, administration or research and development based activities. The site benefits from direct access to the A19. Existing office employers on the Park include EDS and Virtutel. The adjoining Whitehouse Business Park is now fully occupied. Occupants include SSL and Metromail.

**4.30** Spectrum Business Park (formerly Dawdon and Fox Cover Business Parks) is a large Enterprise Zone site to the south of Seaham.

Benefiting from access to the A19 via the recently completed A182- A19 link road, occupiers include the Department of Work and Pensions – who employ more than 500 staff.

**4.31** Although Spectrum has been successful in attracting a range of occupiers, development within the Enterprise Zone has been driven by the needs of investors. At present there is more than 102,000 sq.ft of vacant floorspace. Much of this is high quality office with the flexibility to be sub divided into smaller units.

**4.32** There is no modern office accommodation in Peterlee town centre. Lee House, a 1970s seven storey office development, provides the majority of the available floorspace. There may be potential to create further office accommodation in Peterlee as part of the comprehensive redevelopment of the town centre as highlighted in section 6.

<sup>7</sup> County Durham sites and premises study, August 2005, Donaldsons.

<sup>8</sup> East Durham Business Service Property Guide June 2006.

<sup>9</sup> East Durham Business Service Property Guide June 2006.

## Proposals

**4.33** Using our planning powers, land ownership and working in partnership with other landowners, we will create a pipeline of supply to ensure that the amount of new floorspace entering the market is aligned with demand and does not lead to an over-supply of accommodation which can depress market rents and yields.

**4.34** The Regional Spatial Strategy estimates that an additional 70 hectares of land will be required for employment purposes in Easington over the period 2004-2021. The Council supports these proposals and will work with One NorthEast, private sector developers and investors to enhance the operation of the commercial and industrial property market in Easington, with a particular focus on the East Durham A19 Corridor.

**4.35** We will work with the market to ensure that new sites are brought forward through a coordinated and phased approach. Over time, this will tackle market failure and create the market conditions for private sector development to be viable without the requirement for gap funding or other forms of public subsidy. To achieve this, we will:

- work with Enterprise Zone investors, East Durham Business Service, the County Durham Development Company and other partners to improve the marketing of existing office accommodation at Spectrum Business Park and other Enterprise Zone sites to potential inward investors from elsewhere in the UK; building on our earlier success – and the skills available in the wider labour market - we will undertake market research to identify potential occupiers in the financial and business services sector and deliver a targeted marketing campaign to attract new occupiers;
- work closely with the private sector to ensure that the remaining EZ office investments at Spectrum Business Park are capable of sub-division into smaller units to ensure that they are attractive to a wide range of occupiers; to improve site branding and improve road links within the site
- develop a network of managed workspace and business incubators to foster the development of start up businesses;
- improve the supply of smaller scale industrial/workspace units up to 10,000 sq.ft to meet the needs of Easington businesses seeking to expand;
- reduce the supply of poor quality accommodation in some locations – for example Peterlee North East industrial estate – by acquiring and redeveloping vacant or obsolete units through an innovative public/private partnership (see section 8).



- 4.36** We will work in partnership with the private sector to bring forward new industrial units to meet the under-supply of accommodation in the 2,000-10,000 sq.ft range. As part of our pipeline approach, we will focus this approach on the following key sites over the next five years:
- Peterlee North West (6.5 hectares available)
  - Peterlee South West (3 hectares available)
  - Horden Seaview (11 hectares available)
- 4.37** We will bring forward new office development through a phased approach, focused initially on securing the occupancy of vacant, high quality offices at Spectrum Business Park.
- 4.38** We will also promote the development of Hawthorn Business Park at Murton as a prestige business and industrial park. This 26 hectare former colliery site has the potential to accommodate a range of employment uses with initial phases of development focused on providing high quality industrial development. Site reclamation, access and servicing works have commenced and the site will be available for development by the end of 2008.
- 4.39** The Hawthorn site has the potential for over 73,000 sq.m of business floorspace and is the proposed site for the GREAT Institute. In the medium-term, it will be important to link the site to the B1285 west of Murton to create a strategic highway link between the A19 and A1 (via the A690), and improve the safety and amenity of the village itself.
- 4.40** The draft Regional Spatial Strategy identified a 40 hectare strategic reserve site to the south of Seaham which is proposed to be reserved for a large single user. The Council has now provided planning consent to the developers and await more detailed proposals.



## Creating a network of business incubators and managed workspace

- 4.41** Building on the development of Easington's first 'business incubator' at Peterlee's North West Industrial Estate (the Novus Business Centre) we will establish a network of managed workspace and business incubators (providing more intensive business support) across the district. Opportunities are emerging at Castle Eden; at Murton, as part of the redevelopment of the former colliery site; at Peterlee's North East Industrial Estate; at North Dock, Seaham and also as part of the GREAT Initiative proposals
- 4.42** Through the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative, we will ensure that all new facilities deliver high quality support to businesses. All facilities supported by the Council will be required to ensure that tenants are encouraged to move into follow-on accommodation after 3-5 years to maintain an adequate supply of workspace/incubator facilities for new start up businesses. To facilitate this, where appropriate, we will encourage the development of 'follow-on' units linked to or adjoining these facilities.

## Improving existing industrial estates and tackling poor quality floorspace

- 4.43** In addition to establishing an improved pipeline of new commercial and industrial floorspace, we will work with the private sector to improve the environmental quality of our existing industrial estates. This is crucial to retain and 'embed' existing occupiers and to improve the occupancy of vacant premises.
- 4.44** Works will include landscape improvements, security measures, access and parking improvements and the refurbishment/redevelopment of existing premises. The Council will also explore the potential to enhance private investment in the ongoing maintenance and management of Easington's industrial estates. Over the period to 2010, the priority locations for this programme will include
- Peterlee North West
  - Peterlee South West
  - Horden Seaview
  - Seaham Grange
  - Bracken Hill
  - Whitehouse
  - Dawdon.
- 4.45** We will also support the refurbishment or redevelopment of large, poor quality industrial units to increase the supply of small and medium sized industrial units to meet the needs of local occupiers.



## Marketing and promotion

**4.46** The Council, with EDBS and CDDC, and a range of other partners, has a key role in promoting and marketing Easington. This encompasses promoting the district to potential inward investors but also to potential staying visitors and day trippers and those seeking to move into Easington. As they are in a variety of ownerships Easington's key employment sites lack a consistent approach to branding and marketing. The Council will:

- work with EDBS and CDDC and key private sector partners to coordinate the marketing and branding of existing employment sites and to promote coherent and consistent messages about the benefits of locating in Easington
- explore the potential for joint marketing of the sites along the East Durham A19 Corridor with adjoining local authorities
- consider, as part of the evolving GREAT initiative, the potential to provide a range of low cost energy solutions for businesses in Easington and to market the district as a low carbon emission/low energy cost business destination.



## creating sustainable communities

### Introduction

- 5.1** Alongside our efforts to promote economic growth and create jobs, we aim to create sustainable, mixed tenure communities across Easington and to reverse the long-term migration of young people and families out of the district.
- 5.2** This is beginning to change. In 2004, Easington had a modest net increase in its population for the first time in more than twenty years. Although County Durham's population is expected to grow by almost 3% over the next fifteen years, Government projections suggest that Easington's population will still fall to 87,400 by 2026 – a fall of more than 7% on the 2006 estimate.. More than half of this change is expected to result from out-migration; on average over the period from 1998-2002 an average of 270 Easington residents per annum moved out of the district altogether. As we highlight in section 3, this is simply not sustainable.
- 5.3** Sustainable communities provide an attractive mix of places to live for young people, families and the elderly. They provide accessible schools and community facilities, high quality leisure, shopping, and cultural provision and choice in the type and tenure of housing. Above all, successful neighbourhoods are safe, with low levels of crime and fear of crime.
- 5.4** We are already making considerable progress in our efforts to deliver sustainable communities in Easington, by tackling crime – for example through introducing street wardens in some communities; improving the environmental quality and 'liveability' of our neighbourhoods; promoting healthy living; supporting children and young people and improving community facilities.
- 5.5** We have also explored Neighbourhood Management to help involve communities in the way that local services are managed. We have extended our neighbourhood management programme in Horden and Easington Colliery to include the northern part of Peterlee.



## Objectives

- 5.6** We will reverse population decline by adopting a balanced strategy of promoting both economic and housing growth in Easington. By 2021, we aim to have stabilised Easington's population at current levels – this means retaining or attracting 7,000 people – or around 4,500 households - who would otherwise move from, or not move into the District.
- 5.7** This means providing more jobs, better quality housing and accelerating our efforts to make our neighbourhoods safe, healthy and attractive places to live. To achieve this, we will
- improve the supply of quality housing across all tenures to create more mixed tenure, mixed income neighbourhoods which promote social cohesion;
  - enhance the environmental quality of our neighbourhoods
  - integrate housing renewal with the Building Schools for the Future programme to ensure quality schools underpin efforts to attract and retain families.
  - continue to develop crime, health, environment and neighbourhood management programmes across Easington.

## The Easington housing market

- 5.8** The Easington housing market is subject to a major resurgence, with house prices increasing rapidly and levels of new build at their highest for many years. Between 1997/98 and 2002/3 gross completions averaged just 175 per annum. This increased to 382 in 2003/4 to 406 in 2004/5 and 611 in 2006/7, and this trend is expected to continue for the next five years.
- 5.9** The buoyancy of the housing market is a result of an increase in the supply of good quality housing sites in Seaham including the former Vane Tempest and Seaham Collieries. At Vane Tempest, 650 new homes have been built by Yuill Homes, Haslam Homes and Miller Homes as part of the East Shore Village development. This development includes homes for private sale, self-build and social housing along with community and leisure facilities.
- 5.10** A further residential redevelopment scheme at Parkside in Seaham, has replaced local authority housing stock with over 190 new owner-occupied/social rented homes in a £13.75m joint project by District of Easington Council and Persimmon Homes. Refurbishment of the former Police Station at Seaham into luxury flats is also complete and there have been other smaller scale developments in the town. The former Seaham Colliery has approval for over 400 new dwellings and land adjoining North Dock – formerly occupied by the now relocated Port of Seaham – could also possibly be developed for housing.

- 5.11** Average house prices in Seaham increased from £42,802 in 2001 to £131,605 in 2006 – the highest increase in Britain (213%) over this period. Anecdotal evidence suggests that new build housing in Seaham has been attractive to both local buyers and in-migrants and that the town's housing market is benefiting from improved links with Sunderland, including the Southern Radial Relief Road now under construction.
- 5.12** In Peterlee house prices have been sustained by the limited supply of new housing entering the market since the 1990s. In May 2006, the average house price in the town was £106,311 – representing an increase of 173% since 2000. This notwithstanding, 80% of homes in Easington remain in Council Tax Band A.
- 5.13** Housing choice is improving – with an increasing proportion of new three and four bedroomed properties entering the market. There has also been an increase in Right to Buy sales of former Council housing. However, the buoyancy of the housing market is also creating concerns over housing affordability. Average house prices in Seaham and Peterlee are now more than five times average gross weekly earnings (£18,345) – and this may increase the need for more affordable housing for sale and rent as part of new developments.

At the same time, there is increasing developer interest in Seaham, Peterlee, Bishop Auckland and other communities. With an appropriate regional planning framework in place which allows modest population growth, County

Durham can make a much stronger contribution to the Government's Sustainable Communities agenda. The success of the South East Durham Growth Point bid highlights the potential for further housing growth in the County although in the short to medium terms, market conditions will be very challenging and significant public sector investment, from the Homes and Communities Agency and others, is likely to be required to ensure that market failures are addressed and that proposed levels of growth can be sustained.

Economic development will play a supporting role in our efforts to promote renewal of the housing market and to help communities become sustainable. The public sector has a role to play in ensuring that new investment in schools (through Building Schools for the Future), health and other local facilities, are used to stimulate new development by the private sector, both in terms of housing and retail/commercial investment.

Currently, the global credit crunch is presenting challenges for regeneration, with a combination of reduced access to credit, uncertainty in the housing market and a slowdown in economic activity placing increased pressure on a number of regeneration schemes.

At the same time, global trends could also benefit effective regeneration, with increased mobility of labour and capital facilitating places to adopt quickly and increased opportunities to tackle environmental challenges and achieve sustainable improvements in deprived areas.



- 5.14** Just over 23% of housing in Easington – some 9,700 homes – are managed by East Durham Homes, the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO). There is increasing demand for Easington's social rented housing stock, with housing waiting lists and homelessness increasing. In part, this may reflect the increasing cost of owner-occupation in Easington.
- 5.15** More than 7,000 homes – 72% of the Council-owned stock – failed to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard in 2005. The Council is required to bring these homes up to the approved standard by 2010. At present the Council, through the ALMO, is spending around £10 million per annum on improving the quality of the housing stock. Subject to achieving a 2\* inspection rating from the Audit Commission, East Durham Homes will secure £117 million of Government investment to achieve the Decent Homes Standard across the ALMO stock.
- 5.16** Despite the increasing buoyancy of the Easington housing market and the potential for further investment to improve the quality of the Council rented stock, some neighbourhoods face more complex housing problems. Across all tenures, some housing may be unpopular or obsolete, and neighbourhoods may face complex and inter-related problems of worklessness, crime, poor facilities and a poor quality environment. Some of these neighbourhoods may not be sustainable without more radical change. Research<sup>10</sup> has identified more than 19,000 dwellings across the County as at risk of market failure/low demand, 50% of which were in Easington. These included both social rented and privately owned/rented dwellings.
- 5.17** The Coalfield Settlement study suggested that there is a need to broaden the choice of housing type and tenure across the district. It suggests there is potential to transform the rural coalfield towns and villages into successful, mixed tenure communities with a more diverse mix of residents. The report proposes a programme of stock reduction (of 2515 units) of vacant or obsolete housing complemented by the provision of new housing. However, housing renewal will only be successful if people have access to opportunities and services and neighbourhoods have clear links with areas of economic growth.
- 5.18** Building on this the Coalfield Communities Programme has identified Seaham and Peterlee as priorities for housing investment – along with the smaller settlements of Easington Colliery, Dawdon and Horden. Development Frameworks are now being developed for the priority settlements and funding is being secured by the District Council and its partners (see 5.32 below).

<sup>10</sup> ibid

## Spatial Strategy

**5.19** Our challenge is to extend Seaham's renaissance to other communities – particularly Peterlee and the coalfield villages – to increase the supply of quality housing of all tenures. In preparing its LDF, the Council will also consider the spatial distribution of new housing development across the area.

**5.20** We will focus new housing development on Peterlee and the adjoining coalfield villages – to support Peterlee's growth as a district retail and employment centre and to increase demand for local services and facilities. There are significant opportunities to intensify the development of existing neighbourhoods and for urban expansion to the east and west of the town.

**5.21** The spatial strategy set out in the Regeneration Statement seeks to achieve a greater concentration of new employment and housing in the main urban centres of Peterlee and Seaham. However, the former coalfield villages – including Easington, Haswell, Horden, Murton, Shotton, Thornley and Wheatley Hill – also form an essential part of the social and economic fabric of the district.

**5.22** Each has a distinct identity and faces distinctive challenges – worklessness, obsolete housing, crime, poor health, limited provision of local services and poor quality public transport. The Council and its partners will strengthen our efforts to work with each of the coalfield communities to ensure they have a sustainable future.

**5.23** Places like Castle Eden and Murton are already witnessing strong developer interest in new housing and are well placed to serve the main employment, retail and administrative centres of Peterlee and Seaham. We will encourage small scale housing growth in each of the coalfield villages to support local schools and services.

**5.24** Regeneration activity will focus on improving housing quality and choice (see section 5) and addressing the underlying causes of social exclusion and deprivation. As part of this process we will review the provision of community facilities – including neighbourhood shops and services - to ensure that these continue to meet the needs of local residents. We will also promote stronger linkages between the coalfield villages and the larger settlements – most notably Peterlee – including improved public transport facilities.



## Improving the supply of quality housing

- 5.25** The Secretary of State's proposed changes to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (published in February 2008) aim to ensure that the Region delivers sufficient housing supply to support economic growth of around 2.5% per annum over the period to 2021. The report proposes an average annual net increase to the district's housing stock of some 235 dwellings per annum – or 3,995 net additional dwellings over the period from 2004-2021. This is lower than recent completion rates but consistent with achieving population growth of around 2.9% - the latest forecast for the County – over this period.
- 5.26** The Council will work with its local authority partners to ensure that the Regional Spatial Strategy allocates sufficient new housing to meet our aspiration for sustainable growth and to support a balanced approach to economic and housing growth in Easington.
- 5.27** The rate of new housebuilding has increased significantly in recent years as new sites have come on stream at Seaham. Sustaining new housebuilding is vital to support economic growth and to help attract and retain people of working age.
- 5.28** To achieve our aim of stabilising Easington's population at 2006 levels by 2021, we need to build more housing, and deliver a wider range of affordable and executive homes. Over the next five years from 2007, we will aim to bring forward land for a further 2,000 new homes with the aim of achieving at least 75% of completions on brownfield land.
- 5.29** To this end, the Council has submitted a bid for 'Growth Point' status to play a much stronger role in delivering the Government's Sustainable Communities Strategy. With Sedgfield and Wear Valley districts, the Growth Point bid proposes to deliver an additional 4,800 homes over and above the targets set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy for the period 2004-2016





**5.30** This will support our objective of achieving housing market renewal in Peterlee and the former coalfield communities. The Council believes that integrating new, mixed tenure housing within existing communities – and on brownfield sites where possible – will allow our communities to become more sustainable. In some neighbourhoods experiencing low demand for the existing housing stock the provision of new housing – linked to a wider range of neighbourhood renewal measures around crime, education, health – represents a significant opportunity to achieve this.

**5.31** Whilst the Council is committed to achieving the Decent Homes Standard, in some circumstances DCH improvements may be insufficient to transform the attractiveness of a neighbourhood. Here, in full consultation with tenants we consider the full range of housing renewal options, including stock replacement, where this represents best value.

**5.32** The proportion of housing built on previously developed sites has increased significantly in recent years from just 54% in 2001/02 to 81% in 2004/5 – largely a result of the increase in the supply of large brownfield sites including Vane Tempest and Parkside. In the short-term this will be sustained as these sites and built out and new sites – e.g. Seaham Colliery – come on stream. In the longer term there is a shortage of identified housing sites and this will be a priority for the Local Development Framework.

**5.33** Building on the Growth Point proposals, we will work with the new Homes and Communities Agency and the private sector to accelerate the rate of brownfield housing development, including selective demolition and redevelopment where current housing is vacant or obsolete. The Council is exploring the range of options for delivery of the housing market renewal programme including establishing a joint venture delivery vehicle with the private sector. These issues are considered in more detail in section 8 of the Regeneration Statement.



## Building Schools for the Future

- 5.34** Schools play a pivotal role in the community, delivering a wide range of activity which engages with young people and families alike. Good quality schools can also help to attract and retain working age families. They are an essential part of a sustainable community. However, at present, school rolls in Easington are in decline and fewer primary secondary school places will be required in the short/medium-term. The Council's aspiration is to reverse this situation in the long-term through a strategy of complementary economic and housing growth.
- 5.35** The Building Schools for the Future Programme (BSF) is a Government initiative to transform secondary education through renewing or refurbishing schools over the next 10-15 years; 50% of the nation's secondary schools are to be rebuilt, 35% refurbished and the remaining 15% improved.
- 5.36** The Council is included in the third wave of the BSF programme, and Easington will benefit from investment of between £90 million and £105m in the first of four phases of activity at the County level <sup>11</sup>. All secondary schools within the district are to be retained and up to six schools will benefit from the programme; three schools are likely to be rebuilt and the others improved with a total investment of more than £30 million. Building work is expected to start in 2008-2009 and the programme will take up to 10 years to complete
- 5.37** Building Schools for the Future can play a major role in creating sustainable communities in Easington, but only if new or refurbished schools serve areas of housing growth. The Council will ensure that the development of the Strategic Business Case and subsequent stages of the BSF process are closely linked to proposals for housing renewal and that new schools provide a wide range of services and support for the communities that they serve.

<sup>11</sup> These figures also include investments in the neighbouring district of Sedgfield, which is also included in the first phase of BSF.

## Improving the environmental quality of our neighbourhoods

- 5.38** Many neighbourhoods are witnessing improvements to the quality of their local environment. A Greenspace strategy is being prepared to increase the amount, quality and use of public open space in Easington.
- 5.39** The Council has also undertaken a comprehensive review of vacant and derelict brownfield sites and established Liveability and Land and Buildings Improvement Programmes to bring sites and premises back into use and foster pride in the local environment. Parts of the area are characterised by the presence of many small brownfield sites which, on their own, may be unsuitable for development or unattractive to developers. We will work with Groundwork and a range of other partners to improve these sites together and in a way which optimises the potential to attract Landfill Tax Credit and other funding.
- 5.40** Through its Liveability programme, the Council has supported a range of new community projects. Many community facilities require investment to make them fit for purpose and the Council will work with funding partners to realise these opportunities.
- 5.41** Where appropriate, we will seek to bring together a range of 'frontline' service providers to deliver services and support through existing community buildings to create a network of multi-purpose 'community hubs' across Easington. The Council will also explore how it can help to support the growth of Easington's voluntary and community sector through, where appropriate, the transfer of community buildings to create assets for local organisations.



## P r i o r i t i e s

- work with private sector and English Partnerships to accelerate new housing opportunities in Peterlee and adjoining coalfield communities including Easington Colliery and Dawdon; identify priorities for selective demolition and redevelopment where housing is vacant or obsolete
- focus Decent Homes investments in locations where improvements can achieve significant extension of housing lifecycle and will serve as a catalyst for regeneration
- ensure proposals for new or refurbished schools under the Building Schools for the Future programme are fully integrated with housing renewal programme to ensure new schools are at the heart of new, sustainable communities
- continue investments in improving the quality of environment in those neighbourhoods with a sustainable future, including support for the improvement of brownfield sites
- invest in improving the quality of community buildings and create a network of multi-use 'community hubs' across Easington, and where appropriate consider transfer of assets to the voluntary and community sector.

# section 6

## Building Vibrant Towns and Villages



### Introduction

- 6.1** Town centres can play many roles in the economic, social and cultural life of a community. They can be a focus for shops and related services; administrative centres and for the evening economy. They may be a hub for cultural and community facilities and events, for public transport interchange – and simply meeting places for people.
- 6.2** Easington has two main town centres – Peterlee, the district’s main retail, administrative and employment centre and Seaham, which serves as Easington’s secondary shopping centre but is its primary visitor destination. In addition the out of town Dalton Park development at Murton provides a wide range of factory outlet stores which complement shopping provision in Peterlee and Seaham.
- 6.3** If we are to attract and retain families and young people and provide accessible services for the elderly and other vulnerable groups, Easington needs successful town centres. Both Peterlee and Seaham have under-performed in recent years but have the potential to transform their offer to both local residents and visitors alike.
- 6.4** Previous land use planning strategies have sought to distribute new development evenly across the key settlements of Peterlee, Seaham and the former coalfield villages. In future, our efforts to promote sustainable communities across the district must be informed by a clearer recognition of the distinct role and contribution of each of our key settlements.



## Objectives

- 6.5** The Council will encourage investment in Easington's town and village centres where this:
- strengthens Peterlee's role as the main shopping and administrative centre for the district and develops its leisure and cultural offer to support the attraction of new residents and businesses to the town;
  - develops Seaham's role as a visitor destination of sub-regional significance through the provision of new tourism, leisure and retail facilities which support growth of a sustainable tourism sector;
  - encourage further leisure/retail development at Dalton Park to create an attraction of regional significance where this complements the role of Easington's town centres; and
  - consolidating provision of shops, services and community facilities in Easington's smaller settlements to ensure that they continue to meet local needs whilst improving accessibility to the main centres of Peterlee and Seaham.

## Market overview

- 6.6** Peterlee town centre is Easington's main shopping centre but serves a catchment of just under 62,000 residents – around two-thirds of the population of the district. Hartlepool is Peterlee's main competitor, although Sunderland and the Metro Centre also attract shoppers from Peterlee<sup>12</sup>.
- 6.7** Peterlee is the fifth largest retail centre (by floorspace) in County Durham with around 600,000 sq.ft of retail and service sector units. The retail floorspace is split evenly between convenience (food) stores (including Asda and Aldi) and comparison (non-food) outlets (including Argos, Boots, Wilkinson). In 2004 less than 1% of floorspace was vacant. The main shopping centre – Castle Dene – is fully occupied.
- 6.8** Peterlee plays an important role as a convenience shopping centre. ASDA's Peterlee store is currently one of its best performing stores in the UK (by floor size). Some of the non-food elements (for example clothing) have been relocated to an adjoining unit.

<sup>12</sup> Experian Major Centres Study 2004

**6.9** East Durham College currently plays an important role in the town centre with more than two thousand full-time students. It also provides the only purpose built theatre in Easington and leisure facilities which are used by the public. The College, which occupies two key sites within the town, is to relocate to new purpose built facilities at Howletch. This will provide enhanced college facilities and unlock town centre development opportunities.

**6.10** Shotton Hall is also an important facility for the town, used for weddings and other functions. Peterlee has modest hotel provision although potential sites for an additional hotel have been identified at the South East Industrial Estate or Shotton Park.

**6.11** We explore the office market in Peterlee in section four of the Regeneration Statement.

**6.12** Seaham is the second town in the district and contains just under 230,000 sq.ft of retail floorspace of which just over one-third is occupied by service activities. 7.9% of floorspace was vacant in 2004. The town has a catchment population of 28,145 and is ranked 11th out of County Durham's 14 main centres based on floorspace.

**6.13** A number of development opportunities are being pursued, some facilitated by the relocation of the Port of Seaham to new purpose built facilities to the south of the town centre. Modus have developed a new 120,000 sq.ft shopping centre – Byron Place – on the former docks site; a new Asda opened in 2007 and redevelopment of St Johns Square, to include new shared facilities by the Primary Care Trust, Town Council and County Council is also proposed.





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- 6.14** Much of the demand for new retail and leisure facilities has been driven by Seaham's increasing popularity as a residential location. Seaham also has the potential to further develop its role as a visitor destination, building on the success of Seaham Hall and Serenity Spa which is the North East's premier luxury hotel. Proposals are currently in the planning stage for the expansion of Seaham Hall – including an additional 40 bedrooms, which is anticipated in the next 2-3 years.
- 6.15** Whilst Seaham Hall employs local people, its wider impact on the economy of the town is more limited. Some visitors to the Hall do not visit the town - partly because of the lack of complementary facilities and attractions – and this needs to change.
- 6.16** This notwithstanding, the quality of Seaham's coastal environment has been transformed through the 'Turning the Tide' programme, laying the foundations for further tourism growth. Between 1997-2002 this award winning, £10 million programme resulted in the reclamation of more than 80 hectares of land for public open space and habitat creation and the creation of more than 50 kilometres of footpaths and cyclepaths. The programme culminated in the designation of the area as a Heritage Coast.
- 6.17** Dalton Park, a specialist factory outlet shopping centre on the edge of Murton, is also an important retail/leisure centre for Easington. Focused on the sale of discount high street brands, Dalton Park has more than 50 outlet shops, café's and restaurants, a 1,200 space car park and 55 acres of parkland. Dalton Park serves an extensive catchment which extends well beyond the boundaries of County Durham.
- 6.18** Crimdon is an important coastal resort and hosts a major (750 berth) caravan park. The park was recently acquired by Haven Holidays, who have submitted plans for a £10m investment to upgrade the park and facilities.
- 6.19** Many of Easington's villages have a range of neighbourhood retail and community facilities, including Acre Rigg, Blackhall, Dawdon, Easington Colliery, Horden, Murton, Shotton, Wheatley Hill and Wingate/Station Town. Easington Village is also host to the Seaton Holme Discovery Centre which comprises a gallery and heritage centre.

## Realising Peterlee's potential

- 6.20** Peterlee is the largest settlement in the district. Designated as a New Town in 1948 with the aim of becoming the main district centre for south east Durham, the town has failed to realise its economic or housing growth potential and has yet to reach its initial population target of 60,000 – at present it is too big to be a village but too small to be viable as one of Durham's major town centres. This has had significant implications for the range of shopping and other community facilities supported by the town centre - demand for higher order retail, leisure and cultural facilities has not been sustained.
- 6.21** This represents a missed opportunity. The town's location on the A19 ensures that it has the potential to serve a much wider catchment population, encompassing parts of Hartlepool and Sedgefield districts. The proximity of new developments at Netpark and Castle Eden reinforce this view.
- 6.22** Recent masterplan studies have highlighted the potential to revitalise Peterlee and strengthen its contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of the area. Opportunities include town centre retail development; the relocation of East Durham College; the improvement of Peterlee's industrial estates and new housing development through intensification of housing densities.
- 6.23** Over the period to 2021, Peterlee will become firmly established as the district centre for Easington. It will be the district-wide administrative centre and focus for public services, become Easington's primary shopping centre and provide a range of new leisure and cultural facilities to serve the district as a whole.





**6.24** In partnership with the private sector, English Partnerships and other partners, the Council will deliver a multi-faceted regeneration strategy for Peterlee and the adjoining villages to create a ‘hub and spoke’ approach. This will involve:

- achieving a significant increase in the resident population of the town through the adoption of higher housing densities within existing neighbourhoods and limited suburban expansion; the Peterlee Masterplan identifies the potential to develop more than 3,000 new homes in Peterlee, of which more than 2,200 could be brought forward by 2016
- concentrating further housing growth in the adjoining coalfield villages to extend the ‘Greater Peterlee’ catchment area
- growth and diversification of town centre retail and leisure facilities, facilitated by the relocation of East Durham College and proposals for a mixed use or residential-led development of the former North Blunts School

- encourage public and private sector service providers across the district to consolidate their administrative functions in Peterlee to help strengthen its role as an office location

- developing public transport access, including the establishment of a new railway station as part of the expansion of services on the Durham Coast Line (see chapter 7).


**6.25** We will also improve the public realm in Peterlee town centre to act as a catalyst for private investment. New spaces will be created at Lee House and at the southern end of the shopping mall, and proposals to improve accessibility include stronger links between the town centre and the Dene and between Yoden Way and the ring road.

**6.26** Where possible, the Council will utilise its land assets to facilitate the regeneration of Peterlee, and will work with other partners including English Partnerships to assemble and jointly dispose of sites. Delivery issues are addressed in Section 8 of the Regeneration Statement.

## Seaham – the North East’s premier spa resort

- 6.27** The redevelopment of Seaham Hall to create the North East’s only five star hotel has been a major success story – and builds firmly on long-term investment in improving the environmental quality of the coast through the Turning the Tide programme. The relocation of the Port of Seaham from North Dock and redevelopment of the shopping centre both provide opportunities for tourism development.
- 6.28** Seaham has also been a focus for new housing development in recent years. The redevelopment of the former Vane Tempest and Seaham collieries has served as a catalyst for private sector investment and has improved housing choice. Together, these developments are transforming perceptions of the town.
- 6.29** Tourism represents around 10% of the regional economy. There are almost 15 million day trips to County Durham each year, most of which were to the City of Durham. Easington attracted almost 18% of these visitors – 2.6 million day visitors – and tourism was worth almost £40 million to the local economy in 2004.
- 6.30** The Regional Coastal Recreation Strategy recognises the importance of Easington’s tourism offer – and identifies further potential for development. In addition to Seaham Hall and the Heritage Coast, Easington’s visitor assets include:
- golf at Castle Eden, Seaham and a new course at Seaton;
  - sea and coarse fishing, including fishing lakes at Seaton
  - walking
  - cycling
  - bird watching
  - the National Nature Reserve at Castle Eden
  - Christian heritage, where there is potential to build on the existing network of sites including Durham Cathedral, Jarrow and along the Northumberland Coast
  - watersports.



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- 6.31** Durham's Heritage Coast extends some 14 kilometres from Sunderland to Hartlepool and is an attractive coastal landscape of magnesian limestone grasslands, cliffs, pebble and sandy beaches. Until the late 1990s this was one of the most heavily polluted coastlines in Britain, a legacy of the practice of dumping colliery waste from the six coal mines along its length.
- 6.32** This changed as a result of the Turning the Tide programme, a £10 million initiative which transformed the coastal environment through the removal of spoil heaps and the conversion of arable land to grassland. In 2001, the area secured Heritage Coast status. Much of the coast is of national and international conservation importance – the Durham Coast hosts almost all of the remaining magnesian limestone grassland habitat in Britain. It also provides a rich vein of marine and industrial heritage and the Council and its partners are seeking to develop the tourism potential of the Heritage Coast – including developing extensive walking and cycling networks – in the context of the overall approach to managing its character and biodiversity.
- 6.33** Seaham has the potential to be the main visitor destination along the Heritage Coast, and offers tourism and recreational opportunities in abundance. It is Easington's main visitor destination – but more importantly, has the potential to become the North East's premier spa resort, building on the success of Seaham Hall.
- 6.34** The town can build on several markets, including 'traditional' resort visitors, walkers, extreme water sports activity and high spending visitors to Seaham Hall, although it will need to manage its offer very carefully to attract all three. Dalton Park will also make a significant and complementary contribution to the development of tourism in Seaham, along with the proposed film studio. The initial focus will be on targeting day visitors and the short break market.

**6.35** The Council and English Partnerships produced a regeneration strategy for Seaham in the early 1990s which led to the successful redevelopment of the former colliery sites and the revitalisation of the town centre. The Council is reviewing the strategy for Seaham; future objectives for the regeneration of the town will include:

- delivering the redevelopment of the town centre to improve retail and service facilities for both residents and visitors;
- further residential development to build on the market created by East Shore Village and other sites;
- supporting the further expansion of Seaham Hall and developing complementary facilities and attractions which will widen and deepen the Hall's economic impact on the town;
- creating a new visitor 'gateway' for users of the Heritage Coast at North Dock;
- investing in basic visitor infrastructure including toilets and coach parking
- improving access to the Heritage Coast by further extending the network of footpaths
- developing Seaham's evening economy
- fully integrating Seaham into the County's destination marketing programme

- in the medium/long-term, expanding the range of visitor accommodation within the town to include budget and mid-range facilities
- developing Seaham's role as a centre for the creative industries, led by the proposed film studio.

**6.36** The relocation of the Port of Seaham has created opportunities for new retail development and, at North Dock, to release the harbour for tourism-related development. North Dock could serve as the 'gateway' for visitors to the Heritage Coast if an appropriate mix of facilities and attractions can be developed. Current proposals for North Dock include:

- a new public access route into the North dock;
- open public access to North Pier promenade;
- improvements to the existing Castle viewpoint and seating deck/shelter and further public realm enhancements;
- a refurbished lifeboat station;
- a public launch/slip facility for launching boats;
- new dock gates enabling water sports/activities within the North dock;
- the establishment of a water sports/activities centre;
- beach improvements; and
- a new small workshop and retail development



**6.37** Subsequent phases of the scheme will focus on the creation of a new visitor attraction at North Dock. This is a crucial element of the project – Seaham needs an ‘anchor’ attraction to provide an orientation point for visitors and wet weather facilities. The attraction – which must generate sufficient visitors to be financially viable – could bring together a potential mix of uses including:

- Maritime, Christian and industrial heritage – interpreting the area’s mining and maritime history and linking with Durham City and Beamish
- the arts and creative industries – incorporating gallery space to house collections owned by the Council and other prominent collectors and associated studio space;
- water sports - providing changing and other facilities, including specialist retail;
- leisure and evening economy uses, including cafés/restaurants;
- visitor accommodation; and
- high quality/high density residential development.



- 6.38** The Council will develop a detailed feasibility and business plan for North Dock with the aim of securing a flagship visitor attraction as a catalyst for the further development of Seaham's tourism offer.
- 6.39** There are further opportunities to strengthen the retail and commercial role of the town. The Bryon Place Shopping Centre opened in 2007 with occupiers including Wilkinson and Peacocks and has transformed the town centre retail environment. The regeneration of St John's Square will create two new public buildings – a multi-use resource centre and health centre – alongside housing and retail development and a major civic space.

## Murton

- 6.40** The Council, English Partnerships and Network Space are bringing forward a mixed use regeneration scheme in Murton providing new commercial floorspace, housing and an area of public realm. This will build on other key developments including Dalton Park (see below), Hawthorn Business Park and the Glebe Centre.
- 6.41** Dalton Park's location on the A19 and its extensive catchment create the potential for further expansion of factory outlet shopping and for the development of new leisure facilities which complement provision elsewhere in Easington.
- 6.42** The Council will support new leisure developments which has the potential to extend Dalton Park's catchment. Developer ING is considering a range of proposals which may include sports facilities – linked to the park developed as part of phase 1 - and health/fitness facilities and a cinema. The Council will work closely with ING to realise these opportunities and to strengthen Dalton Park's links with Seaham and Hawthorn Business Park.

## Crimdon

- 6.43** Crimdon is an important coastal resort and hosts a major (750 berth) caravan park. The park was acquired by Haven Holidays who's investments should realise a considerable improvement in the quality of the offer available, boosting tourism assets and revenues in the district in the longer term. We will work with the operators to realise the potential of this important asset.





## Connecting Easington

### Introduction

- 7.1** Connectivity to markets and local accessibility are vital attributes of successful places. Easington benefits from good access to the strategic highway network via the A19, which runs north-south through the district and connects Easington with both the Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley conurbations. Improving these links is vital for the future of the Easington economy – our businesses need better access to markets and skills, and local residents need improved access to employment and learning opportunities outside the district.
- 7.2** The A19 is financed and operated by a private contractor (Autolink) on behalf of the Highways Agency. It accommodates a significant volume of both through traffic and local traffic and further investment is required to upgrade junction capacity and allow new development to be accommodated.
- 7.3** The A181 links the A19 and Durham and the A182 connects the district with Houghton le Spring and the north of the County. However, east-west road links across the district require ongoing investment and there is poor linkage between the primary growth corridors of the A19 and A1.
- 7.4** The Durham Coast Line is also a significant asset, linking Newcastle with Middlesbrough via Sunderland and Hartlepool with a halt at Seaham. Northern Rail provide an hourly service between Newcastle and Hartlepool. There is further potential to improve the frequency of regional services and link these with the new services to London.



- 7.5** Following relocation to the south of the town, the Port of Seaham has doubled its cargo handling in recent years and is now commercially profitable, handling around 600,000 tons of freight including aggregates and timber. The Port of Seaham complements facilities at Teesside and Sunderland. Expansion has generated increased demand for logistics facilities within the port and also at the adjoining Spectrum EZ site which houses logistics businesses including Robertsons and Yearsleys and also Cumbrian Seafoods.
- 7.6** East Durham has low levels of car ownership and some communities are isolated, making it difficult for people to get to work, go shopping or access leisure facilities. Public transport accessibility within the district is poor and was identified as a major constraint by consultees on the County's second Local Transport Plan, prepared in 2005/6.
- 7.7** The second LTP proposes to develop a significantly enhanced public transport network through Transit 15, a programme to improve the frequency and quality of bus links between County Durham's main towns. This will be delivered through increased investment in bus interchanges, public transport information and marketing and improvements in frequency and punctuality of services.

## Objectives

- 7.8** The Council's objectives for connecting Easington are:
- developing improved local rail services on the Durham Coast Line and high speed services to London;
  - securing a new rail halt for Peterlee;
  - developing improved bus services connecting Peterlee, Seaham and the former mining villages and improved links to Sunderland and Durham;
  - securing junction improvements on the A19 to increase its capacity and accommodate further growth at the district's main employment locations; and
  - improving east-west highway links, including completion of the A182 East Durham Link Road
  - developing Seaham's role as a regional logistics centre through the further expansion of the Port of Seaham and the attraction of road and rail-based logistics services



## Improving rail services

- 7.9** The Durham Coast Line is an important asset for the district, connecting Easington with both Teeside and Tyne and Wear. Sunderland is just 7 minutes by rail from Seaham. The Office of Rail Regulation has approved access rights for new daily services from Sunderland to London, which commenced at the end of 2007 operated by Grand Central Trains..
- 7.10** Despite this, train services are not frequent enough and there is only one rail halt at Seaham. These factors limit the potential for Easington residents to use rail services to access employment, leisure and other activities outside the district, and for in-commuters and visitors to Easington.
- 7.11** The Durham Coast Line was identified as an investment priority through the Tees Valley Rail Strategy and whilst the former Strategic Rail Authority invested in increasing the frequency of services, planned investments in further rail halts have yet to be made.
- 7.12** The development of fast link services between Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley is identified in the Northern Way Growth Strategy, as well as the Regional Spatial Strategy. Current proposals for the Tees Valley Metro would increase capacity at the Bowesfield and Eaglescliffe Junctions which could allow additional services or enable existing rail services to use the Durham Coast Line, enabling faster connections between the two City-Regions and providing major benefits to the district.
- 7.13** The lack of a train station at Peterlee is a major constraint to the growth of the town. The potential for a new halt - either at Horden or Easington Colliery - to serve the coastal villages and Peterlee has been identified. There may be scope for a private sector partner to fund some of the improvements required, if this can be linked to benefits from planning gain. If a new halt can be secured in Peterlee then the possibility of direct trains between the district and London, with all the benefits this would bring, is a realistic prospect.
- 7.14** The recently published Local Transport Bill and the emergence of City Regional delivery structures may create the opportunity for Government to devolve more decision making and resources on transport. The Council will work with partners to press the case for improved commuter rail services on the Durham Coast Line and for a new rail halt at Peterlee to improve access to local and pan-regional rail services.

## Strategic road links

- 7.15** The A19 corridor is a major asset but also requires some investments if it is to be fully utilised in terms of regeneration and economic growth impacts. The main challenge at present is the poor configuration of some of the main junctions, which is currently limiting development. There are only two full north-south double junctions on the A19 through the district.



- 7.16** The Highways Agency has objected to some developments in Easington on the basis of the limited capacity of the A19. The Council will work with the Highways Agency and developers to facilitate further investment in junction capacity along the A19 Corridor and to ensure that highways capacity does not constrain development in Easington. We will also explore the potential to secure private investment in improving highways capacity through section 106 or planning obligations.
- 7.17** The East Durham Link Road will significantly improve east-west links across Easington and enhance access to the A1. Funding has been secured for the first stage of the road which will link the A19 to Hawthorn Business Park at Murton. The second and subsequent stages – to Murton and west to the A690 and on to the A1 are awaiting confirmation of funding. This is an important priority for the district and the Council as it will link the employment opportunities in Seaham and Murton to employment sites at Rainton Bridge and Dragonville more effectively.
- 7.18** Completion of the Sunderland Southern Radial Route will result in significantly improved links between the north of the district, Sunderland City Centre and the Port of Sunderland. This will further strengthen Easington's housing market and create opportunities for new logistics facilities serving both the Port of Sunderland and the Port of Seaham.
- 7.19** Such infrastructure will enable East Durham to contribute significantly to the regional economic growth between the three main conurbations of the region.

## Priorities

- accelerate implementation of the East Durham Link Road to improve links between the A19 and A1
- work with Network Rail, Northern Rail and the Tees Valley Partnership and other partners to develop proposals for improved services on the Durham Coast Line
- identify options for the location of a new rail halt at Peterlee and explore the potential for both public and private sector funding
- support the implementation of the Transit 15 programme to enhance the frequency and quality of bus services linking the Durham towns
- promote development of new logistics facilities at Seaham

## M a k i n g i t H a p p e n

### I n t r o d u c t i o n

**8.1** Easington is moving forward - much has been achieved over the last few years. Seaham is being transformed physically and economically, with major investments in Seaham Hall, redevelopment of the former colliery sites, relocation and expansion of the port and the creation of a vibrant new housing market. There are further opportunities to develop tourism at North Dock.

**8.2** In Peterlee, the development of a new College campus will create not only a 21st century Further/Higher Education facility for the district, but will also open up opportunities for the redevelopment of the town centre. Further, parallel housing and economic growth in Peterlee and the adjoining villages will allow the town to realise its potential as a district centre.

**8.3** Easington is at a turning point. Over the next ten years it is vital that we build on our success to:

- create a sustainable, growing economy;
- develop sustainable communities which will attract and retain young people and families;
- enhance the district's educational and cultural infrastructure; and
- improve connectivity within Easington, to the Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley conurbations and beyond



**8.4** The Regeneration Statement highlights some of the physical regeneration priorities that, together, will help realise our vision for Easington. These projects will reinforce wider efforts to tackle social exclusion (through the working neighbourhoods funding and Area based grant allocations and other related programmes), reduce worklessness and boost enterprise and the competitiveness of our existing business. A sustained, long-term and holistic programme of neighbourhood renewal is still required – including investment to improve the quality and range of housing provision – to support efforts to revitalise the County Durham economy. These elements are inextricably linked – one cannot happen without the other.

The Working Neighbourhoods Fund will be an important mechanism to ensure that worklessness is addressed in the most deprived areas of the County, complementing mainstream funding programmes. Poor health continues to be a major barrier to re-entering and remaining in the labour market and it will be important to ensure a continued focus on tackling health inequalities across the County.

We will achieve this by:

- ensuring that our investments contribute directly towards wider economic development and sustainable communities objectives;
- concentrating economic growth where there is greatest potential to link employment with our most deprived communities, and provide sustainable transport to enable people in those communities to benefit;
- investing in the quality of our new buildings and the public realm to help raise the aspirations of developers and investors.

**8.5** The 2006 Local Government White Paper Strong and Prosperous Communities' and the highly inter-related proposals from the Lyons inquiry encourage local authorities to put place shaping - whereby they exercise their strategic leadership role to bring together a range of partners to deliver economic, social and environmental wellbeing – at the very heart of their work.

- 8.6** From April 2009, Easington District Council will merge into a single, unitary authority for County Durham. During this period of transition, the District Council will play a key role in the regeneration process, through
- providing leadership – in setting out a vision for the future and integrating the efforts of our partners to realise the vision
  - by working with regional organisations like One NorthEast and the Government Office and our partners in both the Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley City Regions to ensure that Easington’s interests are fully recognised and to enable the new authority to play a stronger role in the economic, social and cultural life of the region
  - by promoting the use of the Council’s own assets to support the regeneration process.

## Providing leadership

- 8.7** Easington lies firmly between the North East’s urban conurbations of Durham, Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley, on one of the key strategic routes (the A19) which connects them. Government is placing emphasis on the role of the ‘City Region’ in driving regional economic growth. The White Paper further encourages the larger English Cities to collaborate with those local authorities who form part of their hinterland to tackle housing, transport, labour market and other issues which span local government boundaries. Building on the success of the Greater London Authority, the White Paper encourages proposals to devolve powers to City Region authorities and to encourage more elected City Region mayors.
- 8.8** Although Easington lies on the edge of both City Regions rather than at their core, the area has significant potential to both contribute to and benefit from City Regional growth. The emergence of new forms of governance creates the opportunity for devolved decision making on key themes including economic strategy, transport and employment – and to focus on fewer, more strategic priorities with the potential to deliver substantial impacts.



**8.9** Easington will benefit from the emerging City Regional governance arrangements through:

- devolving transport strategy and funding to regional and/or city regional level, affording the opportunity to boost Easington’s case for enhanced rail services and to enhance bus services within and beyond the district; we will seek to influence the development of proposals for a Tees Valley Passenger Transport Authority to ensure that they benefit Easington residents
- devolving funding for urban renaissance programmes from regional to city regional level; and
- developing a city regional approach to employment and skills strategy and achieving improved partnership working at the local level with key stakeholders including the Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus.

**8.10** Easington can also make a distinctive contribution to the City Regional economy, through:

- developing the geothermal energy/microgeneration sector and promoting Easington as a low energy/low carbon location; this can play a major role in delivering the regional Science City agenda and will complement the regional focus on near market onshore/offshore wind technologies;
- developing the role of Seaham in supporting creative industries and as a year round tourism destination targeting a number of distinct markets (spa visitors, extreme sports, traditional seaside visitors);
- boosting the competitiveness of the manufacturing and engineering sector; almost 15% of manufacturing employment in the Tyne and Wear City Region is in Easington; and
- creating sustainable, mixed tenure communities across the coalfield villages to complement the regional focus on housing market renewal in the conurbations.

**8.11** The District Council represents the County Durham local authorities in developing proposals for the Tyne and Wear City Region. We will continue to play an active role in developing city regional strategy and governance arrangements in order to ensure that Easington and Northern parts of County Durham benefits in full from devolution of strategy and investment decisions.

**8.12** This strategy forms part of our response to the Government’s desire for local authorities to develop their place shaping role. This is an exciting opportunity for the new unitary authority to focus its activities on where it can make a distinctive contribution, add most value and show true leadership

## M a k i n g u s e o f o u r a s s e t s

- 8.13** Although the City Region agenda may open up new funding opportunities, the funding environment is quite challenging following the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. At regional level, the message is clear; One NorthEast is likely to support fewer, more strategic projects which deliver regional scale impacts.
- 8.14** We will respond to this agenda by ensuring that we prioritise only those projects which are likely to transform the economic performance of the district, or make a substantial contribution to achieving sustainable communities in Easington. We will ensure that the business case for key projects – for example the GREAT Institute or housing market renewal in Peterlee and the coalfield villages – demonstrates the regional impact of these proposals.
- 8.15** We also recognise that, given the likely pressures on public sector resources following the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007, local government will need to play a much stronger role in delivering Easington's regeneration priorities by leveraging its existing land and premises assets to attract substantially higher levels of private investment than have been achieved so far.
- 8.16** With the other Durham local authorities, the Council is already exploring how its land assets can help to fund housing market renewal, and to facilitate implementation of the Peterlee Masterplan, working in partnership with English Partnerships/the Homes and Communities Agency.
- 8.17** Working in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency, County Council and other key partners we propose to extend this approach to explore the creation of an arms-length joint venture partnership that will accelerate the regeneration programme in East Durham, lever in both private and public investment and create a revolving fund with potential to recycle profits in ongoing projects.
- 8.18** A number of successful public private partnerships have been developed across the UK with a focus on developing land and premises in locations where a degree of market failure is present. Many share the core objective of recycling returns for future investment. In the East Midlands Blueprint has been established by property developer and investor Igloo Regeneration, East Midlands Development Agency and English Partnerships. The fund aims to improve the provision of sites and premises for SMEs in the East Midlands and is developing an initial portfolio of mixed-use regeneration sites in Leicester, Derby and Nottingham with a completed development value of over £500m.



**8.19** Similarly Priority Sites is a public/private partnership between the Royal Bank of Scotland and English Partnerships. The fund specialises in industrial and commercial development in areas demonstrating a degree of market failure and has now developed a portfolio of more than 2 million square feet since it was established in 1997.

**8.20** With partners, the Council will undertake detailed feasibility work on the establishment of a revolving fund. Subject to feasibility, the Council could make available up to £50 million of land and premises assets to underpin the creation of a joint venture – or a series of joint ventures – with private sector investment partners. This approach would:

- reduce the requirement to seek public sector gap funding for property development projects on a case by case basis;
- secure the commitment of One NorthEast, English Partnerships and other stakeholders to a long-term regeneration programme in Easington;
- align the powers and funding of key public sector partners with the commercial expertise and approach to risk of the private sector
- create more attractive investment opportunities for the private sector by ‘scaling up’ and packaging sites together
- provide the public sector with greater control over the type and quality of development brought forward through its influence as a landowner.

**8.21** We will also seek matching contributions from public sector stakeholders including One NorthEast and English Partnerships. English Partnerships holds a number of land assets including former colliery sites (included within the Coalfields Programme) and former New Town Development Company assets in Peterlee.

**8.22** The public sector would participate as a full joint venture partner and take an appropriate share of the commercial risk and return. Returns would be reinvested on a revolving basis in an ongoing physical regeneration programme, focusing on projects which require a degree of public sector support to overcome market failure.

**8.23** Some of the priority projects that could be developed through an arms length development company include:

- housing developments in Peterlee;
- mixed use development of the former Murton Colliery site;
- a programme of managed office/workspace provision across East Durham
- developing a new rail halt at Horden or Easington Colliery.
- highway improvements on t junction, the A19 and the local network

## Measuring our progress

**8.24** We will measure progress towards realising our vision for Easington against a limited number of 'headline' targets. These will include

- creating 5,000 net additional jobs in the district between 2006-2021
- stabilising our population at 2006 levels (94,000 residents) by 2021
- increasing Gross Value Added per capita to above the North East average by 2021
- exceeding the North East average for VAT registrations per 10,000 working age residents by 2021
- increasing our employment rate to the North East average by 2021
- achieving a year on year increase in the number of Easington residents who are very satisfied with their quality of life.

**8.25** These outcomes fit within the framework of the draft Local Area Agreement developed by the County Durham Partnership which includes a mix of national and local indicators to measure progress towards the achievement of the long-term vision for the County. The economic indicators included in the draft LAA include:

- Overall employment rate
- Working age people in out of work benefits
- Average earning of employees
- VAT registration rate

alongside a number of statutory indicators covering early years and secondary education.

**8.26** The outcomes will also contribute to the Tyne and Wear City Region priorities included in the Multi Area Agreement (2008) The MAA highlights progress on improving employment, economic improvement and transport would bring added value to the economy via joint authority working across existing boundaries.

**8.27** The LAA will provide an important mechanism to measure our interim progress against our vision and the headline outcome targets that underpin the Regeneration Statement.



This document is available on request in large print, Braille or audio format as well as the following languages.

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এই ডকুমেন্ট অনুরোধে বাংলায় পাওয়া যায়।

本文件可以應要求，製作成中文(繁體字)版本。

Ce document est disponible en français sur simple demande.

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Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany w języku polskim.

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درخواست پر یہ دستاویز اردو میں بھی مل سکتی ہے۔

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