

Item 6

KEY DECISION

ITEM NO

REPORT TO COUNCIL

25 September 2008

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Portfolio: Planning & Development

Public Participation on the preparation of the Spennymoor Town Centre Area Action Plan

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and its associated Regulations govern the delivery of the Local Development Framework process. The Regulations are currently being revised. Both Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and Regulation 25 of the draft Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 states that in order to take forward this document, the Borough Council must undertake early consultation and public participation with its community. The publication of this document will be the first step to meet requirements of Regulation 25 on Public Participation.
- 1.2 DTZ has been commissioned by Sedgefield Borough Council to assist in the preparation of an Area Action Plan for Spennymoor Town Centre. The aim of the Area Action Plan is to create a robust planning policy framework, which will facilitate the creation of a vibrant and progressive town centre positioned to provide the facilities and services demanded by Spennymoor's growing population.
- 1.3 During the six-week period of formal public participation, there will be a series of events where the local community can come forward with their views. The methods of consultation will be aligned with those outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement.
- 1.4 This Public Participation Report considers the key issues facing and a series of options on how these can be addressed. There will need to be further community engagement before the Council can submit the Area Action Plan to the Secretary of State. Copies of the Public Participation Report and Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report have been placed in the Members Rooms.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council authorise the Report to be published for consultation.

3 SPENNYMOOR TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN

Background

- 3.1 Improving the physical environment and economic success of the town is one of the Council's key priorities, as indicated in the Council's Core Strategy Preferred Options Document (June 2007), which has the following aims:
1. To enhance social inclusion and well being;
 2. To improve the quality of where people live;
 3. To reduce the impact of development on climate change;
 4. To protect and enhance natural resources; and,
 5. To encourage and support a competitive and diverse economy.
- 3.2 In addition to this, the Regional Spatial Strategy (adopted July 2008) identifies Spennymoor as a regeneration town in the Durham Coalfield Regeneration area and therefore it is important that the function and vitality of Spennymoor is supported so that it can meet the local shopping, recreational and community need. Spennymoor has a particular role to play as a main focal point for readily accessible local employment opportunities, services and facilities for its residents and those in the surrounding areas.
- 3.3 The production of the Area Action Plan is a crucial step in achieving this, as it provides the statutory planning document to underpin the main developments the Council wishes to bring forward to regenerate Spennymoor Town Centre. The Area Action Plan will look at amongst other things:
- A vision of how Spennymoor Town Centre should evolve;
 - The scale and location of new shopping facilities;
 - Managing the town centre to enable the full range of shopping facilities to be provided;
 - The level and location of employment uses such as offices in the town centre;
 - The level and location of housing in the town centre;
 - Improving transportation to and around the town centre; and,
 - Enhancing and protecting the environmental design quality of the town centre.
- 3.4 As part of the production of the Area Action Plan, DTZ held a specific workshop with key stakeholders in July 2008. DTZ used the event to ask what their aspirations for the future of the town centre were and to discuss initial ideas for the Area Action Plan. These discussions fed into the refinement of the draft Options, which are presented within this document.
- 3.5 The document has identified three principal areas where physical change could take place within the town centre. These are:
- Festival Walk shopping centre and environs;
 - Former Gas Works site; and,
 - Cheapside.
- 3.6 All of these areas are considered to offer significant development potential which could underpin the regeneration of the town centre. Festival Walk is currently in poor condition with a number of voids and is in need of renewal. The former Gas Works

site is a vacant site that occupies an important position at the gateway to the town from the A688 and offers the opportunity to improve the linkages between this and the town centre. The Cheapside site is currently occupied by a number of public service buildings that are all in a poor condition and in low-density surroundings, yet occupying a central position in the town centre.

- 3.7 For each site, the document identifies possible ways of redevelopment. For Festival Walk it is envisaged that this could take the form of a shopping centre; a food store; or residential led redevelopment. The Former Gas Works site could be redeveloped with either employment, residential or retail/leisure as the main driver. For the Cheapside area, options considered were the development of either a Civic Quarter or a mixed-use led scheme.

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal

- 3.8 The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report has been prepared alongside this Public Participation document. The Scoping Report has been prepared in accordance with the guidance contained in the ODPM document 'Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents' (2005). The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report has been prepared using the same format as the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report for the Core Strategy. In line with Government guidance, the purpose of this Sustainability Appraisal Scoping report is to:

- identify environmental, social and economic objectives identified in other Plans, Policies and Programmes that are relevant to the Spennymoor Town Centre Area Action Plan;
- to assess the environmental, social and economic characteristics of the Spennymoor Area;
- to ensure that, as far as possible, the Spennymoor Town Centre Area Action Plan achieves the objectives of sustainable development; and,
- to set out a framework for carrying out the remainder of the sustainability appraisal.

Appropriate Assessment

- 3.9 Following this initial participatory period, the options for the Town Centre Area Action Plan will be considered and worked up to form part of a second stage of community engagement. As part of this process, an Appropriate Assessment screening process will be undertaken. This is required for any proposed plan or project which may have a significant effect on one or more European sites, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and which is not required for the management of those sites. Schedule 1 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 transposes into English Law the requirement to carry out a screening process for Appropriate Assessment of Local Development Documents, such as the Area Action Plan.

Next Steps

- 3.10 The publication of this document starts the Council's process to meet the requirements of Regulation 25 of the Draft Regulations. Following consultation of the various options and analysis of the consultation responses, each option will be

subjected to sustainability appraisal to help determine which has the most beneficial social, economic and environmental impacts. A further round of engagement will be necessary to provide the community with a preferred list of options for the Town Centre. This is programmed for January 2009.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Funding is from the government's Local Authority Growth Initiative (LABGI) Enabling Capital Investment. Cabinet considered a framework for the use of this funding on 13th September 2007.
- 4.2 Officer time has been considered and scope has been identified within the Forward Plans and Regeneration Teams. The document will need to be publicised in the local press and a number of documents to be printed. This cost will be met from the Local Development Framework budget.

5 CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 All consultation will be undertaken, in accordance with the statutory consultation procedures as prescribed by The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and the draft Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008. Further details can be found in the Borough Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (June 2006).
- 5.2 Consultation on this Document will take place for a period of 6 weeks commencing on 6th October 2008.

6 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Links to Corporate Objectives / Values

The Area Action Plan will provide a framework for action, which will support the Corporate/Transitional Plan's Aim of improving business and employment opportunities and a number of Community Strategy Aims.

6.2 Legal Implications

The document must be published in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and the draft The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.

6.3 Risk Management

If the Area Action Plan is not produced, it will stifle the planned regeneration of the town centre and could lead to inappropriate development within it.

6.4 Health and Safety

No additional implications have been identified.

6.5 Sustainability

Sustainability Appraisal is covered in the main body of the report.

6.6 Equality and Diversity

The Report will carry the Council language panel and be available on request in accordance. It will also be placed on the Council's website in pdf format.

6.7 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion issues are discussed with the Document.

6.8 Procurement

There are no procurement issues.

7 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None.

8 **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Spennymoor Town Centre Area Action Plan – Issues and Options Report
Spennymoor Town Centre Area Action Plan – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

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Key Decision Validation: This is a Key Decision as a decision made by Cabinet in the course of developing proposals to Council to amend the **policy framework**.

Background Papers:

Cabinet Report, 13 September 2007: Utilising Local authority Business Growth Initiative Fund, Report to Cabinet

Cabinet Report, 27 September 2007: Commissioning of an Area Action Plan for Spennymoor Town Centre

Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning

Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

Draft Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008

Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents, 2005

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>