

Appendix 2

Easington Development Framework: Core Strategy and Development Management Preferred Options

“Planning the Future of Easington District, Core Strategy and Development Management, Development Plan Document” May 2008

(This report comprises spatial and planning policy preferences for Easington’s Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy and Development Management, following earlier consultation about issues and options; the County Council agreed its representation on these at Planning Committee on 20 September 2006).

Strategic Objectives

The Core Strategy’s preferred objectives are:-

- to strengthen and diversify the local economy
- to create sustainable attractive communities
- to provide enough good quality housing to ensure residents have access to a suitable and affordable home
- to improve accessibility throughout and beyond the District
- to protect and enhance the District’s natural and built environment

County Council recommended comment:-

Whilst this iteration has produced more strategic objectives, they all remain in line with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and largely accommodate previous advice from the County Council, particularly in respect of housing policy and a widened scope for environmental protection and enhancement. The Core Strategy also links its high-level objectives and preferred policies to the District’s Community Strategy and other relevant plans and programme priorities satisfactorily.

Spatial Strategy

The Spatial Strategy applies both an hierarchical and sequential approach to places, determining a variety of growth, support, promotion, and limiting action, as follows:-

- Peterlee main town (linked to Horden, Easington and Shotton); to be a focus for regenerative growth.
- Seaham main town (linked to Dawdon and Murton); to be supported as a service and employment centre and visitor destination.
- A19 corridor; to be promoted for economic growth.
- Larger villages; development to be supported commensurate with local service centre roles, and using previously developed land capacity. The focus is on renewal and improvement, with investment required to provide the infrastructure for local jobs, services and community facilities.
- Smaller villages and hamlets; development to be limited to meet local needs whilst respecting conservation and environmental objectives.

County Council recommended comment:-

The County Council welcomes this interpretation of a spatial approach and specifically the prioritising of development towards the main towns of Peterlee and Seaham which accords with their RSS “regeneration” designations.

- *The availability and choice of previously developed land around larger villages will require careful examination so that the sustainability of towns and linked settlements is not diluted. The statement in para. 3.17 that development should be of an appropriate scale and not undermine the role of the two main towns is welcomed.*
- *Settlement boundaries are to be reconsidered when a subsequent site allocations DPD is prepared, and this approach is supported.*

Delivering a Stronger and Diversified Local Economy

The preferred option (serving 17 sub-objectives, with policies on Providing for Employment, Town and Local Centres, Tourism and Visitor Attractions, and Sustainable Travel and Accessibility) is a strategy that maximises use of existing employment sites, supports development and growth in a broader range of economic sectors, and strengthens the role of town centres.

County Council recommended comment:-

The County Council notes and approves of the:-

- *alignment with RSS general employment allocation (110hectares), including the significant media-orientated use of land south of Seaham;*
- *emphasis on town and other centres for employment and retailing, the latter using a sound interpretation of the hierarchy recommended in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 6 and the RSS locational strategy;*
- *identification of coastal venues (and others) with potential for tourism and leisure serving the local community as well as employment drivers;*
- *alignment with the County Council’s Local Transport Plan 2 (LTP2), parking and accessibility guidelines, and the important role of intra-district travel efficiency as well as (better) external links. The suggestion of a further rail halt in addition to Seaham on the Coast line needs to be assessed in relation to economic viability.*

Delivering Sustainable Communities

The preferred option (serving 8 sub-objectives) is based around a phased approach to the demolition and regeneration of the District’s housing stock in its most deprived areas, and taking direction from the spatial strategy for growth.

Housing

RSS net housing additions per annum (to 2021) are replicated as a minimum target, although the locally planned variation averages 48% above these to year 2024 to take account of the County Durham Growth Bid in a distribution across Peterlee, Seaham, Larger Villages, and Rest of the District areas. A peak occurs in the first phase up to 2009 which reflects the state of current

commitments. In terms of house-type, the demands from families, the elderly, and affordability are highlighted giving an opportunity, through replacement provision, to shape places where people will want to live and thereby balancing the contrasts of high/low demand in the District and outward migration mentioned in RSS.

The Derelict Housing and Building Programme anticipates a figure of 80% (up to 2016) for the re-use of Previously Developed Land (PDL), at building densities above 30 per hectare. The PDL ratio is considerably higher than the 65% County average set by RSS in Policy 31, whilst the proposed densities are in line.

An overall, albeit negotiable, 20% (at 50% discounted sale and 50% for social rent) is proposed as an affordability target on housing developments of 15 dwellings or more.

Six criteria are specified as measures of the need and demand for the provision of accommodation for gypsies and travellers.

County Council recommended comment:-

The County Council endorses the District's objectives and the referencing of action to appropriate guidance (eg. on 15 year supply, affordability, and gypsies). A decision on the County Durham Growth Bid is still awaited from Government and the scale of enhanced future housing provision largely depends on a positive outcome. Nevertheless, the Government approach on housing numbers means that the RSS figures are no longer a ceiling, but represent a guideline. LDFs may make the case for higher figures as appropriate. The outcome of the Growth Bid and results of the County Durham Strategic Housing Market Assessment will need to be taken into account as part of the RSS mini-review of housing (just commencing) and work on a future county-wide LDF.

Green Space, Sport and Recreation

The overarching policy seeks to support schemes that protect and enhance the quantity, quality and accessibility of facilities and to develop a green hierarchy of these spaces: strategic (i.e. country parks and linear routes that attract outside visitors as well as local patronage), urban (larger parks in the main centres of Peterlee and Seaham, and long-stay community parks predominantly in larger villages); and neighbourhood (play areas and amenity green space for everyday visit, principally on foot).

All new residential developments will be expected to contribute to sustaining the green hierarchy.

The loss of specific facilities will only be allowed where it can be demonstrated that it is not required at that location nor lead to the degradation of similar amenities in the vicinity.

County Council recommended comment:-

The County Council supports a better quality of life and health, and improved visual amenity, through this well defined and evidenced hierarchy of green space, sport and recreation facilities. However, the Council suggests an even

stronger reference to coastal opportunities to mirror the recommendations about the potential future management of grasslands' areas around housing.

Delivering an Improved and Protected Environment

The preferred option, addressing 11 sub-objectives, seeks to improve and protect the environment whilst capitalising on leisure and tourism resources through the provision of an attractive urban and rural landscape. The District is seeking to build on natural assets (eg. the Heritage Coast, and Castle Eden Dene Nature Reserve) and the best re-use of its industrial heritage.

This section also attends to the climate change issue, and in which the LDF is described as a tool to define environmental limits, a reduction of greenhouse gases and the acceleration of renewable energy use in line with national targets.

County Council recommended comment:-

The County Council recognises that the document is much improved in its environmental content by incorporating previous observations from the Issues and Options stage and an appropriate emphasis on the special qualities of the Heritage Coast.

Four aspects are given policy status.

Promoting High Quality Design

The policy lists 7 factors determining this judgement and specifying the content of Design and Access Statements, where required.

County Council recommended comment:-

The County Council considers the local interpretation of RSS Policy 5b is appropriate.

Sustainable Development and Renewable Energy

Through the application of 4 proposals' criteria, this policy aims to encourage sound and energy efficient construction, to avoid pollution, to minimise the use of resources (including water), and to avoid flooding risk. Specific measures include:-

- commercial developments over 1000 sq. metres are expected to provide a minimum of 10% energy from local renewable sources and meet at least the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) Very Good Standard;
- residential schemes over 10 houses to provide at least 10% of energy from renewable sources and meet at least Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes;
- where on-site renewable energy sources cannot meet the relevant mark, an additional 10% reduction in overall energy consumption will be required.

The policy recognises a need to balance such benefits against any potentially adverse impact from renewable sources (egs. solar power, wind power, biomass) on the landscape, nature conservation, and wildlife - including bird migration patterns.

On flood risk, the District will act on the contents of its Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).

County Council recommended comment:-

The County Council welcomes the selective approach to renewable energy and reduced carbon emissions targets in line with the recent PPS1 supplement on Climate Change.

Protection and Enhancement of Landscape and Local Heritage

This policy provides for the especially sensitive management of a number of named locations: the Durham Heritage Coast; the East Durham Limestone Plateau; the Great North Forest; the Green Belt east of the A19 north of Seaham, and north of the B1404 and west of Seaton; and the District's four Conservation Areas.

More generally, the policy targets the special characteristics of listed and unlisted buildings of local importance, sites of archaeological interest, and the historic parks and gardens at Passmore Pavilion in Peterlee and the Castle at Castle Eden.

County Council recommended comment:-

Whilst the County Council welcomes a higher profile for the built environment in this section, it does not sufficiently embrace town centre locations.

Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

The District defines these features in terms of the interaction of (unspecified) wildlife and the existing designation of important locations eg. Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of High Landscape Value, ancient woodland and veteran trees as described in the County Durham Biodiversity Action Plan.

In addition, the relevant Planning Policy Statement (PPS9) is sourced to direct the promotion of biodiversity and at least neutral outcomes on habitats and species from new developments and the re-use of land.

County Council recommended comment:-

The County Council suggests that it would be helpful to recognise the possibility of amendments and/or extensions to those areas under special designation and control in the future.

Planning Obligations

In 2006, Easington District outlined 6 issues on which it consulted in respect of the Council's Development Control function of responding to planning applications. In the present combined document, much of the response has been absorbed implicitly into Core Strategy Preferred Options. What remains explicit is the role of development management in securing wider community

benefit from individual proposals through the negotiation of planning obligations and conditions to secure these outcomes:-

- the affordability, phasing or particular types of housing
- the provision of infrastructure eg. drainage, flood prevention, transport access
- contributions to community facilities, services and art
- the provision and/or maintenance of green space
- securing improvements to biodiversity and heritage
- the mitigation of adverse impacts, including climate change.

From 2009, LDF Core Strategies will need to accommodate the operation of the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and which sets the District's planning and delivery of social and environmentally acceptable infrastructure in a formalised range of developer charges.

County Council recommended comment:-

The County Council welcomes this broad indication of potential benefits from the operating of a planning obligations' regime and CIL.