

## **Cabinet**

**17 November 2021**

**Chester-le-Street, Newton Aycliffe  
Peterlee, Stanley and Three Towns  
Masterplans and Durham City  
Framework**



**Ordinary Decision**

---

### **Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth**

**Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Partnerships**

**Councillor James Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets**

#### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

#### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval to commence consultation on a number of masterplans across County Durham.

#### **Executive summary**

- 2 The Council has previously prepared a number of masterplans and regeneration frameworks for the larger towns in the county, the most recent being the Chester-le-Street Masterplan adopted in 2019. Although this has always been a rolling programme, we have accelerated a number of new masterplans to support potential Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bids currently in preparation.
- 3 Although a key driver for this round of masterplans is LUF they are being comprehensively prepared and therefore contain other projects and proposals that will either not be suitable for LUF or may ultimately be unsuccessful bids. This will ensure that these projects will be well placed to progress should other sources of funding be identified.

- 4 The masterplans identify current and future activities across the public and private sectors in order to provide a coordinated approach to delivery and maximise opportunities for funding.
- 5 The consultation on the masterplans will enable local communities including residents, businesses and other stakeholders to have their say on the content of the masterplans, as well as putting forward their own ideas for consideration. Following consultation, amendments will be made in response to the comments made wherever possible.

## **Recommendations**

- 6 Cabinet is recommended to:
  - (a) agree the Chester-le-Street (Appendix 2), Newton Aycliffe (Appendix 3), Peterlee (Appendix 4), Stanley (Appendix 5) and Three Towns (Appendix 6) masterplans and Durham City Framework (Appendix 7) for consultation from 29 November 2021 to 14 January 2022; and
  - (b) agree to delegate to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Economic Regeneration and Partnerships and Resources, Investment and Assets the power to make modifications and adopt the masterplans following consultation.

## Background

- 7 Over the years, the Council has prepared a series of masterplans and regeneration frameworks for a number of the largest towns in the county. The first round of these documents was agreed up to 2016. In January 2017 a number of masterplan updates were also agreed by Cabinet. These update documents provided an overview of past delivery and future confirmed actions. In 2019 the Council agreed the Chester-le-Street Masterplan as the first of a subsequent round of full masterplan documents. This round of masterplans was planned to continue over a number of years. However, in order to support potential Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bids, currently in preparation, we are bringing forward a number of masterplans. These will provide a strategic context for the detailed business cases for the chosen projects.
- 8 Members will recall a report in June 2021 which provided Cabinet with an overview of the guidance and bidding requirements for access to the LUF and agreed a first round submission for investment across South West Durham within the identified Bishop Auckland Constituency. These masterplans will support bids for rounds two and three.

## Chester-le-Street Masterplan

- 9 The Chester-le-Street Masterplan (Appendix 2) supplements the Towns and Villages Programme. The Masterplan also seeks to build on the 2019 Chester-le-Street Masterplan. In this context, it provides an update on project delivery and seeks to expand the scope and coverage of the masterplan. The 2021 Chester-le-Street Masterplan extends the scope beyond the town centre to the key employment locations to the west of Chester-le-Street and to the riverside area to the east. In this context, the 2021 Masterplan provides a consolidated, updated and expanded action plan for Chester-le-Street, which supercedes the 2019 Masterplan. Key project areas include:
- A vibrant town centre at the heart of the historic market town - Since the 2019 Masterplan, the £6 million de culverting project has been completed and is operational. There is an opportunity to build on the success of this project to support investment opportunities in the surrounding area. The Masterplan notes the Council will continue to work to reduce vacancies in the town centre and to support development opportunities;
  - An enhanced leisure offer across the town – The Masterplan seeks to capitalise on the opportunities afforded by existing assets in Chester-le-Street including the Emirates Riverside Cricket Ground and Riverside Park, to further enhance the sport and leisure offer in the Riverside location and across the town. This includes seeking to foster and support a sporting village in

the riverside location which will build upon current activities and facilities and the opportunity for a leisure centre on the former Civic Centre Site, as part of the Leisure Transformation Programme;

- Expanded and improved employment locations to support job creation and economic growth – The Masterplan identifies the opportunity to expand Drum Industrial Estate, a well-used employment location which is home to a number of national and local firms. This project would result in the development of a currently vacant site and support private sector led industrial development which would see the provision of new modern industrial space in an attractive market area. The Masterplan also identifies an opportunity at the Stella Gill employment location to capitalise on the success of the site by delivering further employment accommodation in the form of light industrial units to meet local need. As part of this project, it is recognised that there is an opportunity to deliver further employment accommodation as part of a mixed use scheme alongside the delivery of new housing, including affordable homes. The project could also incorporate the demolition of the redundant sheds, which are in a poor state of repair and have been the focus of antisocial behaviour; and
- Improving connectivity, accessibility and sustainable travel opportunities – To enable the development at the Stella Gill employment location, the Masterplan notes the intention to undertake further work to understand capacity issues and potential improvements on the highway network and specifically, the Picktree Lane, North Burns, Pelton Fell Road transport corridor. It is recognised that this route suffers from congestion during peak periods. Furthermore, the masterplan seeks to enhance and develop linkages between strategic locations and to improve connectivity. As identified in the 2019 Masterplan, there is a particular opportunity in this regard to improving sustainable travel between the town centre and riverside area.

## **Newton Aycliffe Masterplan**

- 10 Newton Aycliffe has many locational advantages and is a popular place to live and invest. Housing growth is planned within the town, including the local plan allocation at Low Copelaw. The successful business park will also continue to grow with land identified at Merchant Park and Forrest Park for business and industrial growth that will build on the investment of Hitachi. However, Newton Aycliffe does have some issues, particularly the vitality and viability of the town centre which has high vacancy rates and low footfall. The Newton Aycliffe Masterplan

(Appendix 3), which covers the whole of the town, proposes a radical approach to re-invigorate the town centre including targeted interventions and improved transport infrastructure. Key proposals include:

- Support the demolition of 1-17 Beveridge Way and the Multistorey Car Park to create a town centre development area;
- Identify the potential of the proposed demolition site to provide an investment opportunity for a new anchor retail unit;
- Identify the potential of the proposed demolition site to provide a new purpose-built health facility/GP Surgery;
- Repurpose existing vacant floorspace in the town centre to meet an immediate need for new clinical space;
- Extend, refurbish and repurpose 32-58 Beveridge Way to provide a mix of modern floorplate retail units;
- Repurpose and sub-divide 53-57 Beveridge Way to provide units for food and beverage uses that support the creation of a leisure quarter alongside the leisure centre;
- Explore options for extending and improving the leisure centre;
- Consider the potential of the Bewick Crescent car park site to meet the unmet demand for new drive thru facilities;
- Support the introduction of wi-fi within Newton Aycliffe town centre and provide training and support for existing and future businesses in order to maximise its use;
- Support the delivery of improved cycling and walking infrastructure between the Aycliffe Business Park and the town centre;
- Improve walking and cycling links between the surrounding parks and town centre and explore potential cultural and sporting events that can link to the town centre;
- Improve walking and cycling links between new housing developments and the town centre;
- Support planned transport improvements across the town;

- Support the delivery of Merchant Park and Forrest Park as sites that can provide new business and industrial premises to meet business needs and provide employment; and
- Support the delivery of new housing to meet needs on allocated housing and other suitable windfall sites.

## **Peterlee Masterplan**

11 Peterlee Masterplan (Appendix 4) seeks to guide development, facilitate investment, and transform Peterlee into a thriving town for local people, businesses and visitors. It includes a number of proposals with a focus on improving the infrastructure, public realm and vibrancy of the town centre including:

- Improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure into and around the town centre;
- Improvements to Peterlee bus station as the focus for a Mobility Hub including cycle parking, cycle share, car club, EV charging etc;
- Upgrade existing shared use route towards Horden and the Railway Station;
- Improve appearance of ASDA / car park / ramps at northern gateway to the town centre, including wayfinding and signage;
- Improve offer / attraction / useability / accessibility at Castle Eden Dene / Dene Park bringing additional footfall from visitors and families;
- Improve the quality of the public realm and soft landscaping on Yoden Way;
- New gateway/plaza at Bede Way arrival point adjacent the Argos, blending in Castle Eden Dene;
- Diversify uses within the town centre, including on Yoden Way and fronting onto the public square;
- Celebrate Castle Eden Dene as Peterlee's USP, and extend it through the town centre as a green corridor;
- Explore opportunity sites to bring housing into the town centre;
- Assess feasibility for adaptive re-use of Lee and Ridgemount House; and

- Explore opportunities for a cultural community hub / centre that celebrates the history of Peterlee including its mining and New Town heritage.

## Stanley Masterplan

12 Stanley Masterplan (Appendix 5) has been prepared in collaboration with the Council, Stanley Town Council and the Stanley AAP and the main focus of the masterplan is the town centre with housing, environment and employment consideration given to outlying areas. Key challenges that the masterplan is trying to address include increasing footfall and dwell time in the town centre, improving its environment and reducing its size and repurposing and reusing derelict buildings. Key proposals include:

- Improved transport capacity on A693 and enhancement of active mode routes, refurbished bus station and reprioritised town centre offer within Stanley (£20 million);
- Decongestion improvements on two A693 junctions in Stanley, with 20,000 vehicles per day. Additional lanes at Oxhill and the Asda roundabout, which would also be signalised. This would result in improved flow along the A693, and improved egress opportunities from the Wear Road and Bus Station legs. Lessened accidents at the roundabout, with it becoming signalised. Also, potential capacity improvements at the A693/A692 junction;
- Enhancement of active mode routes, linking residential areas, including the town centre, North Durham Academy and the C2C route. Also, at grade (surface) crossings at the Asda roundabout, as an alternative to the subways;
- New focus/flexible space on Front Street for potential events, markets, food and beverage and a new cycle hub, better promoting the town as a stop for C2C cyclists;
- Refurbished bus station (800,000 passengers p.a), including seating, lighting, CCTV and passenger information provision;
- Consider introduction of traffic to Front Street to maximise passby trips and passive supervision;
- Destination retail introduced to west of Front Street to increase footfall;
- Evening uses to extend duration of stay and spend for local residents;

- Maximise the opportunities for extending local visiting (Beamish, Bowls, C2C, Tanfield Railway) for linked trips;
- Create a destination, a reason to visit. A cycle hub for national route users as well as local leisure and utility journeys. Improved access to Stanley from the surrounding areas increases personal mobility without the reliance on motor vehicles;
- Gateway features at key arrival points including the two roundabouts and the links from the C2C;
- Concentrating the retail core on the southern section of Front Street and Clifford Road;
- Exploring opportunities for other large format retail to locate within this retail core, acting as another anchor to the south and drawing footfall between the popular Home Bargains retail park area and Front Street;
- Promoting a mixed use quarter around the northern section of Front Street (north of Clifford Road) including building on the existing community uses here and additional residential;
- This could include relocating existing businesses to more prominent locations on Front Street, as well as attracting new start ups and businesses;
- Repurposing and redeveloping key vacant buildings and sites, including Bertie's Bar, the old School Board building, the Elite buildings site and the Customer Access Point, as well as smaller vacant units along Front Street. Some of these could be repurposed as business start up units or skills and training 'shopfronts';
- Explore the potential to tie in Stanley's heritage by using some of the vacant unit space on Front Street for a heritage display, and creating a vintage tea room similar to the successful Fifteas Tea Room in Bishop Auckland;
- Creating a legible, high quality network of pedestrian and cycle routes, based on the key north south and east west routes illustrated on the diagram opposite;
- Better integrating the leisure and cultural uses around the Louisa Centre into the town centre;
- Improving town centre public spaces, including the green space adjacent the Louisa Centre, Clifford Road square, and the space

between Front Street and Beamish Street. This could include providing new market space as part of an initiative to encourage specialist markets, and events space as part of an ongoing programme;

- The potential to use undeveloped brownfield land as a temporary community allotment, similar to the successful scheme in Todmorden called Incredible Edible;
- The possibility of utilising Oakey Park as an events venue by upgrading the existing facilities, to attract out of town visitors; and
- Better accessibility and use of surrounding woodland and green spaces, potentially as a 'wild play trail'.

### **Three Towns Masterplan**

- 13 The Three Towns Masterplan (Appendix 6) covers Crook, Tow Law and Willington. These towns face a variety of ongoing challenges. In recent years, Willington in particular has suffered from a lack of footfall causing a decline in its vitality and viability resulting in a number of vacant buildings. Crook and Tow Law face similar challenges which will likely be exacerbated by national trends in retailing, meaning a degree of consolidation and diversification will be needed. The masterplan looks to address these issues, for example through physical improvements to buildings and businesses, and by adapting to the digital economy.
- 14 Further challenges within the towns relate to transport and car parking. While bus services are generally adequate between the towns and to other settlements, they are located in rural areas which are less-well served. These gaps have been mitigated to some extent, however there are opportunities to assist with the transition towards more environmentally friendly transport modes including electric vehicles and cycling.
- 15 While there has been significant expenditure on leisure facilities in recent years, there are opportunities for this to continue and improve the current offer. This could include a cultural venue or possibly a new swimming pool for Crook and improvements to the main town centre park in Willington. The plan also identifies a range of opportunities to tackle problem areas within the town centres, including for example where the public realm is in need of revitalisation, and where there are opportunities to create more attractive and usable public spaces. The main proposals in the masterplan include:
  - A range of improvements in the three town centres to help improve the quality of shopping environment including

improvements to buildings and public realm. Measures include targeted business improvements, support for new development proposals, and public realm improvements. Further business improvements are proposed for Willington that would seek to:

- Work with owners to develop/find uses for empty buildings and properties;
  - Provide a dedicated support programme via match funding for commercial property owners to improve or install new shop fronts, signage and minimise the use of roller shutters;
  - Develop a programme of public realm, street furniture and public space improvements to improve the overall appearance of the High Street; and
  - Ensure linkages are made to highways related projects to provide improved parking options and traffic flows, whilst ensuring safe and effective pedestrian and vehicle environments and access;
- In response to the challenges the town centres face, and in a bid to help recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, free public wi-fi is being introduced to centres across the county through the Digital High Street project (part of the Towns and Villages Programme). Coverage for Crook will include Hope Street, Commercial Street, Church Street, North Terrace and the Market Place. Roll out is expected to be by the end of March 2022. The project may be rolled out to further settlements in the future, including Willington, depending upon resources and the outcomes from the current programme;
  - A number of key development opportunity sites across the three towns including:
    - The former Croft Street Offices building at Croft Street in Crook;
    - Willington Welfare Hall;
    - Low Willington Industrial Estate (LWIE) - Industrial and Housing Development; and
    - Culture and Leisure Enhancements;
  - The existing formal leisure provision in Crook is located within the centre run by Crook Community Leisure, at the Peases West

Sports Centre at Roddymoor on the outskirts of the town. The Council will help the Community Group explore opportunities to enhance these facilities, including exploring the possibility of providing a new swimming pool in the town;

- The Council will work with the community to explore the potential of bringing the former Empire Cinema in the Market Place back into use as a cultural venue for theatre, cinema and related education;
- In Willington, the Council will work with all partners to explore ways in which the town park could be developed further into a key integral part of village life, including a skate park, improved outdoor play facilities and informal leisure;
- Opportunities for providing additional vehicle charging infrastructure, such as public filling stations, will be explored within the towns including potential sites off Glenholme Drive in Crook and the former Cattle Mart site in Tow Law. Further opportunities will also be explored in Willington, possibly connected to new car parking provision;
- Opportunities will be explored in relation to improvements to the A68 strategic route, for example in relation to journey times and improved connectivity for local communities and increasing visitor numbers, especially where charging facilities are developed;
- The current highway infrastructure through Low Willington Industrial Estate via Barnfield Way and Park Street is viewed as a potential bypass to the lower end on Willington, and opportunities will be explored to promote this route as a potential alternative to the A690 for through traffic including improved signage and realignment of junctions;
- Improvements to car parking provision at Albion Place (adjacent to Co-Op) and Commercial Street in Willington will be explored further, to improve traffic flows along the A690 and support businesses;
- Proposed improvements to the Brandon to Bishop Auckland cycleway including the creation of a more formalised route south of the A690h and a possible spur to Spectrum Leisure Centre where there is a BMX track, providing a safe route for users away from the A690.

## Durham City Framework

- 16 The Durham City Framework has a different format to the rest of the masterplans having been prepared using the StoryMap feature of ArcGIS. It is therefore best viewed online here: <https://durhamcounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=76f264d05387492c93088e6fb0bbe854>. The document includes all the content you would expect with a traditional masterplan including a vision and objectives, opportunities and challenges but then features an interactive map which identifies all current and future projects in the Durham City area. However, the text and projects have been exported from the StoryMap and are attached (Appendix 7).
- 17 Durham City, with its range of housing and employment, the quality of the environment and its unrivalled heritage is an attractive place to live, work and visit. It also has real economic potential. With strategic investment and sensitive planning, Durham can become one of the most important centres for economic growth in the north east. To help realise that potential, we have produced a Framework to outline the strategic context for how we see the city developing, the principles which should guide investment and the programmes of regeneration and investment activity which are underway or planned. The key proposals in the Framework include:
- Major commercial and employment development sites at Milburngate and Aykley Heads;
  - A cultural hub at Millennium Place;
  - Improved accessibility and public realm improvements on Durham Riverside;
  - Heritage improvements at Durham Miners at Redhills, Crook Hall, Belmont Viaduct, Old Fulling Mill, Cornmill;
  - Housing developments at Sniperley Park, Sherburn Road, Gilesgate and Gort Place;
  - Public Realm improvements on North Road, Boathouse Yard and Fowlers Yard;
  - Retail development at Dragonville, North Road and the Former Eddis site;
  - Durham University development including new academic buildings and Purpose Built Student Accommodation;

- Cycling and walking projects including improved links from the railway station to the town centre;
- Improvements to and creation of a number of routes in the Durham City Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and the Great North Cycleway;
- Transport infrastructure including new park and ride capacity, Sniperley roundabout and a number of Active Travel projects including Abbey Road to Rotary Way, Framwellgate Moor Front Street, A181 Gilesgate Access Road;
- Broader city-wide projects including new public Wi-Fi provision and fibre broadband.

## **Next Steps**

- 18 If agreed, consultation will be undertaken on the masterplans from 29 November 2021 to 14 January 2022. The consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and will include a number of 'face to face' drop in events.
- 19 The consultation will provide an opportunity to consider the vision and objectives as set out within the respective masterplans, as well as the identified issues, proposals and opportunities. The consultation process will enable local communities including residents, businesses and other stakeholders to have their say on the content of the masterplans, as well as putting forward their own ideas for consideration. Following consultation, the feasibility of suggested projects will be investigated and amendments to the masterplans will be made in response to the comments made wherever possible.
- 20 The final masterplans will provide a coordinated approach to delivery and will be used to bid for funds both within the Council and externally, including informing the business cases that will be prepared for rounds two and three Levelling Up Fund submissions.

## **Background papers**

None.

## **Author**

Mike Allum

Tel: 03000 261906

---

## **Appendix 1: Implications**

---

### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

Some masterplans and elements of others have been undertaken by consultants which has had a financial cost. The Masterplans identify a series of projects which will be associated with its own funding bid, through the Levelling Up Fund and other sources. The Masterplan does not guarantee funding for the projects listed.

### **Consultation**

The programme of consultation has been agreed with the Council's Corporate Communications Team and the Council's Consultation Officers Group and will be undertaken from 29 November 2021 to 14 January 2022.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Protocol 1 Article 1: Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions, including their property. The masterplans propose projects which will affect landowners' rights to develop their land. It is noted, however, that rights afforded under this Article are not absolute but qualified. Therefore, any interference with landowner's rights must be balanced against the wider public interest.

### **Climate Change**

Climate change is a thread running through the masterplans and a significant number of projects relate to encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport. Charging points for electric vehicles also feature in a number of schemes. Any built development projects will have to conform with the policies of the County Durham Plan which seek to mitigate and address the causes of climate change.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Issues of crime and disorder are associated with the reasons for undertaking some of the projects included in the masterplans.

## **Staffing**

Resource required to undertake the consultation and progress delivery of the masterplans.

## **Accommodation**

None.

## **Risk**

Detailed risk assessments will be undertaken at the individual project level.

## **Procurement**

The consultants used in the preparation of some of the masterplans have been appointed in accordance with the Council's procurement rules and procedures.