

**Cabinet**

**14 November 2012**

**Chester-le-Street Development  
Masterplan**

**Key Decision R&ED/13/12**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Ian Thompson, Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic  
Development**

**Councillor Neil Foster, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic  
Regeneration**

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**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The development masterplan for Chester-le-Street provides a detailed programme of activity that can be undertaken within the town to ensure future sustainability through a programme of investment and marketing of the town's key development opportunities and tourist attractions.
- 2 The document provides the strategic context to delivery and seeks to establish key principles to co-ordinate and guide this activity. The document is one of a series of similar documents established for all of the major towns within the County.

**Background**

- 3 Chester-le-Street is a major town in the North of County Durham located about 6 miles north of Durham City, with a population of over 24,000, and situated within a ten mile radius of Newcastle, Sunderland, Gateshead, Washington, Consett, and Stanley. The good public transport, road and rail links, to and from Chester-le-Street make this town an excellent location from which to travel to work. It is an attractive locality with good quality housing in the mid and above range of prices, catering for families and couples. Housing has grown organically around the town centre along with other people based services. Chester-le-Street is a town with potential to increase substantially in size, with the town centre having the opportunity to benefit economically from this growth.
- 4 Chester-le-Street is an historic town, dating as far back as 122CE with Roman built remains visible in town, as well as being home to Lindisfarne monks with the body of St Cuthbert for over a century from 883-995CE. The Lindisfarne Gospels were translated here during that time. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries there has been significant change following the advent of the mining industry near the town. Chester-le-Street has potential to benefit significantly from Roman and Christian tourism as well as from the visitors to the Riverside

Park, Emirates Durham ICG, golf course and other leisure facilities. All of these attractions are on the edge of town and bringing in combined visitor numbers in excess of 300,000 each year.

- 5 Chester-le-Street town is a lively and vibrant town centre that appears to be weathering the current economic storm in better condition than some of its neighbours. Through the new County Durham Plan there is significant opportunity for the town to increase housing development and the Local Plan identifies a housing allocation of 1,455 homes along with 10.4Ha employment land allocation for the next 20 years. In addition, there are significant development opportunities at the Lambton Estate which are being brought forward through a Supplementary Planning Document to the Local Plan. This is thought to be an achievable figure for both homes and businesses, and will improve the economic standing of Chester-le-Street as these developments progress over the years.
- 6 The Development Framework aims to:
  - Focus and co-ordinate the regeneration activities in Chester-le-Street and assist the enabling of a delivery mechanism for the various regeneration projects;
  - To input into the delivery of the emerging Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Plan and draw together the strategic and policy drivers for development and regeneration within Chester-le-Street
  - Assist in the consultation process with partners, stakeholders and the community;
  - Assist in taking proposals forward with investors, developers and landowners; and,
  - Raise Chester-le-Street's profile in order to stimulate further investment activity.
- 7 This development framework seeks to articulate the County Council's desire to stimulate regeneration and economic growth and to guide investment in Chester-le-Street; focussing on enhancing the environment and investing in tourism and development opportunities, building on the potential of the town.
- 8 Combining expenditure from the former District Council and the County Council, there has been recent investment of more than £5m within the town centre. This is on major projects like the Market Place and Civic Heart, Mile House and the public realm throughout Front Street. This investment has ensured that further external investment has been placed in the town like the Gainford and Bright Stars site on Picktree Lane and the infill development on South Burns on the Market Place next to the old brewery Grade 2 listed building.
- 9 The key drivers for this framework are:
  - Establishing a clear set of priority projects together with a realistic delivery plan which reflects both market demand, investor appetite and availability of sources of finance;
  - Promoting the diversification of the local economy and employment growth, led by the private sector;

- Providing a sustainable and vibrant town centre with a focus on deliverability, creating key opportunities for change by securing definitive proposals for redevelopment, development or refurbishment of land and premises;
- Consolidating the population and expenditure base and improving the balance and mix of the housing offer to include market for sale, intermediate tenure and rented, which would in turn help to underpin a sustainable local economy, retaining young people whilst providing for an increasing proportion of elderly residents;
- Improving the patronage and frequency of stopping trains at the railway station;
- Developing the tourism and leisure offer and asset base, most notably in relation to the town centre, the Roman and Christian heritage, the Emirates Durham ICG, Riverside Park and riverside walks;
- Ensuring that key stakeholders, in particular those using the town centre, are positively engaged in the process and that the final outcomes are ones which local residents and businesses have confidence and pride in;
- Maximise the benefits of the new market place and civic space through regular business led planned events; and,
- Optimising the environmental, social and economic sustainability of Chester-le-Street through the design and phasing of the developments and the implementation process.

10 There are a number of major projects currently underway throughout town. These include the Emirates Durham ICG stand extension and hotel with conferencing facilities; the skate park to be constructed within Riverside Park; improvements to the signage within town directing visitors to and from the town centre to the cricket ground and leisure facilities; and the rowing club are planning to improve their facilities in the future.

11 The key challenges for the town centre focus on how to create a sustainable future for the town. The train station needs to play a significant role in the economic performance of the Town. The train service is currently operating at minimal levels (despite increasing patronage). Whilst the service does allow people to commute and visit the higher order centres, it does not cater for those who wish to spend an evening in Chester-le-Street in town or at a concert at Emirates Durham ICG. The Council needs to lobby the Department of Transport to ensure that more trains stop at Chester-le-Street to maximise the potential of this transport interchange.

12 There is a range of development opportunities to be promoted in Chester-le-Street and provide the necessary conditions for a sustainable and competitive town centre. These are as follows:

- The Council will work with regeneration partnerships and private sector partners to continue to **deliver a vibrant town centre**;
- Chester-le-Street has been successful in attracting and retaining numerous small and medium-sized businesses both within the town centre and at Drum. Additional development land for business users can be brought forward with the introduction of infrastructure at an extension site at Drum. **The Council will endeavour to work with existing businesses, potential funders, developers and**

**prospective inward investment companies to ensure that Chester-le-Street enhances its supply of business properties in order to provide for wealth and job creation.**

- There are a number of sites that could provide residential development for sale, intermediate tenure and rent. **Additional housing close to the centre will help the vitality and viability of the town and the Council will continue to work with the development industry, Registered Providers and other interested parties to deliver the new homes that Chester-le-Street requires.**
- Encourage patronage of train station and **work with Department of Transport to improve the occurrence of services**
- **Increasing the numbers of visitors to Riverside Park, the Cricket ground**, and other leisure activities that also visit the town centre
- The Chester-le-Street Destination Development Plan produced in July 2010 identifies the need to link more closely to increase the visitor numbers to the town through **strengthening Chester-le-Street's identity as a destination for heritage, sport and recreation**, and as an attractive and convenient base from which to explore Durham and Newcastle
- **Improve the access routes** between the riverside and town centre
- Work with the private sector and community groups to increase the number of events in the Civic Heart, which would increase the footfall in the town centre help sustain the local market

- 13 Consultation on the preparation of this Masterplan has been undertaken with a range of local stakeholders including the AAP, the local Business Association, internal Council departments, and local town centre businesses. A summary of these discussions are attached in the consultation log.
- 14 The Masterplan is supported by a delivery plan and project plans for each development site/proposal. These will be kept up-to-date.

#### **Recommendations and reasons**

- 15 The Chester-le-Street Masterplan will help plan, co-ordinate, and deliver regeneration activity in Chester-le-Street over the coming years.
- (a) It is recommended that the report be approved by Cabinet.
- (b) It is recommended that appropriate officers engage with the Department of Transport to improve services at Chester-le-Street station bearing in mind the key role this service provides to the town.

#### **Background papers**

Chester-le-Street Development Framework 2012

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

The document contains a delivery plan with possible partners and costs identified. The opportunities can be resourced through a combination of DCC capital programme, Section 106, CIL, asset backed regeneration vehicle, and private sector, and developer contributions.

**Staffing - None**

### **Risk**

Detailed Risk Assessments will be undertaken for each project/development

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

EIA completed

### **Accommodation**

The framework refers to the future of the Civic Centre site, a possible new customer access point in the library, and possible new north Durham office space.

**Crime and Disorder - none**

**Human Rights - None**

### **Consultation**

Consultation has been undertaken with stakeholders, a summary log is attached.

**Procurement - None**

**Disability Issues - None**

### **Legal Implications**

The framework will provide evidence to support the County Durham Plan but will not have any statutory weight in the planning process.

**Chester-le-Street Development Framework 2012  
Consultation Log**

<b>Person</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Regeneration and Development Representatives</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>
John Sheehan	Chair of Business Forum	Chris Myers Michael Hurlow	25/07/12	Meeting to take Chair's initial comment on behalf of Business Forum prior to next meeting in September
Gordon Brown, Katherine Taylor	Gordon Brown Law Firm LLP	Sarah Robson Michael Hurlow	30/07/12	Follow up meeting on MP's suggestion to receive comments on Chester-le Street current issues
Andrew Megginson	AAP - DCC	Vicky McCourt Michael Hurlow	30/07/12	Check on consultation with AAP – cross check key local issues
Andrew Farnie	AAP - DCC	Chris Myers Michael Hurlow	07/08/12	Review development management context for development framework
David Harker - Chief Executive, Richard Dowson - Operations Manager	Durham County Cricket Club	Chris Myers Michael Hurlow	07/08/12	Update on Cricket Club development and review of relationship with town
Paul Stephens, Zoey Hawthorne	Cestria Housing Association	Chris Myers Vicky McCourt	13/08/12	Update on Cestria activity and review of relationship with town
Craig Wilson  Derek Snaith	Visit County Durham  Chester-le-Street AAP	Vicky McCourt Michael Hurlow	16/08/12	Review of tourism, Destination Development Plan and impacts on Ch-Le-St
Alex Nelson  Joyce Roberts	Proprietor, Chester-le-Track  Secretary of Business Forum	Chris Myers Alan Hind	17/08/12	To receive comments on current issues for Chester le Street inc. transport related
John Sheehan  Joyce Roberts  1  2  Marjorie Dodds 1  Fred and Norman Richards  1	Chair of Business Association Secretary of Business Association Manager Market Tavern Proprietors Ashley Tea Room Town Crier Representative Swinburne and Madison Retired business owners , local voluntary work New member, private businessman	Michael Hurlow	05/09/12	To provide an update on framework progress and receive comments on current issues for Chester le Street