

CONSETT REGENERATION FRAMEWORK
Delivery & Implementation Plan

1.0) Background to and Purpose of Framework

- 1.1 Consett is an important, local centre for employment, shopping, leisure and public services within North Durham and is recognised as such by the Council's Regeneration Statement. The economy has undergone radical restructuring under regeneration initiatives in recent years and the area needs to continue to develop proposals for further retail, leisure and business offers in order to provide employment opportunities and to continue to improve the commercial vitality of the area.
- 1.2
- 1.3 Consett Steelworks closed in the early 1980s with the loss of 9,000 jobs and immediate and far-reaching effects on the area's population and the local economy. In some areas, unemployment reached 35% and the area's population declined by 20,000 to 80,000 as people left in search of employment elsewhere.
- 1.4 Over the subsequent years, Consett and the surrounding area of the former Derwentside District has received substantial regeneration funding and attention to rejuvenate the town's economy, to provide opportunities for employment and to diversify the area's business base. These efforts have had some notable successes in terms of creating a pipeline of supply of business premises which can attract and retain SMEs and provide the town with a more diverse and resilient business base. Today, Consett is home to over 200 different companies and 6,000 new jobs have been created since the steelworks closed.
- 1.5 The Consett area has seen a lot of housing development in recent years, however there remains a need for further housing market renewal in order to help stabilise and sustain Consett's long-term role. The health, education and public transport facilities and services will be maintained and enhanced at a level appropriate for the town.
- 1.6 In November 2009, the Council commissioned a consultancy team, led by property and regeneration specialists, GVA with support from Ryder Architecture and Social Regeneration Consultants to prepare a development framework and masterplan for Consett. The previous town masterplan was produced in 1992 and it was felt that it was timely that a new framework be developed to guide regeneration and investment activity over the next 15 to 20 years, recognising Consett's distinctive role and identifying the means to support a vibrant town centre in consultation with business, town centre users and the wider community, linking with existing strategies and taking advantage of predicted market demands.

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1.7 The brief for the framework acknowledged a rationale for focussing upon a number of key areas which, if delivered effectively, will maximise benefits for Consett and the surrounding area. These are:

- The provision of a vibrant, sustainable town centre.
- The identification of sites of opportunity to potentially relocate existing uses from the Belle Vue site.
- The re-use of surplus sites to provide for the needs of Consett.
- Linking the development of the Belle Vue site to the town centre and onwards to the Genesis site.
- Focussing on deliverability identifying issues associated with infrastructure delivery both physical and social.
- Optimising the environmental, social and economic sustainability of Consett both through the phasing of the developments and the implementation process.
- Ensuring that key stakeholders, in particular those using the town centre, are positively engaged in the process and that the final project is one which local residents, community and businesses, have confidence and pride in.
- Promoting excellence in design and sustainable development.
- Creating key opportunities for change by securing definitive proposals for redevelopment, development or refurbishment of land and premises.

1.8 The framework will guide the Council and future development partners in formulating and delivering development proposals, creating key linkages between development sites and areas, engaging with the community and establishing workable plans for phasing to include transport and servicing strategies. In spatial terms, the framework will (by necessity) concentrate on Consett town centre, Belle Vue, the Project Genesis site and a variety of sites that have the capability to accommodate new housing.

1.9 Prior to preparing the framework, GVA undertook a baseline review of the town, coupled with an assessment of demand across various sectors of the property market. The key characteristics that emerged were:

- The built environment within the town is of mixed quality. There is no sense of arrival to the town, no conservation area and only one listed building (a church) in the town centre. A number of buildings are rundown and the library in particular is in poor condition and poorly integrated.
- Although public transport is good, movement around the town is convoluted and cluttered.
- The town retains an impressive 95% of food retailing expenditure due to the presence of Tesco and Morrison's, both of whom intend to expand.
- The town fares far worse in comparison retailing (retaining only 34% of spend) and bulky goods sales (50%) due to the proximity

and draw of Metro Centre, Newcastle, Sunderland and Teesside. National multiples are poorly represented in Consett. The market suffers from poor covenant strength resulting in investor requirements for high yields and depressing values. As a result of this market weakness, values and returns are insufficient to encourage the private sector to invest in new or substantially refurbished development within the town centre. A lead must be taken by the public sector to simplify and de-risk investment opportunities and then lever in private sector funds.

- Consett has performed well in attracting and retaining SMEs through the provision of business space at developments such as Consett Business Centre and Consett Innovation Centre however there is now something of a “log jam” with an absence of growth on space. There is proven demand for freehold premises, however the existing supply is concentrated on offering leasehold and the private sector is unwilling to invest due to inadequate returns. There is demand for sites/premises for niche manufacturing. There is an oversupply of employment land and a significant proportion of employment space is older, poor quality stock..
- Consett has witnessed relatively rapid growth in office employment (admittedly, from a low base) but the town has no available “Class A” office space.
- There is very limited demand for B8 logistics space due to distance to the A1(M).
- The former Derwentside district exhibits high levels of productivity but there is a very low level of entrepreneurial activity and the area is projected to suffer badly from the recent recession with predictions for a very slow recovery. There are significant daily outmigrations from the town for employment in Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland and Durham City.
- Consett has witnessed strong performance in terms of new build housing with over 1,800 new homes delivered in the past decade. The town is projected to witness population growth requiring over 3,200 new homes by 2030. Sites are already identified for much of this housing provision and the Council is supporting a number of current and planned developments (details of which are outlined further at S 4.2).

- 1.8 The development of the framework has also incorporated a community consultation exercise, undertaken over a period of a month and involving the interviewing of nearly 600 residents of Consett and users of the town centre. The overwhelming desires are for the creation of new jobs and the securing of a higher quality retail experience in the town centre (based upon better shops, a higher quality shopping environment and reductions in fear of crime, criminal activity and antisocial behaviour).

2.0) Aims and Objectives Resulting from the Framework

- 2.1 The framework and masterplan have been developed to provide long term direction for the town recognising that, for the town centre to become an attractive location (for investment) within the North East region, a critical mass of commercial development and associated leisure and retail opportunities are required. The principal aims arising from the framework and masterplan production are:
- To embrace and promote a refreshed vision for the town centre.
 - Specific proposals for key sites, the identification of other sites for development and the creation of a linked system of high quality spaces.
 - A design structure to act as a yardstick against which future development proposals can be judged.
 - A phased programme of funding and implementation.
- 2.2 In brief, the framework and masterplan provide phased proposals across a series of key activities, designed to lift the performance and vitality of Consett town centre and to better integrate new developments into the fabric of the town in order to maximise leverage and economic and environmental impacts.
The masterplan concentrates upon key geographic areas of the town and the linkages between them; Consett Urban Area, Shotley Bridge, Leadgate, Delves and Moorside.
- 2.3 The phased project proposals, which are covered in more detail in Section 3 below build upon committed spend in new educational and leisure facilities, are concentrated upon public realm and retail frontage improvements, better car-parking arrangements, increased opportunities for residential development, the creation of better public spaces and facilitating redevelopment to secure new retail space.

3.0) Proposed Projects

- 3.1 The approach aims to deliver an integrated social, economic and environmental framework, drawing together and building upon existing and proposed regeneration and investment streams to deliver future improvements to and development within the town. Illustrative plans identifying settlement wide opportunities and committed schemes across the town are attached at section 6.
- 3.2 Adopting a thematic approach, the proposed projects and key details of their anticipated delivery are shown as follows:

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Theme	Project Activity	Timescale	Outputs	Project Lead & Partners	Budget Details
Town Centre	Targeted Business Improvement program - improve shop fronts include shop fronts strategy support for job creation or up skilling.	1-5 years	13 business premises improved.	DCC & Owners.	Budget cost £300,000. DCC approved budget of £100,000. (2011/2012) future funding earmarked. S106 contributions of £160,000. 30% contribution to be sought from owners.
	Increased and better managed car parking.	1-5 years	Car parking strategy. Better service access. Bus station traffic management. Improved signage to car parks. Options under development.	DCC & Owners.	LTP3 project awaiting costings.
	Improved signage.	1-5 years	Signage Strategy for the Town Centre. Car Parks using real time information.	DCC.	Options under development. LTP 3 project awaiting costings.
	Design & Public Realm (Front Street, Middle Street etc).	1-5 years	Shop Front and Public Realm proposals including design guidance on materials and styles, remodelling of bus station, creation of public space to enhance the shopping experience	DCC & Owners.	Budget cost £2.75 million – phased implementation. DCC £55,000. LTP3 £200,000 secure
	Re use of space above shops.	1-5 years	Strategy for re-use.	DCC & Owners.	Linked to targeted Business Improvements.

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	Events.	1-5 years	Cultural events, speciality markets etc	Shop owners and DCC.	Budget cost £10,000 pa. Linked to market improvements.
	Market improvements.	1-5 years		DCC & Owners.	Delivery options under review.
	Pedestrian links to Genesis.	1-5 years		DCC.	Budget cost £250,000 DCC £200,000 approved. S106 contribution £50,000 secure.
	<i>Theatre/Restaurant.</i>	<i>5-10 years</i>	<i>Invest additional commercial space and job creation linked to improved facilities.</i>	<i>DCC.</i>	<i>Indicative Budget cost £600,000 No current allocation - business case required.</i>
	<i>Pitt Street Demolition & Redevelopment.</i>	<i>10-15 years</i>		<i>Owners (with DCC support).</i>	<i>Budget cost £1.55 million No developer identified</i>
Other Retail	Tesco relocation and expansion.	1-3 years	Support Tesco in relocation and expansion at Genesis Way including local recruitment project for 250 new jobs.	Tesco and DCC / colleges.	Tesco £24 million (all private sector). Funding secure. Local recruitment supported from Employability contracts
Belle Vue	Consett Academy & Leisure Centre.	1-5 years	Deliver new academy for 1,500 students aged 11-16, providing enhanced opportunities through education. Conjoined leisure facility to include swimming pools, sports hall,	DCC.	Budget cost £24 million. DCC Approved.

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			external pitches & tennis courts, indoor bowling, squash, aerobic facilities and functions venue. Deliver pedestrian and cycle links to town centre.		
Genesis	Support for Genesis employment site masterplan implementation.	1-5 years	To support the emerging masterplan for the remainder of the Project Genesis employment land.	Project Genesis with DCC support.	No budget requirement identified.
Employment Sites	Deliver additional business space at Consett Business Centre.	1-5 years	Deliver 20,000sq ft of business space maximising ERDF funding. Building will provide approx 35 offices ranging from 120 to 350 sq ft, although the internal design will be flexible to accommodate any pre lets so sizes and number of units could change.	DCC/ERDF	Budget cost £3.8 million DCC £1.9 million approved. ERDF £1.9 million approval sought.
Housing	Support for housing delivery.	1-15 years	Secure additional 3,200 units of appropriate mix, type & tenure by 2030. Provide capacity for executive housing. Support and influence developers through LDF and planning process	DCC	Current investment by private sector estimated at £75 million. From existing private sector resources.
	Villa Real Bridge/ Leadgate Road.	1-5 years	Working with the private sector to open up 5.59 hectares of DCC land to be brought forward for housing which will provide a capital receipt which, subject to the approval process, could be used to re-align Leadgate Road and remove the weak Villa Real Bridge.	DCC, Sustrans and private developers	Budget cost circa £3 million. DCC capital approval sought.

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- 3.3 To date, the Council has committed £30,269,000 towards early stage investments and interventions at:
- Consett Academy and Leisure Centre
 - Shop Front Improvement Scheme
 - Pedestrian Link to Genesis
 - Bus Station/Victoria Road redevelopment/acquisitions
 - Bus station traffic management and car parking
 - Consett Business Park – new business space
- 3.4 These investments are supported by £400,000 of secured S106 contributions from Tesco and, subject to approval, £1,900,000 of ERDF funding (towards the Consett Business Park development).
- 3.5 The Council is currently actively engaged with a range of private sector developers in order to influence the pace and scale of development in Consett and to lever in maximum private sector investment, design quality and opportunity for residents. Examples of such developments (which, in total, are estimated to involve private sector investment of circa £100 million) include:
- Barratt Homes - housing development currently on site at Berry Edge.
 - Story Homes – 279 houses currently being built at Shotley Bridge Hospital site.
 - Shepherd Homes – 240 houses currently being built at Delves Lane.
 - Derwentside Homes – RSL developments at Ashby Crescent, Blackhill and Dales View, Delves Lane.
 - Persimmon Homes – pre-application discussions for land at Leadgate Road.
 - Tesco – supporting supermarket operator in £24 million relocation/expansion and local recruitment for 250 additional staff.
- 3.6 These investments will be used to maintain progress under the regeneration delivery programme pending recovery of the property market, leveraging in £100 million private funding, based on calculations of the value of current residential and commercial developments.

4.0) Way Forward

- 4.1 The County Council has a good record of joint working with public, private and voluntary sector partners and of engaging business and the wider community. The proposals for Consett will be implemented under a “whole town” approach, providing improved environment, facilities and opportunities for all and stimulating further investment.

5.0) Conclusion

- 5.1 The current climate of public sector expenditure reductions is resulting in numerous organisations reviewing their operational requirements in order to maximise efficiencies and secure savings. In Consett, this may provide further opportunities for joint working and the future re-use of sites and premises. In due course, the Council may be in a position to acquire land and premises or otherwise influence redevelopment from possible change to delivery models of police, County Court and PCT functions.
- 5.2 Similarly, public sector sources for regeneration funding are limited. The Council will, however, seek to maximise match funding and other investment into Consett as a priority under the Regeneration Statement.

Potential sources of funding include:

- Homes and Communities Agency
 - Competitiveness and Employment Funding
 - ERDF (the 2007-13 programme makes Euro 375.5 million available to the North East for Innovation or Business Growth and Enterprise projects)
 - JESSICA
 - Tax Increment Financing
 - Business Improvement District
- 5.3 In the short term, the framework provides a focus on realistic and deliverable interventions with the Council funding capital improvements. This will lead to an ability to expand joint working to a wider framework of public and private sector interests.

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6.0) Consett Regeneration Framework – Plans

- 1) Settlement Wide opportunities**
- 2) Town Centre projects - September 2011.**