



Northumberland

County Council

ASHINGTON AND BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

DATE: 11 JULY 2018

Northumberland Local Plan - Regulation 18 Draft Plan

Report of the Interim Executive Director: Place

Cabinet Member: Councillor John Riddle - Planning, Housing and Resilience

Purpose of Report

To provide the Local Area Council with an update on the Northumberland Local Plan and details on the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan consultation. A presentation on the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan will be provided at the Local Area Council.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Local Area Council note the content of the report and the presentation provided.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the following key themes in the Corporate Plan for 2018-2021:-

- How - We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone;
- Living - We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for;
- Enjoying - We want you to love where you live;
- Connecting - We want you to have access to the things you need;
- Learning - We want you to achieve and realise your potential; and
- Thriving - We want to attract more and better jobs

Key Issues

The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan for Northumberland, covering the period 2016 to 2036. The Northumberland Local Plan will:

- Set the strategic planning policies of the Council, taking account of key factors like population trends, economic growth, climate change, resources and environmental character;

- Set the general scale and distribution of new development which is required to meet Northumberland's needs to 2036;
- Provide the planning principles¹, including detailed 'development management' policies to guide decisions on planning applications;
- Show in detail where new homes, workplaces and facilities will be located through allocations of land; and
- Show key environmental designations and include site specific proposals for the conservation and enhancement of historic and natural assets.

In accordance with National Planning Policy the Council must, through the Local Plan, provide a positive planning policy framework that supports and grows the economy.

The most significant challenge to the delivery of the vision of the Draft Local Plan is the profile of the Northumberland population. Without positive policy intervention, projections show that there is likely to be a significant accelerating ageing of Northumberland's population. This change in the age profile has substantial potential to have a significant negative impact on the long term diversity and resilience of communities across Northumberland.

Without positive policy intervention, Northumberland will not have the working age population to support the delivery of the jobs which are required to allow Northumberland to deliver its share of economic growth as identified within the North East Strategic Economic Plan.

Significant evidence base work has informed the preparation of the Regulation 18 Draft Plan. This evidence base work also forms part of the Regulation 18 consultation.

This report will be supplemented at each of the Local Area Council meetings with a presentation on the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation. Cabinet approved the consultation and engagement approach on 14th June 2018.

Background

Progress update on the preparation of the Northumberland Local Plan

1. Following the withdrawal of the Northumberland Core Strategy in July 2017, the Council has been working on the preparation of a new Local Plan for Northumberland. Significant progress on the preparation of the new Local Plan for Northumberland has been made, supported by the all-party LDF Working Group. The preparation of the Local Plan is proceeding in accordance with the Local Development Scheme (April 2018).
2. The Spring 2018 Local Plan consultation ended on 2 May 2018. It asked people to show the Council where, in their opinion, development should go and to flag up key issues that the Local Plan should address. The results of that consultation have fed into the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan.

¹ Excluding the Northumberland National Park which is a separate Local Planning Authority and has separate planning policies.

Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan

3. Section 2 of the Draft Local Plan sets out the spatial portrait of Northumberland, defining the opportunities and challenges for the Local Plan to address. It highlights:
 - the importance of the natural and built environment and the need for the Local Plan to conserve and enhance it;
 - the importance of Northumberland to the regional and national economy;
 - that the Northumberland economy is intrinsically linked to the economies of neighbouring authorities, those in Tyneside in particular;
 - that the population of the County is ageing, and the significance of this demographic change makes it an important policy issue for the prosperity and resilience of communities across Northumberland.
4. The Draft Local Plan proposes a vision which sets out what it intends to achieve over the plan period (2016-2036). The vision, objectives and outcomes inform all of the draft policies in the plan. This reflects the Council's Corporate Priorities set out within the Corporate Plan 2018-2021 and the Northumberland Economic Strategy 2015-2020. It has also been informed by key partnership strategies such as the North of Tyne Devolution Deal and the Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan.
5. The Draft spatial vision is:

Northumberland's physical and cultural identity will be conserved and nurtured; its resources will be utilised in a sustainable way. The breadth, scale and quality of its special, varied landscapes and biodiversity will be conserved, enhanced and increased. The quality of its buildings and spaces will be conserved and improved. New development will be well designed, minimise environmental harm and reduce the effects of climate change.

The economy will be thriving and competitive, and deliver more and better jobs. Supported by investment and infrastructure, building on existing strengths whilst diversifying and realising the potential of the rural and visitor economy .

The health and wellbeing of the county's people and communities will be safeguarded by continually improving education and skills, and ensuring access to decent, affordable homes, services and facilities is secured

Delivering the vision for Northumberland

6. The Local Plan needs to define the level and distribution of development and specific policies that are required to deliver the spatial vision. The vision and objectives highlight the importance of protecting and enhancing the physical and cultural identity of Northumberland, but also the need to allow development to grow and diversify the economy to support the resilience of local communities.

7. A significant challenge to the delivery of the vision of the Draft Local Plan is the profile of the Northumberland population. Without positive policy intervention, projections show that there is likely to be a significant accelerating ageing of Northumberland's population and a substantial reduction in the working age population. The impact of this will be a significantly shrinking labour force and fewer working age families within the County. This change in the age profile has substantial potential to have a significant negative impact on the long term diversity and resilience of communities across Northumberland.
8. The Council considers that it is not an appropriate option to plan for a level of development only to meet population projections. This will not provide the working age population to allow the economy to grow to deliver the additional jobs as identified in the Council's Economic Strategy. It is considered that not planning for job growth across the County would unacceptably impact on the vitality and resilience of Northumberland Communities.
9. Some of the potential impacts include:
 - Reduction in the level of wealth created and retained within the County;
 - Further pressure imposed on spending in the public sector on social care and welfare;
 - Impact of reduced local expenditure - reducing income to local businesses and threatening further job losses;
 - The appetite for innovation and creativity may be suppressed - with those who have marketable or transferable skills moving elsewhere to find employment or further, higher education or training;
 - The County as a whole could become less competitive in increasingly competitive markets;
 - There is a risk of lower aspirations in education and learning;
 - The reduction in wealth creation may be accompanied by reduced investment in the buildings and spaces which make up the fabric of the County's towns and villages, together with its natural and historic environments;
 - This in turn may impact on the ability to attract new investment in the new economy; most notably digital, media, telecommunications and software;
 - A lack of choice in the housing market across the County, inhibiting the ability of existing households to secure the homes they need, and attract a working age population.
10. It is recognised that no or limited growth will reduce some of the pressures currently imposed on the County's environmental assets. Also, that an ageing population will create new employment opportunities, through the expansion of support services, increased levels of disposable income brought by in-migration, or simply by people working well beyond current retirement age. However, the Council consider there is a high level of risk of limited benefits and potentially high costs to the social and economic well-being of the wider community from the adoption of a policy of no or limited growth, because the County will not have the labour force to sustain economic growth.

A strategy for sustainable growth across Northumberland

11. In order to support the delivery of both the North East Strategic Economic Plan and the draft Northumberland Economic Strategy, the chosen development strategy for Northumberland is predicated on an ambition to support the delivery of additional, better paid and higher skilled jobs in the County, and to provide homes to meet not only the needs of the resident population, but also to accommodate the needs of people moving into Northumberland, who create and fulfil jobs across the County.
12. The vision proposes that the Local Plan will build upon existing strengths while diversifying and realising the potential of the rural and visitor economy. In order to deliver the economic objectives, the Local Plan will:
 - Provide a portfolio of high quality employment sites in the right locations which are attractive to the market;
 - Support locations in the South East and Central Delivery Areas as cost effective alternatives to the Tyneside market for industrial development;
 - Provide a diverse range of interconnected sites around the Blyth Estuary to provide for growth of the strategically important sectors – low carbon and environmental goods, energy generation, and offshore engineering;
 - Support improvements to the County's gateways to international growth – The Ports of Blyth and Berwick, and links to Newcastle International Airport;
 - Support the development of high quality office accommodation at Northumberland Business Park, and key locations in the other Main Towns;
 - Enable the development and diversification of the rural economy, and deliver the Borderlands Initiative, by supporting the creation and expansion of hubs for business services and creative industries in the County's market towns, rural service centres and larger villages, and through more home run enterprises;
 - Support the growth and diversification of the visitor economy, including the development of tourism facilities and accommodation;
 - Support improvements to town centres;
 - Support initiatives to improve skills levels in Northumberland's resident workforce;
 - Support the objectives of partners including those within the North of Tyne, and North East Local Enterprise Partnership, to support business investment.
13. In order to maximise the potential to deliver the above, infrastructure improvements are essential. The Local Plan will:
 - Support improvements to the East Coast Main Line, the re-introduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Rail Line, and improvements to the strategic highways including the dualling of the A1;
 - Support the rollout of effective superfast broadband across the County, and improvements to mobile communications.

Extending choice in the housing market

14. In order to meet the needs of Northumberland's resident population, including the diverse needs of an ageing population, and to provide attractive housing options for those moving into the County to boost the economy, the plan proposes to extend choice in the housing market. As such, the plan proposes to deliver housing at a level above the minimum 'Local Housing Need' identified by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The plan proposes to deliver the

right types of homes in the right places. This includes homes which will enable residents to get onto the housing ladder, affordable homes to rent, and specialist housing including extra care housing. The plan proposes the delivery of 17,700 dwellings (885 dwellings per annum). This housing will also help:

- Increase the numbers of skilled workers moving into the County, and reduce the number moving away, stemming the decrease in the size of the working age population;
- To rebalance and re-energise the resident population, and strengthen the labour force;
- Maintain and enhance vitality, and the provision of local services in the County's rural communities.

15. The indicative distribution of the dwelling requirements across the County is informed by the spatial strategy, and using disaggregated 'Local Housing Need' identified by the standard methodology as a guide. The Draft Local Plan seeks to ensure the future sustainability and viability of communities, and improve choice to meet the needs and aspirations of all existing and future residents. The approach therefore takes account of the role of main towns and service centres, the presence of key local services and facilities in smaller settlements.
16. While planning to meet future needs, the distribution of new allocations in the Draft Local Plan is also informed by the scale of commitments in each area. Account is also taken of environmental constraints and designations (including the Green Belt) that may restrict the ability of some areas to fully meet their needs and thus necessitate a slightly higher provision in neighbouring areas.
17. The indicative distribution of housing needs across Northumberland is set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Indicative Distribution of Housing Requirements 2016-2036

Location²	No of Dwellings 2016-2036	Average no of Dwellings per year³
South East Delivery Area	9,000	450
Amble	540	27
Ashington	1,600	80
Bedlington / Bedlington Station	840	42
Blyth	1,800	90
Cramlington	2,500	125
Guidepost / Stakeford	340	17
Newbiggin-by-the-Sea	300	15

² The indicative housing numbers and the geographies for Alnwick and Morpeth reflect those of Made neighbourhood plans.

³ Numbers do not add up due to rounding

Seaton Valley	600	30
Rest of South East	480	24
Central Delivery Area	4,450	223
Hexham	530	27
Morpeth	1,700	85
Ponteland	530	27
Prudhoe	630	32
Corbridge	170	9
Rest of Central	890	45
North Delivery Area	3,390	170
Alnwick	1,100	55
Berwick-upon-Tweed	610	31
Belford	80	4
Rothbury	140	7
Seahouses / North Sunderland	90	5
Wooler	170	9
Rest of North	1,200	60
West Delivery Areas	860	43
Haltwhistle	290	15
Allendale	100	5
Bellingham	100	5
Haydon Bridge	140	7
Rest of West	260	13
Northumberland	17,700	885

Green Belt in Northumberland

18. The Government attaches great importance to the Green Belt and through the NPPF sets out the policy approach to Green Belt. The NPPF states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and that a key attribute of land in the Green Belt is its openness. The Green Belt within Northumberland forms part of the wider Tyne and Wear Green Belt, the overriding purpose being to prevent the unrestricted sprawl of the Tyne and Wear conurbation. An extension to the Green Belt around Morpeth was

identified in the 1996 Northumberland Structure Plan, Regional Planning Guidance in 2002, with the Policy S5 of the revised Northumberland Structure Plan (2005) defining the general extent.

19. NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances; through the preparation or review of Local Plans, and that their boundaries need to have permanence enduring beyond the plan period.
20. Given that Northumberland already has a significant amount of housing committed across the County, it is not considered that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the alteration of Green Belt boundaries for residential development as housing growth in the Draft Local Plan can be accommodated outwith the Green Belt. However, the Council has identified exceptional circumstances to revise the Green Belt boundaries in order to deliver an identified need for employment land in sustainable locations.
21. The Council is consulting on options for the reorganisation of schools in the west of Northumberland, which includes schools in the Haydon Bridge and Hexham Partnerships. The outcomes of this consultation are not expected until summer 2018. Following the conclusion of this process, there may be considered to be exceptional circumstances to revise Green Belt boundaries for educational purposes.
22. The boundaries of the previously defined Green Belt have been amended in some areas to improve coherence across the designation. The following changes have been made:
 - Detailed boundaries of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth have been defined;
 - Some settlements, previously washed over with infill boundaries, have been inset from the Green Belt to improve coherence across the wider Green Belt and allow development within sustainable locations;
 - Minor amendments of the Green Belt boundary have been made to address anomalies, enabling boundaries to better align more accurately to physical edges;
 - Land has been released during the plan period from the Green Belt in Hexham, Ponteland and Prudhoe for employment purposes.

Settlement hierarchy and limits

23. A hierarchy of settlements for development is set out with the Draft Local Plan, which gives priority to identified Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages. There is no specific definition of a Main Town, Service Centre or Service Village. The role of settlements within these categories varies across the County.
24. In order to better control the location of development, settlement limits are proposed within the Draft Local Plan. While criteria based policies will also be used, it is considered that settlement limits will provide a higher degree of certainty to communities regarding future development. They will help to protect the countryside from ad hoc development encroachment, prevent the merger of settlements, maintain

the character and form of settlements, and protect the settings of historic and ecological assets.

25. The Draft Local Plan defines settlement limits for all Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages unless local communities, through the neighbourhood planning process, are defining boundaries or have specifically chosen not to.

Delivering sustainable development

26. The Draft Local Plan contains many other policies, which seek to deliver the vision for Northumberland.
27. In addition to the policy approach highlighted above, other policies within the Draft Local Plan seek to deliver a thriving and competitive economy by:
- Allowing for appropriate retail, leisure and employment opportunities within town centres, to protect the existing vitality and viability;
 - Supporting and improving transport and communications networks and the County's gateways to international growth – the Ports of Blyth and Berwick, and Newcastle International Airport.
28. Draft policies within the Draft Local Plan also seek to provide existing and future communities with access to a decent affordable home, including:
- Addressing the shortfall in affordable homes across Northumberland;
 - Identifying the need for a range of housing tenures, types, prices and sizes to be provided in order to help meet local needs for different groups of the population, including meeting the needs of an ageing population;
 - The potential to create lifetime neighbourhoods to support older people to remain independent as they age;
 - Identifying and providing for the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
29. Policies to protect and enhance Northumberland's distinctive and valued natural, historic and built environment included with the Draft Local Plan seek to:
- Allow Northumberland's natural and historic environment to continue to be experienced and valued by residents and visitors, within the scope that is possible to maintain their full protection and allow for their enhancement;
 - Direct development away from our most sensitive and valuable natural assets, habitats and species, towards less sensitive locations;
 - Ensure that new development contributes to the delivery of priorities set out by the Local Nature Partnerships;
 - Maintain and enhance Northumberland's Green Infrastructure networks;
 - Protect and enhance the landscape character of Northumberland;
 - Protect and enhance Northumberland's the tranquillity and dark skies;
 - Conserve and enhance features and areas of historical and cultural value, including the sensitive re-use of historical buildings and a reduction in buildings at risk;
 - Use Northumberland's distinctive heritage as the inspiration for new developments;
 - Protect archaeological sites and features;

- Protect the outstanding universal value of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage site from inappropriate development.
30. Policies to ensure connectivity seek to:
- Ensure coordinated and planned provision of essential infrastructure e.g. transport, water supply, sewerage, energy, flood alleviation, telecommunication, education, and health care;
 - Support effective partnership working between the Council, other infrastructure providers and developers to facilitate infrastructure delivery and opportunities for the co-location and multi-functional use of existing and new infrastructure services, amenities and facilities;
 - Protect existing infrastructure services and facilities unless they are no longer needed, or there is alternative provision elsewhere;
 - Support the provision of new or improved infrastructure, provided there is no detrimental environmental impact;
 - Provide a range of viable, efficient sustainable transport alternatives to reduce reliance on the private motor vehicle, although it is recognised that in rural areas reliance on the private car is unavoidable;
 - Support improvements to transport and communications infrastructure, and the County's gateways to international growth i.e. dualling of the A1 and A69, the Ports of Blyth and Berwick, passenger services on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line, and Newcastle International Airport.
31. Policies to ensure community health and wellbeing seek to:
- Protect and enhance accessible local services provision;
 - Support the provision of state of the art hospitals to provide improved healthcare;
 - Ensure strategic growth is matched by the delivery of improved and new infrastructure.
32. Policies to address climate change seek to:
- Support a sustainable pattern of development, including improvement to the self-containment levels of the main towns and service centres and a reduction in the need to travel;
 - Support new development to incorporate sustainable building practices and where possible contribute to improving the existing building stock;
 - Embed high energy efficiency into new development;
 - Require new developments to incorporate appropriate adaptation and mitigation for climate change, particularly risk from flooding and rising sea levels.
33. Policies to manage natural resources seek to:
- Not unnecessarily sterilise finite mineral resources across the County and make land available to meet defined needs;
 - Ensure that minerals extraction, transport and processing does not have unacceptable adverse impacts on the environment or local communities;
 - Recognise the importance of the minerals industry as a source of employment;
 - Ensure Northumberland continues to have a well-established and spatially distributed network of waste management facilities, with sufficient capacity and that recycling and recovery rates are maximised;

- Ensure that the need to generate energy is effectively balanced with the need to protect Northumberland's environment and communities from any significant adverse impacts associated with it, including the identification of area being suitable for wind energy development;
- Ensure that efficient use is made of land, with priority given to the development of previously developed land, wherever possible.

34. Policies to ensure quality of place seek to:

- Ensure that the design of new development will be of a high quality;
- Maintain and improve the individual character of places in Northumberland;
- Improve the accessibility of services for communities;
- Provided attractive living and working environments that are valued by their communities.

35. A presentation on the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan will be provided at the Local Area Council.

Engagement on the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan

36. The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan consultation commenced on Wednesday 4 July 2018 runs for 6 weeks, ending on 15 August 2018. As well as the consultation document being available online, hard copies are also available at Customer Information Centres and Libraries throughout the County. Hard copies of the consultation document will also be available to purchase. A CD with the consultation document is also available on request.

37. To ensure effective engagement, it is essential to raise awareness of the consultation. The Council has been seeking to raise awareness of the consultation in the following ways:

- Early notification emails to Town and Parish Councils;
- Formal consultation letters and emails to statutory and other consultees, including Town and Parish Councils and those registered on the consultation database – at the start of the consultation period;
- 23 information sharing drop-in events have been arranged across the County, in each of the Main Towns and Service Centres;
- Leaflet to all addresses in Northumberland publicising the consultation and the drop-in events;
- Press releases – at the start, middle, and towards the end of the consultation;
- Statutory notice;
- Article in Northumberland News;
- Use of social media to raise awareness about the start of the consultation – and in advance of drop-in events;
- Clear links on the front page of the Council website;
- Presentations to Local Area Councils during July - to which Town and Parish Councils will be invited to attend;
- Parish Councils have also be asked to raise awareness of the consultation;

Next Steps

38. Following the Regulation 18 consultation, there will be a period of collation of the representations received and consideration of the issues raised, as well as amending the draft plan where necessary. The timescale for publishing the draft plan under Regulation 19 is January 2019.
39. The current timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan and consultation is set out in the published Local Development Scheme (April 2018). The key stages are set out below:

Local Plan Timetable

Key Stages	Date
Regulation 18 - Preparation of Local Plan - Consultation on draft Local Plan	July - August 2018
Regulation 19 - Publication of Local Plan - Consultation on Pre-submission draft (limited to 'Tests of Soundness')	January 2019
Regulation 22 - Submission to Secretary of State	May 2019
Regulation 24 - Independent Examination Hearings	September 2019
Regulation 26 - Adoption of Local Plan	March 2020

Implications

Policy	The Local Plan when adopted will form part of the Council's policy framework.
Finance and value for money	Plan preparation costs will largely be met from within existing Council's budgets. Any additional costs preparing the Local Plan will be funded from Council reserves.
Legal	Local Planning Authorities must prepare a Local Plan which sets planning policies in a local authority area. Local Plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework, Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework.
Procurement	External expertise has been procured to assist with the preparation of evidence base studies, where the nature of the work is of a specialist nature. Additional external capacity, in the form of project management and critical friend support has also been procured to assist in the preparation of the Local Plan.
Human Resources	Work on the Local Plan involves both Council Officers and Members.

Property	The adopted Local Plan will apply to land and buildings owned by the County Council as they apply to land and buildings owned by others.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	An Equality Assessment will be published alongside the Regulation 19 - Publication of Local Plan consultation document.
Risk Assessment	There is a risk of intervention by the Secretary of State if delivery milestones are not met. The regulation 18 consultation is the first milestone on the LDS. A detailed project plan and resources plan are in place and are monitored on a regular basis.
Crime & Disorder	Crime and disorder considerations will be taken into account in the preparation of the Local Plan.
Customer Consideration	The Local Plan once adopted will supersede many planning policies from the former County and District Council planning documents into a single document, ensuring consistency in planning policies across the County and thereby making it easier for the public to understand.
Carbon reduction	The emerging Northumberland Local Plan includes draft policy approaches relating to climate change and carbon reduction.
Wards	All.

Background Papers

- Northumberland Local Plan - Local Development Scheme (April 2018)
- Northumberland Local Plan - Regulation 18 Draft Plan for consultation and accompanying policies map (July 2018)

Report Sign Off

	initials
Finance Officer	AM
Monitoring Officer/Legal	LH
Human Resources	N/A
Procurement	N/A
I.T.	N/A
Executive Director (Paul Johnston)	PJ
Portfolio Holder(s)	JR

Author and Contact Details

Joan Sanderson - Senior Planning Manager (Planning Policy)
01670 623626
Joan.Sanderson@northumberland.gov.uk