

**REPORT TO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE****3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022****TITLE OF REPORT: Local Plan Call for Sites Engagement - Digital Platform****REPORT OF: Anneliese Hutchinson, Service Director, Climate Change,  
Compliance, Planning and Transport**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Planning and Development Committee about the Call for Sites engagement exercise. The call for sites is to be undertaken utilising a digital platform to consult on and support the site selection process. The Call for Sites exercise will commence early August 2022 for a period of 8 weeks.

**Background**

2. The Local Plan for Gateshead comprises the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP), adopted in 2015, and Making Spaces for Growing Places (MSGP), which was adopted in 2021.
3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that policies within local plans: “should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years and should then be updated, as necessary.” The preparation and review of all policies in Local Plans should be underpinned by up-to date evidence.
4. Government Planning Practice Guidance advises that identifying sites and assessing their suitability for development is an important source of evidence to inform plan-making and decision-taking.

**Call for Sites**

5. A Call for Sites is a way for landowners, developers, individuals and other interested parties to suggest sites for development, and to let the council know when they might be available for development. This is a normal part of Local plan making and an important part of finding out what land may be available. This includes sites which may no longer be required for their current use and could become available for development or redevelopment. Land owned by the Gateshead Council will also be included for this purpose.
6. It is technical evidence gathering exercise carried out to update information on sites. Understanding landowners’ and developers’ intentions will ensure that the council has up-to-date evidence on the availability of sites during a time of

rapidly changing market conditions. This information will help provide a robust, updated evidence base on potential development sites across the borough, which will then be used to assist us when it comes to review the Local Plan.

7. Gateshead Council intends to carry out an initial Call for Sites exercise in early August 2022. We will invite site submissions from residents, landowners and businesses for a range of potential land uses, including
  - Residential development
  - Office, manufacturing, industrial, warehousing
  - Other commercial uses such as retail, waste management
  - Mixed use development sites
  - Community or cultural facilities
  - Renewable energy generation
  - Public open space and community gardens
  - Natural environment features, including community forests, sites for biodiversity offsetting
  - Flood and water management infrastructure
8. All relevant sites submitted will be assessed for their suitability, availability, and achievability, in accordance with national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The assessment of suitability will consider any constraints that may prevent or limit development. The assessment of availability will consider whether there are legal or ownership issues that may prevent a site's development and will consider whether development of the site could be economically viable.
9. With regard to land in the Green Belt the Council does not currently consider there to be exceptional circumstances that would justify taking land out of the Green Belt to accommodate housing or commercial uses. However, brownfield sites within the existing Green Belt can be put forward, whilst some uses (such as woodland and some leisure uses for example) could take place in the Green Belt without being considered inappropriate development and can therefore be submitted.
10. Following the Call for Sites and assessment process workshops will be set up with Ward Councillors to discuss the outcomes of the process for each ward, and to consider any additional sites not previously identified. Portfolio will also be notified of the outcome of this process.

## **Digital Platform**

11. Gateshead Council aims to transform and digitise the call for site process, allowing users to submit a range of submission sites on a digital platform. A platform called PlaceMaker has been procured which is a digital cloud-based platform created to enable local authorities to manage elements of the local

plan process. The platform comprises a suite of tools for processing potential development sites based on geospatial algorithms as well as public consultation.

12. To note Newcastle City Council are also undertaking a similar call for sites exercise using a digital cloud-based platform.

#### Engagement

13. The public engagement tool allows users to submit sites and directly provide information for analysis by officers without all the manual labour involved. The interactive maps allow geospatial data to be collected in one place, reducing the burden on users to have to supply their own maps. The PlaceMaker site dashboards allow you to visualise all the inputs so you can clearly see who said what and why.

#### Site Assessment Database

14. PlaceMaker enables officers to define their search and scoring criteria and use geospatial algorithms to sift through sites, instead of manually appraising a few hundred sites which previously has involved thousands of hours of officer effort. Officers can tailor the search and scoring criteria to reflect local circumstances. It also allows assumptions about the potential impact of viability to be made as well as providing an estimate of the site's capacity and potential appropriate densities for different locations.
15. This approach reflects the government's ambitions set out in the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill to establish a modern digital planning system, with local planning authorities making best use of digital tools and services to deliver a more efficient and user-friendly planning system.

### **Benefits**

- Contributing towards Gateshead's digital transformation of the local plan process
- The Call for Sites exercise will provide an up-to-date evidence base on the availability and deliverability of sites across the borough that are potentially suitable for development
- A more automated process will help to reduce the time it takes officers to manually assess each site, making the process more efficient and allowing officers to focus on sites or issues that require manual review.
- Ensures the correct site information is collected once and stored in one place, reducing duplication
- Makes best use of policy, information and data that is already held by the council and communicating this through the selection process

- Allowing officers to design and deliver a better more efficient and transparent process for landowners and communities
- Standardised data to assist with clear decision-making, potentially allowing for quicker identification of development land supply
- Flexibility to customise the site assessment approach to meet local needs and circumstances specific to Gateshead
- Developing a set of resources and tools that can be translated into other areas of the local plan, such as consultation

### **Outputs**

16. The final output will be completion of a comprehensive review of sites, pulling together constraint information and identifying sites that might be suitable for development, as well as their potential capacity. This will enable the final dataset to provide a robust evidence base for future Local Plan work which can stand up to scrutiny and defend the council's position at examination on the capacity to accommodate future development needs.

### **Next Steps**

Members are advised to:

- Note the issuing of the call for sites engagement exercise which will inform ongoing Local Plan review and evidence base work
- Note the intention is to commence the Call for Sites using the digital platform in early August 2022 for a period of 8 weeks, after which a consultation report will be prepared and circulated.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Committee note the report for information.

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**1. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

**2. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

**3. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

**4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

**5. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

**6. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

**7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

**8. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

This applies to all wards.

**9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

[Local Plan](#)

