

TITLE OF REPORT: Local Plan 2025-2045 – The Start of the Conversation

REPORT OF: Peter Udall – Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval from Cabinet to start the conversation with our communities on the [Gateshead Local Plan](#) and the independent Sustainability Appraisal [Sustainability Appraisal](#). This consultation will take place under Regulation 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (hereinafter referred to as “the Local Planning Regulations”).

Background

2. The Government requires all Councils, as local planning authorities, to have an up-to-date Local Plan which guides decisions on future development proposals and addresses the needs and opportunities of the area. The Local Plan provides confidence and certainty to our communities, businesses and future investors in the Borough and implements Thrive and our other Council strategies - health and wellbeing, the economy and housing.
3. The Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP) forms Parts 1 and 2 of Gateshead’s current Local Plan and was adopted in 2015. Under Regulation 10A of the Local Planning Regulations, local planning authorities are required to review the Local Plan at least once every 5 years to ensure that policies remain relevant and effectively address the needs of the local community. Gateshead’s Local Plan was most recently reviewed in 2020 and the Council concluded that it was up to date. Although the current Local Plan does not expire until 2030, the Council has a duty to ensure that the planning framework is up to date, reflects the ambitions and aspirations of our communities and is based on a robust evidence base. A new Plan, should it be adopted, will replace the CSUCP and will provide a blueprint for regeneration and development which looks ahead to 2045. The document is the start of the conversation with our communities, statutory consultees and stakeholders.

Proposal

4. The proposal is to undertake consultation on the Start of the Conversation document, commencing in November 2023 for a minimum of 8 weeks.
5. Delegated authority is sought for the Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport, to make minor changes necessary to the document prior to release for public consultation.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- i. approves the Gateshead Plan Start of the Conversation document and Sustainability Appraisal for a minimum of 8 weeks public consultation in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Local Planning Regulations and;
- ii. delegates authority to the Strategic Director, Economy Innovation and Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport to make minor changes necessary to the documents prior to release for public consultation.

For the following reasons:

- i. An up-to-date Local Plan is essential for Gateshead Council in planning for future growth in a sustainable manner. The Local Plan will help to deliver our health and well-being, economic and housing strategies. Having an up-to-date planning framework reflecting current national policy will be more robust in determining planning applications and more efficient in terms of implementation through decisions on planning applications.
- ii. Public engagement is a key part of local plan preparation and ensuring our communities are involved in shaping the future of Gateshead. Feedback from the public and stakeholders will be considered in preparing the draft Local Plan.

Policy Context

1. An up-to-date Local Plan will provide confidence and certainty to our communities, businesses and future investors in the Borough. It will be a tool in implementing Thrive and our other Council strategies such as health and wellbeing, the economy and housing - the spatial representation of our priorities.

Background

2. The strategic policies in the new Local Plan will shape our communities for the future setting out an overall strategy to make sufficient provision for housing, employment, shops, leisure, and other commercial development, infrastructure, community facilities, conservation of the natural, built and historic environment, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.
3. The Start of the Conversation is a structured way to gather information. It will engage our communities and other stakeholders to assist in the visioning about the future of Gateshead; identifying options and local priorities; confirming evidence requirements and support the development of the next stages of the plan. It also will be an important start to the conversation with our communities and stakeholders including statutory bodies.
4. The document provides a summary of the key issues facing Gateshead that it is considered that the local plan should address. This high-level document is based around principles that will help to determine the overall strategy for the Local Plan. It does not contain details on specific sites, policies or proposals. These will come in later stages once our community and other stakeholders have provided their input, and the overall strategy has been determined.
5. With our communities, setting a strong vision with clear objectives as to how we want Gateshead to evolve is one of the main aims of Starting the Conversation. This will lay the foundations for a plan that is understood and form the basis of the next stages. It will help identify the production of proportionate evidence to demonstrate soundness. Work on the evidence base will commence after the conversation with our communities.
6. Supporting our approach is an independent Sustainability Appraisal, prepared by consultants (AECOM) on the social, environmental, economic, health and equality effects [Sustainability Appraisal](#). This will be integral to the whole plan making process to ensure decisions are made that contribute to achieving sustainable, healthy and equitable development. The Scoping Report includes the collection of baseline information about the area and identifies sustainability issues and challenges. The Council must seek the views of the three statutory environmental consultation bodies – Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England.
7. They will have the opportunity to comment on the scope and level of detail of the environmental information contained within the Scoping Report. Local communities and other bodies will also be consulted on the content of the Scoping Report.

8. Public consultation on the 'Issues and Options' is proposed to take place between November 2023 and 2 January 2024. Consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). A [Communications Plan](#) has been produced.

Policy

9. The National Planning Policy Framework requires that local planning authorities (individually or in conjunction with other local planning authorities) prepare a plan that sets out the strategic policies for their area, with non-strategic policies being included in either the same plan or a separate plan.
10. The Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP) forms Parts 1 and 2 of Gateshead's Local Plan and was adopted in 2015. This plan was jointly prepared with Newcastle City Council. Local Plans must be reviewed every 5 years and assessed to identify whether they are up to date. The Council considers that the current Development Plan is up to date, however, given that the current Plan will expire in 2030 we need to commence work on the next Plan, as plans take years to adopt. The new Local Plan will be referred to as the Gateshead Plan.
11. Once adopted, the new Local Plan will supersede and replace the strategic policies in the current Local Plan Part 1 and 2. It will not currently replace the non-strategic policies in the Local Plan Part 3 Making Spaces for Growing Places, which was adopted in February 2021, unless there is a need to do so because of new evidential material or change in national legislation or guidance. The Government is currently consulting on Plan Making Reform. Part 4 of the MetroGreen Area Action Plan will be considered by Cabinet in the new year.

Consultation

12. The following have been consulted on the Issues and Options document:
- Environment and Transport Portfolio
 - Strategic Housing Board
 - Leader and Deputy Leader

Alternative Options

14. The alternative option would be to not progress a new Local Plan or delay preparation and consultation. This would be reputationally damaging and lead to Government intervention to produce a Local Plan for the authority.

Implications of recommended option

15. Resources:

- Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms costs of the Local Plan will be met from allocated reserves
- Human Resource Implications** - Currently anticipated to be delivered within existing resources. This will be kept under review alongside other work priorities.

- c. Property Implications** - There are no direct property implications arising from this report.

16. Risk Management Implications

The risk of not undertaking consultation at this time is that the preparation of the Local Plan will be delayed. This could also mean that meeting the Government's requirement for Gateshead Council to have an up-to-date Local Plan may not be achieved.

There are risks that national changes to planning may impact on the timetable for preparing the Plan. The Government is currently consulting on the content of Local Plans whether it could be streamlined, and some areas of policy set out nationally. A timetable of 30 months may be introduced by government for the preparation of Plans.

Government has advised to continue with the preparation of Plans and not to delay and wait for the planning reforms to provide a framework for addressing housing needs, social and environmental priorities. Whilst there is some uncertainty, it is important to start this early stage which will put the Council in a strong position to proceed with preparation of a draft Local Plan. For the time being the preparation of a new Plan will follow the current legislation national planning policy framework and planning guidance.

17. Equality and Diversity Implications

The Local Plan will be subject to ongoing Equality Impact Assessment.

18. Crime and Disorder Implications

There are no direct crime and disorder implications.

19. Health Implications

The Issues and Options consultation document recognises the Health and Wellbeing Strategy - and is accompanied by an independent sustainability appraisal of the social, environmental, economic, health and equality effects. The SA is integral to the plan making process to ensure decisions are made that contribute to achieving sustainable, healthy and equitable development.

20. Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications

The Issues and Options consultation document recognises that the Council has declared an emergency, the Climate Strategy is accompanied by an independent appraisal of the social, environmental, economic, health and equality effects. The SA is integral to the plan making process to ensure decisions are made that contribute to achieving sustainable, healthy and equitable development.

21. Human Right Implications

There are no direct human resource implications arising from this report. There are no direct human right implications.

22. Ward Implications

The Issues and Options consultation will cover every ward in Gateshead.

23. Background Information

- [Issues and Options Document](#)
- [Communication Plan](#)
- Sustainability Appraisal