

TITLE OF REPORT: MetroGreen Area Action Plan – Draft Plan for Public Consultation**REPORT OF: Peter Udall – Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth**

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval from Cabinet to undertake consultation on [the Draft MetroGreen Area Action Plan and 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 Council’s long established position on MetroGreen is set out in the statutory Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP). CSUCP Policy CS3 identifies MetroGreen as a major brownfield site for a new sustainable community in an Area of Change. CSUCP Policy AOC2 sets out the requirements for future development at MetroGreen including: a mixed-use sustainable community, providing new residential neighbourhoods, commercial, leisure and community facilities, a network of green spaces and routes for pedestrians and cyclists, and substantial improvements to public transport and flood and surface water management infrastructure.
3. The development and regeneration of MetroGreen is to be in accordance with planning policy as set out in an Area Action Plan (AAP). A Draft AAP (hereinafter referred to as the AAP) for MetroGreen has been prepared for public consultation.
4. The AAP is a key tool to facilitate the regeneration of land surrounding and incorporating the Metrocentre. MetroGreen will support the Metrocentre and its diversification by providing flexibility for Metrocentre related development, recognising changes in the retail/leisure sector to ensure the ongoing viability of the Metrocentre and its longer-term contribution to the economy of Gateshead and the wider region.

5. MetroGreen will deliver over 974 homes, 25,500 square metres of leisure and ancillary uses, including a hotel and a transformed and outward-facing Metrocentre, which will be integrated into the wider MetroGreen area.
6. The AAP provides a co-ordinated strategy for guiding future long-term re-development and investment. It sets out new and improved walking and cycle routes and public transport improvements; measures to manage river and surface water flooding; and a network of multi-functional green spaces, including a continuous riverside route and park along the River Tyne with links to the Metrocentre. The AAP promotes a high design led approach to the regeneration and as such contains a design guide, supported with illustrative drawings and images.
7. The AAP safeguards land to ensure the critical strategic blue and green infrastructure and sustainable transport improvements can be delivered to enable development to come forward and create a sustainable place at MetroGreen. This land is within multiple ownerships and will require site assembly. The AAP will enable the Council to consider the use of its compulsory purchase powers should this be necessary as a last resort to deliver the objectives and policy requirements of the AAP.
8. The delivery of MetroGreen will take place over a number of years in phases. The AAP sets out the key development phases and the order in which development of infrastructure and specific land parcels should progress. This indicates that the strategic flood infrastructure along the River Tyne will need to be implemented in advance of some of the development sites.

Proposal

9. The proposal is to undertake consultation on the Draft MetroGreen Area Action Plan, commencing 26 February 2024 – 7 April 2024, for a minimum of 6 weeks.
10. 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 plan, prior to release for public consultation.

Recommendation

11. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - i. Approves the [Draft MetroGreen Area Action Plan and Sustainability Appraisal](#) for a minimum of 6 weeks public consultation in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Local Planning Regulations.
 - 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 plan, prior to release for public consultation.

For the following reasons:

- i. To progress the Draft MetroGreen Area Action Plan through the various stages of consultation on its way to adoption as part of the development plan for Gateshead Council.
- ii. To support the regeneration of the Metrocentre and the surrounding area.
- iii. Public consultation is a key part of local plan preparation, feedback from the public and stakeholders will be considered in preparing the Draft Local Plan.

CONTACT: Neil Wilkinson extension: 3411

Policy Context and Background

1. The Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP) sets out the development requirements for MetroGreen and commits to preparing an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the MetroGreen area. The AAP will be part of the Gateshead Local Plan. The AAP is a statutory document that will provide detailed planning and design policies and guidance for the area setting out which land uses should go where, what infrastructure is required and how it will be delivered.
2. The Council commenced work on a new Local Plan through the recent consultation called [Start of the Conversation](#). The AAP has been prepared alongside and in conjunction with the evidence base informing the forthcoming new Local Plan which looks ahead to 2045. The AAP plan period extends to 2045 in alignment with the new Local Plan. This will allow for the AAP to be incorporated into the new Local Plan should it be adopted.
3. The AAP is being prepared to support the regeneration of and investment in vacant and underused brownfield land around the Metrocentre, approximately 213 hectares. The AAP supports the re-positioning of the Metrocentre, diversifying and encouraging multi-functionality to ensure its longer-term contribution to the economy of Gateshead and the wider region.
4. The Metrocentre has potential to deliver additional growth beyond what is currently planned for, diversifying further the range of uses and substantially increasing the number of homes. The scope of this has been discussed in the recent consultation which ended in January called the [Start of the Conversation](#). The operators of the centre have also considered the scope of additional growth and are actively engaging with the Council to look at the infrastructure challenges particularly around transport and water. Any additional growth would be handled through the Local Plan review.

The Importance of MetroGreen

5. The transformation of MetroGreen is a Council priority. The location and strategic scale of development will deliver the following benefits:
 - MetroGreen supports the Metrocentre and its transformation through diversification of uses at the centre and connection to the wider MetroGreen area, helping to sustain over 10,000 jobs and its contribution to the local, regional and national economy.
 - MetroGreen is set within a wider riverside renaissance which will be fundamental in transforming the riverside from Gateshead Quays to the Derwent Valley.
 - MetroGreen will help deliver the Councils key strategies including Gateshead Thrive, Health and Wellbeing, Economic Development, Climate and Housing.

- MetroGreen will boost the supply of housing at a national and local level, helping to deliver the Council's housing targets and provide new homes in the local area.
- MetroGreen is a significant brownfield opportunity in an area of high accessibility by sustainable transport modes, limiting the need to travel by car and contributing to carbon neutral growth.
- MetroGreen will deliver strategic multifunctional blue/ green infrastructure that will create a sustainable, attractive and healthy environment that includes flood management solutions to protect existing and new development, the creation of high quality public open spaces, biodiversity retention, creation and/or enhancement and active travel routes including the recreational riverside route along the River Tyne.

MetroGreen Vision and Objectives

6. The vision for the MetroGreen AAP is:

MetroGreen brings together sustainable waterfront communities offering a hugely attractive lifestyle with the River Tyne as its backdrop and easy access to city and countryside, riverside and seaside.

A mix of distinct neighbourhoods are well connected to local facilities and activities. At the core of the area, integrated with these neighbourhoods, is a re-imagined Metrocentre - outward looking and incorporating an exciting leisure offer of regional importance.

Connected communities - residential and business - are supported by excellent public transport and a green network of parks, streets and spaces with water never far away.

7. The strategic objectives of the draft AAP form the basis of the plan and its policies. The themes for the strategic objectives are set out below:

- Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing
- Facilities, Leisure and Wellbeing
- Sustainable Transport Connections
- Greenspace and Biodiversity
- Water and Blue Infrastructure
- Low Carbon
- Economy and Employment

8. The MetroGreen Vision and Objectives document can be found on the Councils website [here](#).

MetroGreen Draft Area Action Plan

9. The AAP provides the planning policy framework for the comprehensive development of the following principal uses:

- 974 homes
 - 25,500 square metres of leisure (use class) and ancillary uses
 - Hotel
10. The AAP sets out improved walking, cycle and public transport improvements; measures to manage river and surface water flooding; the provision of green spaces including a continuous riverside route and park along the River Tyne with links to the Metrocentre. The AAP promotes a high design led approach to the regeneration and as such contains a design guide, supported with illustrative drawings and images.
 11. The MetroGreen AAP is supported by a substantial evidence base which includes a range of technical reports that can be found on Gateshead Council's website [here](#).
 12. Preparation of the AAP has undergone various consultation stages in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. These are summarised below:
 - MetroGreen Scoping Report
 - MetroGreen Options Report
 - MetroGreen Pre-Consultation Options ReportThe Reports are available on the Gateshead Council website [here](#).
 13. Consultation on the Draft AAP and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal will be carried out for a minimum of 6 weeks starting in February 2024 in line with the Council's [Statement of Community Involvement](#) adopted in July 2020. The upcoming round of consultation is important as it is the last informal round of consultation on the Draft AAP, welcoming comments and suggestions to all aspects of the draft plan. It also provides members of the public and stakeholders with the opportunity to be further informed of the Council's and Metrocentre's regeneration plans.
 14. The results of this consultation will be assessed, and the Draft AAP will be revised considering the comments received as appropriate. Cabinet will then be requested to endorse the AAP for pre-submission publication (Regulation 19) during which formal representations can be made, followed by formal submission to the Secretary of State and an Examination in Public.

MetroGreen Delivery Strategy

15. The Council is working with partners to prepare a delivery strategy for MetroGreen which will set out how the development will be funded and delivered. There are a number of viability challenges facing the delivery of development due to site abnormal and infrastructure costs. Significant investment will be needed to deliver the physical infrastructure and

development which will require long term commitment and funding from a variety of sources. The development is likely to be led by the public sector to begin, so to unlock the scheme.

Consultation

16. The following have been consulted on the report:
- Environment and Transport Portfolio
 - Ward Councillors for Blaydon, Dunston and Teams and Whickham North

Alternative Options

17. The alternative option would be to not progress the AAP or delay preparation and consultation. This would be reputationally damaging and cause uncertainty to our partners supporting Gateshead Council in the areas regeneration.

Implications of recommended option

18. **Resources**
- Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, confirms that there are no additional revenue implications arising from this report and there is a Capital Programme allocation for MetroGreen.
 - Human Resource Implications** - Currently anticipated to be delivered within existing resources. This will be kept under review alongside other work priorities.
 - Property Implications** - There are no direct property implications arising from this report, albeit the Council has land ownership in the MetroGreen area.
19. **Risk Management Implications**
There are several risks such as reputational, procedural and legal that will need to be addressed in the preparation of the AAP. A strong, collaboration, budget and governance structure has been developed that will ensure these risks are met as the project develops and which will ensure planning regulations are complied with. The AAP itself sets out the infrastructure requirements to address risks to the successful development of the area and the MetroGreen Delivery Strategy will address how the development will be funded and delivered.
20. **Equality and Diversity Implications**
The MetroGreen AAP Draft Plan Sustainability Appraisal. This includes a Strategic Environment Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment as part of a combined integrated approach.
21. **Crime and Disorder Implications**
There are no direct crime and order implications.

22. **Health Implications**
The MetroGreen AAP Draft Plan Sustainability Appraisal. This includes a Strategic Environment Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment as part of a combined integrated approach.
23. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications**
The MetroGreen AAP Plan Draft Plan assesses the climate emergency and sustainability implications.
24. **Human Right Implications**
There are no direct human resource implications arising from this report.
There are no direct human right implications.
25. **Ward Implications**
There are Ward implications for Blaydon, Dunston and Teams and Whickham North.

Background Information

- MetroGreen AAP Draft Plan
- MetroGreen AAP Draft Plan Policies Map
- MetroGreen AAP Draft Plan Communications Plan
- MetroGreen AAP Draft Plan Sustainability Appraisal