

**THE NEWCASTLE AND GATESHEAD ONE CORE STRATEGY: UPDATE
ON SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION**

REPORT BY THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 A report to the November meeting of this Committee outlined the Council's response to two emerging planning documents jointly prepared by Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Borough Council:-
- the Newcastle and Gateshead draft Core Strategy (the One Core Strategy) which covers the whole administrative area of Newcastle and Gateshead, and
 - the associated Urban Core Area Action Plan, which covers central shopping and business areas.
- 1.2 At the meeting it was agreed that Gateshead and Newcastle Council's should be informed that the City Council objected to proposals in the Core Strategy for housing development in the vicinity of Leam Lane as this would require development of Green Belt land.
- 1.3 It was also agreed that as the consultation deadline had been extended until the New Year, further discussions should take place between Gateshead and Sunderland Councils so as to enable a fuller understanding of the background to the proposal. The outcome of these discussions would be reported back to this Committee in time for a formal response to be made before the end of the consultation on 4th January 2012.
- 1.4 This report updates Members on these subsequent discussions.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Gateshead Borough Council and Newcastle City Council are collaborating on preparing a single Core Strategy which covers the whole of the authority areas of Gateshead and Newcastle. Called the "One Core Strategy", it will provide broad guidance on the scale and distribution of development in the area to 2030 for the two authorities.
- 2.2 Core Strategy Policy CS12 highlights that provision will be made for a total of approximately 36,000 new homes to be built between 2010 to 2030. The gross housing requirement is split between Gateshead (15,000) and Newcastle (21,000).
- 2.3 In this regard, the Core Strategy proposes a Neighbourhood Growth Area at Leam Lane in Gateshead where up to 900 mid/upper market homes could be developed. As outlined in the report to November Planning and Highways Committee, this proposal is of particular concern to the City Council as it would represent a significant intrusion

onto land that has been protected as Green Belt for over twenty five years. For this reason it was considered appropriate to lodge a holding objection to the Core Strategy. It was further agreed that discussions should take place with Gateshead Council

3.0 UPDATED POSITION

- 3.1 Officers from the two Councils met on 1st December at Gateshead Civic Centre to discuss the issue. The following matters were examined:-
- 3.2 **Core Strategy** It was confirmed by Gateshead officers that the Core Strategy will not be allocating sites – including those at Leam Lane - this will be left to the Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) which is to be prepared at the same time as the Core Strategy.
- 3.3 The **Gateshead Strategic Housing Land Assessment (SHLAA)**. It is clear from the latest SHLAA prepared by Gateshead Borough Council (September 2010) that there are no significant suitable and deliverable housing sites in the urban part of east Gateshead where additional new houses could be built.
- 3.4 Whilst a number of sites were put forward in locations to the south of Leam Lane during the SHLAA process, due to their Green Belt status these were considered “unsuitable” for housing development.
- 3.5 **Strategic Land Review and Green Belt Assessment (SLR)** As the SHLAA has not identified sufficient new housing sites to accommodate the proposed housing requirement, a Strategic Land Review and Green Belt Assessment was undertaken to identify the most appropriate additional sites to meet development needs. This tested all parts of the Green Belt within Newcastle and Gateshead to establish how well they meet the five Green Belt objectives set by national planning guidance (PPG2). This allowed the identification of those parts of the Green Belt which only make a very limited contribution to Green belt objectives.
- 3.6 The SHLAA sites at Leam Lane were tested against criteria relating to:-
 - Preventing the merging of neighbouring towns
 - Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns
 - Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
 - Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas
 - Assisting in urban regeneration
- 3.7 The Leam Lane sites scored 21 points out of a possible 25 which meant that in terms of the SLR, they were appropriate for consideration for housing development.

- 3.8 Discussions with officers from Gateshead have highlighted that whilst the SLR has identified the Leam Lane sites as potentially suitable, this does not mean that all of the land will be released for housing. The need to take into account the topography of the area and identify a defensible long-term Green Belt boundary could result in only part of the land being considered appropriate. This has yet to be determined. It is important to note that the SLR has for the present time identified more land than is required. All landowners and developers who have interests in the sites identified within the SLR – including those at Leam Lane - have been requested to submit broad concept plans of how their site could be developed with particular emphasis as to landscaping and Green Belt boundary treatments. It is understood these are to be submitted by January 2012. They will be assessed by both Gateshead and Newcastle Councils, where the most suitable sites are likely to be allocated within the separate Allocations DPD.
- 3.9 At the present time the draft Core Strategy must adhere to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). However, in the light of the impending revocation of the RSS, and due to changing economic circumstances, the preferred development requirements will be reappraised prior to the next formal stage of the Core Strategy. As the Localism Bill was enacted on 15th November 2011, it is now the case that this reappraisal will need to be undertaken so as to inform the next stage of plan making. It is possible that this could result in a reduction in the level of new housing required over the plan period.
- 3.10 Officers from the City Council will continue to monitor this situation to ensure that the One Core Strategy is based on robust population and growth assumptions. Further discussions will take place as part of the ongoing cross-boundary working group in the spirit of the duty to cooperate established under the Localism Act.
- 3.11 On this matter in general, there is a growing need for the three neighbouring Councils – Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland – to work together in appraising the Green Belt in the Leam Lane/ Follingsby / Nissan area to jointly agree any potential for bringing forward new sites to support proven regeneration requirements. This issue will need to be addressed in terms of the proposed Strategic Site to the North of Nissan where a new low-carbon business cluster is proposed in the City's emerging Core Strategy. The mechanism for delivering this appraisal will be the subject of a future report to this Committee.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 As outlined above, the scale of new housing at the proposed Neighbourhood Growth Area at Leam Lane will require the development of land which has been in Green Belt for many years.

- 4.2 It is recommended that Newcastle and Gateshead Councils are informed that the City Council maintains its holding objection to the draft Core Strategy. This objection would be subject to : -
- Newcastle and Gateshead re-appraising their growth requirements in the light of the enactment of the Localism Bill and demonstrating there is still a requirement for the Leam Lane site in order to deliver the Councils' overall housing requirements;
 - Future consideration of the concept plans that will be produced for these specific sites. .

- 4.3 The City Council would then offer a formal response - either positive or negative - at the next iteration of the Newcastle Gateshead Core Strategy.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Subject to Committee approval, this report will be forwarded to Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Borough Council as constituting the formal response of Sunderland City Council.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 Committee is requested to:-
- i) Endorse the comments as detailed within this report and make any additional comments considered appropriate;
 - ii) Agree that the City Council maintains its holding objection to the current proposals for the Leam Lane Neighbourhood Growth Area on the grounds that it will significantly impact on the Green Belt in this location;
 - iii) Authorise officers to forward a copy of this report to Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Borough Council as constituting the City Council's formal response to the Newcastle and Gateshead One Core Strategy.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

NewcastleGateshead One Core Strategy
NewcastleGateshead Strategic Land Review and Green Belt
Assessment
Gateshead Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

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