

CABINET – 13 MARCH 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK : CORE STRATEGY REVISED PREFERRED OPTIONS

Author:

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's recommendation to Council to approve the Sunderland Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options for public consultation.

Description of Decision:

Cabinet is requested to agree that Council be recommended to :

- a) Approve the attached Sunderland Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options (including the Sustainability Appraisal Report) for the purposes of public consultation and as a material consideration in assessing planning applications, pending its finalisation following public consultation.

- b) Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to make any required amendments to the attached Sunderland Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options (including the Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment Reports) as necessary prior to its publication for public consultation.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget Policy Framework ?

Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget / Policy Framework.

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

The decision is required to enable the Core Strategy to proceed to its next stage (statutory consultation) in accordance with the Council's adopted Local Development Scheme.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

All local planning authorities are charged under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 with the preparation of a Local Development Framework (LDF), which must include a core strategy. They are also charged with preparing the LDF in accordance with the provisions of an approved Local Development Scheme.

Consequently, no alternatives can be recommended.

Impacts analysed:

Equality Y Privacy n/a Sustainability Y Crime and Disorder Y

Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution? Yes	Scrutiny Committee
Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions? No	Planning and Highways Committee

SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK : CORE STRATEGY REVISED PREFERRED OPTIONS.

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

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3.0 SUMMARY OF KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Within the body of this report, Members are requested to agree the following key policy issues over the period 2012 to 2032 :

- To agree to a minimum target of 15,000 new dwellings (net) (paragraphs 7.7 - 7.11)
- To provide a minimum of 81 hectares of employment land (paragraphs 7.12 - 14)
- To provide an overall requirement of some 78,900 sqm (gross) of comparison goods floorspace and 7,500 sqm gross of convenience goods floorspace with the City Centre being the primary location for meeting these requirements (paragraph 7.15)
- To endorse the allocation within the Core Strategy of the two strategic sites on land to the North of Nissan (for 20 hectares) and at Vaux / Farrington Row for offices (paragraphs 7.16)
- To approve the principle of development and the broad range of uses in those areas proposed as "Locations for Major Development" (paragraphs 7.17 – 7.18).

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The Core Strategy will sit at the heart of the city's development planning framework. It will set out the overarching strategic planning framework for the development of the city for the next 20 years and draw from other strategies of the City Council (such as the Sunderland Strategy and Economic Masterplan) and those of other organisations. Apart from the allocation of "Strategic Sites",

the Core Strategy will otherwise not be site specific and will only indicate the broad locations for delivering new development such as new housing, employment and transport. Once the Core Strategy is adopted, all other Development Plan Documents (including a site specific Allocations Plan) must conform to the broad requirements of the Core Strategy.

4.2 The Core Strategy, like all statutory development planning documents must pass through the following statutory and non-statutory stages :

1. Issues and Options
2. Preferred Options Draft
3. Publication Draft including public consultation
4. Submission Draft to the Secretary of State
5. Public Examination before an independent Inspector
6. Adoption

5.0 CHANGES AT THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SUNDERLAND'S CORE STRATEGY

National

5.1 Since coming into power in May 2010, this Government has sought to remove centralised controls and give neighbourhoods and local areas the flexibility to innovate, access new resources and control their own futures. As part of this approach, it has sought to deliver on a series of pre-election pledges to reform the planning system. The Government sees that the planning system has a central role in delivering three key functions:

- To give people more control over the shape, look and feel of their communities including the protection and promotion of important environmental and social interests;
- To provide sufficient housing to meet demand;
- To support economic development by providing infrastructure and using land use planning.

5.2 The mechanics of delivering many of this Government's reforms are set out in the **Localism Act** (which received Royal Assent in November 2011). Supplementary legislation and regulations have been issued and will continue to be rolled out to enable the various sections of the Localism Act to be realised. These will continue to have a significant bearing on spatial planning which will require further consideration as they emerge. Among the key reforms set out in the Act are:

- The abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies, to include the scrapping of top down house building targets on local authorities
- With the impending demise of the Regional Spatial Strategies, neighbouring authorities must work together to ensure that strategic cross boundary issues are considered appropriately in the development plan making process (known as the Duty to Cooperate)
- A commitment to a plan led system, albeit in a modified form, that includes -
 - The consolidation of all national planning policies into a single National Planning Policy Framework which was published 27th March 2012 (discussed below)
 - A non-binding Inspector's report for local plans
 - Giving the power for local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans to bring forward more development than that set out in the Local Plan.

- 5.3 National planning policies were previously contained within topic based Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Mineral Policy Statements (MPGs). Collectively these informed the preparation of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and were material considerations in determining planning applications.
- 5.4 In July 2011, the draft **National Planning Policy Framework** was published for consultation. As part of its wider reforms to simplify the planning process, it sought to update and consolidate all national planning policies into a single streamlined document. The draft version attracted considerable controversy nationally for being too pro-growth orientated.
- 5.5 The final version of the National Planning Policy Framework was published in March 2012 and took immediate effect. It has largely redressed many of the concerns that were raised to its draft version. The majority of PPSs, PPGs and MPSs have been repealed. The exception being PPS10 "Planning for Sustainable Waste Management" which remains extant until national waste policies are published as part of the National Waste Management Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework does not contain specific policies for nationally significant infrastructure proposals. These will be dealt with in separate National Policy Statements for Major infrastructure.
- 5.6 Key messages of the National Planning Policy Framework reinforce that the planning system should :
- Continue to be plan-led empowering local people to shape their surroundings where a presumption in favour of sustainable development underpins the entire national policy
 - Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver homes, businesses and infrastructure, taking into account market signals
 - Secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings
 - Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting viability of urban areas and protecting the Green Belt
 - Support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate
 - Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution
 - Continued to protect town and city centres.
- 5.7 The **Neighbourhood Planning Regulations** (April 2012) were introduced to provide local communities with the potential to influence planning decisions in local communities. Importantly, Neighbourhood Plans cannot be used to block approved development. Tools available to communities that want to get engaged in local development decisions include:
- Neighbourhood Development Plans – the potential to set planning policies for the use of land in a neighbourhood.
 - Neighbourhood Development Orders – power to permit certain types of development without the need for a planning application.
 - Community Right to Build Orders – offer the potential for communities to bring forward development on smaller sites without the need for formal planning permission.
- 5.8 The Regulations set out clear processes by which proposals for the three mechanisms of Neighbourhood Planning can be advanced. In the absence of

an appropriate Town or Parish Council, all require the formal designation of a 'Neighbourhood Forum' in order to proceed.

Regional

- 5.9 In July 2010, the Government attempted to meet its pre-election pledge by announcing, with immediate effect, the abolition of the suite of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) adopted across the country. This decision was subsequently overturned through a series of High Court rulings. The Localism Act 2011 has repealed the legal requirements for these strategies, leaving authorities to set their own growth requirements (based upon objectively assessed evidence). However, European and domestic regulations require the completion of Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisals (SA) on all plans and programmes that generate significant environmental effects. These ensure the socio-economic and environmental considerations are fully taken on board.
- 5.10 Previously, Government published a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the revocation of the North East of England Plan which was open to consultation between October 2011 and January 2012. A joint response was submitted to this consultation by the Councils of Sunderland, County Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Newcastle. But it only considered the options on whether to revoke or to retain the North East of England Plan. The SEA Directive states that an environmental report should consider all reasonable alternatives. In November 2012, Government published for consultation a more comprehensive SEA (to which the City Council responded). At the time of writing, the revocation of two RSSs elsewhere in the country have formally been announced. It is expected that the North East of England Plan will be formally revoked in early 2013.
- 5.11 In the meantime, the RSS remains legally in force, though the weight afforded to it varies:-
- For development management purposes, the revocation can be treated as a 'material consideration' which means that depending on the nature of the application, the RSS policies may or may not be applied
 - Emerging Development Plans must by contrast still conform with the RSS provisions until they are formally abolished.

6.0 THE EMERGING CORE STRATEGY PROGRESS TO DATE

- 6.1 The first formal Core Strategy stage began with consultation on the Issues and Options between November 2005 and February 2006. The Preferred Options Draft was consulted upon between December 2007 and February 2008. However, given the availability of new evidence and regulatory changes during 2008 and 2009, it was considered appropriate to revise the Preferred Options draft prior to advancing to its next formal stage, the Publication Draft.
- 6.2 During late 2009, the Council developed and consulted upon four realistic alternative approaches regarding the overall spatial distribution of development across the city which included :
- § Approach A ~ Focussing Development on the Conurbation
 - § Approach B ~ Proportional Distribution of Development
 - § Approach C ~ Focus Development within the Current Urban Area
 - § Approach D ~ Meeting Sub-Area Spatial Requirements - a Hybrid of Approaches A-C

- 6.3 Ten strategic sites were also identified and proposed for consultation.
- 6.4 Some 150 responses were received showing that Approach D was the preferred option favoured by residents and stakeholders which was corroborated by the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal. The number of strategic sites was also reduced to two – namely Vaux and land to the north of Nissan.
- 6.5 In accordance with the Local Development Scheme the Revised Preferred Options Draft was approved in March 2010 by the Council for consultation. Given the then impending national elections and the sweeping changes being made to the planning systems (particularly the ensuing High Court decisions following the announcement to revoke RSSs in 2010), its publication was deferred.
- 6.6 The Revised Preferred Option draft and separate high level development Management Policies were approved in April 2012 by Cabinet. Further detailed work has been undertaken prior to seeking Full Council approval and going out to public consultation. This has included :
- Reviewing and updating the emerging Core Strategy policies to maintain alignment with the Sunderland Economic Masterplan and National Planning Policy Framework
 - Developing and reviewing the evidence base that is required to underpin the emerging policies which includes :
 - Commencing a full review of the deliverability of the city's employment land portfolio and updating projections on future employment land requirements
 - Undertaking a full review of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (due for completion in April 2013)
 - Instigating the review of the annual Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (due for completion in April 2013)
 - Commencing a full review of the City's Green Belt and Settlement Break designations to ensure they remain fit for purpose
 - Working with neighbouring authorities regarding strategic cross boundary issues to ensure compliance with the duty to cooperate requirements imposed under the Localism Act 2011
 - Developing the evidence base to determine the city's long term housing requirements
 - Undertaking a full review of the City's green space and ecology.

7.0 THE CORE STRATEGY REVISED PREFERRED OPTIONS DRAFT

- 7.1 The Core Strategy seeks to provide a long term strategic framework for development of the city over a 20 year period (that is 2012 to 2032).

Format and Structure.

- 7.2 In accordance with national guidance, the theme of shaping Sunderland as a place underlies the format of this Core Strategy. In other words, it seeks to tell the story of where Sunderland has come from and where it will be by 2032 through the delivery of these policies. There remains a strong relationship with the Sunderland Strategy, but more pertinently, it reflects and supports the objectives of the Sunderland Economic Masterplan.

7.3 This Core Strategy is effectively divided into two parts :

- 1) A suite of 10 broad city wide policies that bring together the range of policy requirements. In summary, these relate to :
 - The spatial growth and regeneration of the city and how new development will be distributed in the five separate sub-areas : Central Area; Sunderland North; Sunderland South; Coalfields; and Washington (as shown at appendix 1)
 - Reflecting previous consultation around the Alternative Approaches to the spatial distribution of new development by focussing the majority of development within the Sunderland / Washington conurbation and supporting the sustainable growth of the Coalfields
 - Developing the city's economic prosperity to meet the long term employment and retail requirements (as informed by evidence on employment land and retail needs)
 - Ensuring there remains a sufficient supply of housing land to meet existing and future needs (for both general market and affordable housing)
 - Ensuring that movement and travel promotes the city's sustainable regeneration
 - Protecting and enhancing the city's built and natural environment
 - How the city will effectively manage both minerals and waste
 - How the city will manage and respond to changing circumstances

- 2) A suite of detailed development management policies which take their lead from the higher tier Core Strategy policies, which are to be used on a day to day basis to inform planning applications. These policies cover areas such as :
 - Managing the release of new sites giving priority to re-using brownfield land and other sustainable sites
 - The control and development of new and existing employment sites
 - Detailed requirements as to new residential development including the required mix of types, affordable housing requirements and student accommodation
 - The control of new development within the open countryside, including Green Belts.

7.4 The strategic policies are illustrated on a 'key diagram' which shows their geographical relationship.

Establishing the Quantum and Distribution of Development

7.5 The emerging Core Strategy must still legally conform to the RSS for the North East until the latter is formally revoked. However, the RSS was set during a completely different economic climate when projections for economic growth were strong. This growth scenario underpinned the policies especially in terms of new house building and economic development. These specific growth objectives now need to be reviewed to take account of recent changes in economic conditions regionally, nationally and globally. Furthermore, it is extremely likely that the North East Region's RSS will be revoked before the Core Strategy reaches the next stage in the process – the Publication Draft.

7.6 National planning guidance emphasises the importance that policies should be based on sound and robust evidence so that policies can stand scrutiny either at

Examination or when used in support of planning decisions. In particular there is a duty for plans to meet objectively assessed needs.

- 7.7 With regard to new housing, there are effectively three options to follow to determine long term housing requirements over the next 20 years :
- Retain and aggregate forward the adopted RSS housing targets (circa 18,900 dwellings)
 - Retain and aggregate forward figures that were proposed through the RSS pre-examination draft (circa 13,000 dwellings)
 - Develop localised targets based on local need and evidence.
- 7.8 Evidence has and continues to be developed which considers the three options in detail, and updates the information taking into account factors such as :
- The latest population growth and household projections released in 2010
 - Census 2011
 - Overcrowding
 - Employment levels
 - Past housing delivery rates
 - Housing renewal and replacement
 - The potential supply of sustainable housing land (informed by the SHLAA)
 - Housing demand based information arising from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)
 - Policy requirements including the Sunderland Economic Masterplan.
- 7.9 It is considered that those requirements set out within the RSS (18,900 dwellings) are overly ambitious. Crucially, the evidence which underpinned the RSS housing requirement is becoming increasingly outdated. For example, the baseline national population and household projections have been updated since the RSS's adoption in 2008. Further national projections are expected this summer based on the Census 2011 (as outlined at paragraph 7.10). The scenario upon which the housing growth was planned to grow could not predict the economic downturn and consequently, the level of planned growth is presently not being realised. It is considered this option should be rejected. Equally, the pre-submission RSS housing target is considered potentially too low to sufficiently meet the City's aspirations and needs.
- 7.10 A locally derived target of some 15,000 dwellings is therefore proposed to be taken forward in the Core Strategy. Given this is based on more up to date information and data, it is considered that its basis is more robust. It would provide both a realistic and deliverable target for growth, but is sufficiently aspirational based upon the long term objectives for the city to grow. It should be stressed, that this figure would be treated as a minimum target and not the maximum allowable. Informal discussions with the house building industry and agents (via the House Builders Forum) would suggest that this locally derived target is a reasonable position to take. However, crucial to this target setting exercise will be the need to compare forecasts for economic growth with the implications this will have for population growth (eg high economic forecasts would signify the need to accommodate additional house building). This exercise is presently being undertaken. Equally important to take into account will be the ONS's release of its latest household projections which is expected in March 2013. Both pieces of work will be required to inform and clarify the City's long term housing requirements.

- 7.11 Of the proposed 15,000 target, it is recommended that the Core Strategy sets a requirement for the first 5 years of the plan period of 3,200 dwellings (net) in order to retain a rolling supply of deliverable housing sites. This would require an average net annual build rate of some 640 dwellings per annum.
- 7.12 With regard to employment land requirements, the Core Strategy has been informed by the Employment Land Update (adopted in April 2012). This points to the need to deliver some 81 hectares of employment land. As part of this, the Core Strategy proposes to allocate the 20 hectare Strategic Employment site to the north of Nissan. However since April, considerable time has been spent reworking the Employment Land Update to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Further baseline economic forecasts are presently being considered and tested to cover the Core Strategy plan period. These forecasts will further inform the employment land required.
- 7.13 In addition, there is growing evidence to suggest that the existing portfolio of employment land is not necessarily conducive to meet live business enquiries which require larger floorplates to accommodate major employment opportunities. A review of the existing portfolio is being undertaken to assess the true potential to deliver sites for such demands – including whether there are opportunities to conjoin multiple smaller sites or premises into larger employment areas that could meet these requirements.
- 7.14 Under the ‘duty to cooperate’, discussions with South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council reveal they are experiencing similar issues. A joint study is shortly to be commissioned to assess the true potential of this investment (in terms of the level of land take that could be required) and whether suitable option(s) exist to accommodate any identified demands. This Core Strategy has acknowledged this emerging work stream. Should the evidence indicate that there is a need for substantive land to come forward, the Core Strategy provides an appropriate policy ‘hook’ that will enable the Council to respond to meeting such demands through the preparation of a separate development plan document in partnership with South Tyneside Council.
- 7.15 In terms of future retailing requirements, the Core Strategy has been informed by the Retail Needs Update (adopted April 2012) which indicates the Core Strategy should provide some 78,900 sqm of comparison floorspace (such as clothes and electrical goods) and some 7,500 sqm (gross) of convenience goods floorspace (food items) over the next 20 years. For meeting both requirements, the City Centre should remain the primary focus for development.

Strategic Locations for Development.

- 7.16 As previously agreed by Full Council in March 2010, the Core Strategy retains the approach to allocate two sites which are considered to be vital to the regeneration of the City’s economy :
- Vaux / Farringdon Row – The need to regenerate the City Centre is an agreed priority of the Council. A key element in this is the need to stimulate the city centre office market via the delivery of a new central business district on the Vaux / Farringdon Row site in order to provide the range of city centre B1 offices found in other similar sized cities.
 - Land North of Nissan - This 20 hectare site was first supported by the Employment Land Review (2009) and Sunderland Economic Masterplan, which recommends the need to identify a strategic employment site in the area of Washington. Furthermore, it would support the designation of the

Enterprise Zone at Nissan. It is considered that this site could provide an appropriate location for 3 to 4 large employers associated directly with ultra low carbon vehicle production, advanced manufacturing and engineering.

Locations for Major Development

7.17 To provide a bridge between the Core Strategy and the Allocations DPD, the Core Strategy proposes (but does not allocate) a number of areas classed as “Locations for Major Development” including:

- Holmeside Triangle (mixed use including retail);
- Crowtree Leisure Centre (retail);
- Sunnyside (housing, leisure, business);
- Stadium Village (leisure, housing and business);
- Bonnersfield (housing and education);
- Former Pallion Shipyard (manufacturing/ offshore engineering);
- The Port (port-related development);
- Philadelphia (housing/ mixed use and supporting infrastructure)
- Groves (housing and supporting infrastructure);
- Chapelgarth (housing and supporting infrastructure);
- Cherry Knowle (housing and supporting infrastructure);
- Land North of Burdon Lane (housing and supporting infrastructure);
- South Ryhope (housing and employment);

7.18 The Core Strategy deliberately does not formalise the site boundaries to these areas nor does it prescribe specific types and the quantum of development. This would be undertaken through further investigation in the subsequent Allocations Plan. The intention behind identifying the range of locations is to provide the development industry and residents with a degree of confidence that such areas could provide major opportunities for future development.

8.0 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION FOR THE CORE STRATEGY

8.1 By law, at each stage of the process, the Core Strategy must be accompanied by supporting materials, which are discussed below.

Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment

8.2 The Revised Preferred Options document is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal report as required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Sustainability Appraisal incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the plan as required by European directive. An ‘Appropriate Assessment’ Report of the potential impact of the plan on Natura 2000 sites (these are international designations covering species and ecological habitats), and again a legislative requirement has also been prepared.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)

8.3 Infrastructure planning is fundamental to delivering the city’s Local Development Framework (LDF). The Core Strategy will be subject to an independent examination and tested, in part, as to whether its policies and proposals are deliverable and must be supported by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) setting out :

- What physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable the amount of development proposed for the area

- As far as possible, how and when infrastructure will be delivered (including an understanding of committed and planned spending as well as funding gaps); and
- Who will deliver the necessary infrastructure.

8.4 The IDP must include the operations of all infrastructure providers including the Council, and other public and private organisations. Alongside Sunderland's emerging Core Strategy, the IDP has been developed which covers infrastructure important for delivering the specific aims of the Core Strategy. A range of partners, agencies and service providers from the public and private sectors including internal stakeholders have been involved in its development. These organisations have supplied information on their own plans, which through the IDP will help shape their strategic process and investment decisions. The IDP must in its own right be viewed as an evolving document which is monitored and updated regularly, particularly in this climate of considerable financial uncertainty and change.

Rejected Options

8.5 This Core Strategy contains an analysis of the 'Rejected Options' which demonstrates how each policy has been tested, analysed and justified in terms of the wider policy review, public consultation and the Sustainability Appraisal. This sets out in clear terms the reasons why alternative policy options have been discounted in favour of those set out in the Revised Preferred Options draft of the Core Strategy.

9.0 NEXT STEPS

9.1 Subject to Council approval, the Revised Preferred Options report, (along with its supplementary reports), will be published, advertised and placed on the Sunderland website for consultation. The consultation will cover the requisite minimum period of 6 weeks during April and May 2013 and will be undertaken in accordance with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

9.2 Whilst consultation at the Preferred Options stage is no longer a statutory requirement, it was considered prudent to continue with both the preparation and consultation of this Revised Preferred Option Draft of the Core Strategy. The introduction of locally derived information will provide the first formal opportunity for residents and stakeholders to consider the policies and the evidence that underpins the conclusions. In effect, consultation at this stage would be a test bed to agree as far as possible, proposals for locally derived land requirements. This would offer time savings prior to moving to the next statutory stage (the Publication Draft).

9.3 Subsequent to the close of consultation, responses will be collated and a summary of the main issues emerging prepared for the agreement of Cabinet. The Core Strategy will be amended as necessary to take account of the results of the consultation and other more up to date information.

9.4 The next statutory versions of the Core Strategy will be delivered as follows :

- Publication Draft including public consultation (programmed for October 2013)
- Submission Draft (programmed for February 2014)
- Public examination before an independent Inspector (programmed for May 2014)

- Adoption (programmed for November 2014)

10. STATUS OF THE EMERGING CORE STRATEGY

- 10.1 The planning system is plan-led and planning applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 10.2 Legally, the saved policies contained within the adopted Unitary Development Plan, 1998 (as amended by Alteration No. 2, 2007) constitutes the city's adopted development plan. Until the Core Strategy is formally adopted, it will remain as a material planning consideration to determine planning applications. The weight that can be given to the Core Strategy as a material consideration will be limited in the short term, but will increase as it advances through the stages outlined at paragraph 9.4. The degree of weight will also be influenced by the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given).

11.0 REASON FOR DECISION

- 10.1 The decision is required to enable the Core Strategy to proceed to its next stage (statutory consultation) in accordance with the Council's adopted Local Development Scheme.

12.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 12.1 All local planning authorities are charged under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 with the preparation of a local development framework (LDF), which must include a core strategy.
- 12.2 The Preferred Option stage is no longer statutory and it is entirely reasonable for the Council to consider moving towards the formal Publication Stage. However, a key stage in the process will be the forthcoming Public Examination. An independent Inspector will test the plan for its 'soundness' and will assess whether :
- It is based on robust and credible evidence (comprising evidence that the views of the local community and key stakeholders have been sought) and whether the policies are backed up by fact;
 - The policies and proposals are deliverable
 - The strategy proposed is the most appropriate having discounted all reasonable alternatives. In effect, this requires a clear evidence trail that through public consultation at the earlier stages of the process *ie* up to the Preferred Options stage, that all issues and alternative strategies have had an appropriate airing and assessment. As the Plan advances to the next stages, there is limited opportunity to introduce new proposals
 - The extent to which the Council has worked collectively with neighbouring authorities and other public bodies (as required by the new duty to cooperate).
- 12.3 This will be the first opportunity for residents and stakeholders to comment on the plan since 2009 (and particularly the new locally derived growth requirements post RSS). Given the need to satisfy the above 'tests of soundness' it is considered this informal consultation stage in the LDF process

allows for such proposals to be fully explored. Failure to meet the above tests could result in the Plan being struck down (as has happened elsewhere). Therefore, it is felt there are no alternatives to preparing the preferred options of the Core Strategy.

13.0 IMPACT ANALYSIS

Equalities

13.1 The Core Strategy is 'equalities' neutral by focussing on land use matters. However, a Impact Needs Requirement Assessment (INRA) has been completed. The key area of possible impact on equalities relates to how the document is consulted upon. All consultations will be carried out in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

Sustainability

13.2 By law, planning must promote sustainable development. This is the underlying objective of the Core Strategy. To that effect, the Core Strategy policies have been tested against its own Sustainability Appraisal as outlined at paragraph 8.2 to this report.

Reduction of Crime and Disorder – Community Cohesion / Social Inclusion

13.3 The Core Strategy contains policies which seek to promote crime reduction and social cohesion within new developments.

14.0 OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Financial Implications

14.1 Costs have arisen from developing the evidence base and will arise from the consultations and subsequent Public Examination of the Core Strategy. Funding will be met from contingencies allocated to the LDF.

Legal Implications

14.2 The Core Strategy, Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment have been prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Planning Act 2008 and the Localism Act 2011.

Policy Implications

14.3 The Revised Preferred Options set out draft over-arching policies for the guidance of development. Until the Core Strategy is adopted the provisions of the saved policies of the Sunderland Unitary Development Plan and Alteration Number 2 will remain the statutory land use policies for the City along with the Regional Spatial Strategy. However the draft Core Strategy will be a material consideration as well to help ensure that planning decisions are up to date and reflect the aspirations of the City as expressed in the Sunderland Strategy and emerging Economic Masterplan.

Implications for other Services

14.4 The Core Strategy policies reflect as appropriate other Council and LSP partners' strategies, plans and programmes. As such it should enable their land use aspects to be achieved in a co-ordinated and timely manner, for instance the land use decisions associated with the Council's waste management strategy. The consultation period will provide a further opportunity for interested parties to ensure that their strategies and plans have been properly accounted for in the Core Strategy.

The Public

14.5 It is a requirement of the planning system that the public as a whole are engaged in the development plan process, with minimum statutory requirements for consultation set out by regulation. The consultations so far on the Core Strategy and those proposed for the Revised Preferred Options have and will achieve those requirements for public involvement set out within the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

APPENDIX 1 - THE CORE STRATEGY SUB-AREAS.

