

Marine Walk Masterplan and Seafront Regeneration Strategy

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the responses received following public consultation on the draft Marine Walk Masterplan and the draft Seafront Regeneration Strategy and to seek Committee's comments on the revised strategy and masterplan.
- 1.2 The Committee's comments will be reported to Cabinet on 3 February 2010 when agreement will be sought to adopt the Marine Walk Masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document and to approve the Seafront Regeneration Strategy as planning and investment guidance.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 29 July 2009, Cabinet approved the draft Marine Walk Masterplan and Seafront Regeneration Strategy for the purposes of public consultation.
- 2.2 The main proposals contained in the draft Marine Walk Masterplan included:
- New flexible cultural spaces at Holey Rock Corner and the roundabout on Marine Walk.
 - Feature lighting in key areas at Roker including the cliff face at Holey Rock Corner, Roker Bridge and Spottee's Cave.
 - An interpretation trail covering the length of Marine Walk from Roker Ravine to the Volunteer Life Brigade Museum which may include artwork, vinyls, bespoke display and notice boards, and sculptures.
 - New sculptural gates to the pier and the restoration of the lighthouse and resurfacing of the pier.
 - A number of new facilities including an education space, a retail space and an information point located in kiosks designed to complement and reflect Roker's rich heritage and attractive natural environment.
 - Public realm works including resurfacing of key areas at Marine Walk, the footpaths linking the upper and the lower promenades and the replacement of street furniture.

- The masking of substations and the opening up of Spottee's Cave at the entrance to Roker Park from Marine Walk.

2.3 The main proposals contained in the draft Seafront Regeneration Strategy included the creation of four character areas:

- Ocean Park - which will continue to be central to the resort of Seaburn providing visitors with a range of leisure facilities and complementary uses.
- Seaburn Promenade - which will be enhanced to create a promenade area with a coordinated palate of high quality street furniture, materials and lighting.
- Cliff Park and Recreation Park – which will support landscaping in key areas using plants native to the Durham coast.
- Marine Walk – improvements in this area will enhance Roker's distinctive built heritage and natural assets.

2.4 Other proposals contained in the strategy included:

- Environmental improvements and soft landscaping that integrate with and add to the coastal location and existing green spaces.
- The provision of new street furniture in key areas along the seafront using high quality materials, such as granite, which are able to withstand the marine environment.
- A bespoke range of signs to improve legibility and way finding to and within the seafront including signage to and from Seaburn Metro Station.
- The addition of public artwork along the seafront and the use of feature lighting to enhance key features such as the cliff face at Holey Rock Corner and the old South Pier Lighthouse.
- Improved signage, surfacing and layout of cycle routes along the seafront to attract visitors to the area and promote sustainable modes of transport.
- Guidance on development quality and sustainable design to ensure the unique character of the seafront is enhanced in an appropriate manner.

3.0 Consultations on the draft masterplan and strategy

3.1 The draft Marine Walk Masterplan and the draft Seafront Regeneration Strategy were the subject of public consultation between 8 August and 18 September 2009.

- 3.2 During this period all information relating to the consultation, including the draft Seafront Regeneration Strategy and the draft Marine Walk Masterplan was available online at www.sunderland.gov.uk/seafront.
- 3.3 Letters were delivered to all households and businesses within the Seafront Regeneration Strategy study area. The letter notified recipients of the consultation period, invited them to see the main proposals plan at exhibitions displayed at the Civic Centre, Seaburn Leisure Centre, Sunderland Aquatic Centre, the Independent Living Centre at Leechmere and the Tourist Information Centre on Fawcett Street, throughout the consultation period. The letter notified them of a 9 hour drop-in session at the Seaburn Leisure Centre, one three hour and one two hour session at Marine Walk in Roker and two three hour sessions on Seaburn lower promenade where they could see the exhibition and discuss the proposals with council staff. Freepost comments cards and summary brochures of the draft masterplan and strategy were available at all venues as well as all local libraries across the city. Responses could also be made by email or by completing an online consultation form at the website www.sunderland.gov.uk/seafront.

4.0 Consultation responses and changes to the Marine Walk Masterplan

- 4.1 50 comment forms were completed and returned by members of the public. In addition 28 emails were submitted. 55 respondents supported the masterplan proposals, 9 objected to the proposals and 14 respondents did not specify if they supported or objected.
- 4.2 Thirteen responses were received from formal consultees. They were generally supportive of the draft Marine Walk Masterplan. Further consideration of representations submitted by Natural England, Northumbrian Water, the Environment Agency and the Sunderland Branch of the Green Party have resulted in minor changes to sections of the Marine Walk Masterplan.
- 4.3 A full list of the representations received, together with the City Council's response and how, if necessary, the masterplan has been amended to reflect the representations are set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.4 The main comments received are summarised below.
- 4.5 Quality of the plan
Thirteen respondents complimented the quality of the plan and its content. In particular, respondents were in support of the landscaping proposals, including planting of native species in the grass banks at Marine Walk.
- 4.6 Proposal for greater traffic restrictions
The majority of objections related to the proposal in the draft masterplan for greater traffic restrictions on Marine Walk. These restrictions were included in the draft masterplan due to concerns raised in the initial seafront consultation regarding conflict between pedestrians and vehicle users on Marine Walk. Businesses located at the north end of Marine Walk commented that imposing

traffic restrictions there would reduce trade and threaten the viability of their businesses. All representations received were fully considered and as a result the masterplan has been amended to allow for vehicular access up to the roundabout on Marine Walk. It is felt conflict between vehicle users and pedestrians can be adequately reduced through greater enforcement of existing traffic restrictions and improved traffic calming.

4.7 Toilet facilities

A number of respondents felt there is a requirement for better toilet facilities at the seafront, including improved provision for people with disabilities. Toilet provision was highlighted as a key issue in the initial seafront consultation which took place between 16 February and 3 April 2009. Many people commented that toilets at the seafront should be open throughout the year. As a result the council has secured funding to ensure toilets at Seaburn Shelter, Cat and Dog Steps, Marine Walk and Pier View will remain open throughout the year. Only the toilet located under the tram shelter at Seaburn will close during the winter. The council is now in the process of undertaking a full review of toilet provision at the seafront including disabled facilities, with a view to allocating funding to improve provision as necessary.

4.8 Maintenance

Four respondents commented that there is need for better maintenance at the seafront. The council is in the process of reviewing the management and maintenance of the seafront. These comments will be considered as part of this review.

4.9 Roker Pods

Mixed comments were received in relation to the Roker Pods. The pods are kiosks which will contain facilities such as education space, an information point and potentially retail. Three respondents were in favour of the pods, three objected on the grounds of the appearance of the pods and one respondent was undecided. Nobody objected to the principle of providing education facilities and an interpretation point at Marine Walk. The design of the pods shown in the masterplan is a design concept for illustrative purposes. Funding has been secured from the Commission of Architecture and the Built Environment Sea Change fund to deliver a first phase of improvements at Marine Walk, including the pods. A design team will now be established to develop the concept further. The objective of the design team will be to create the required facilities in a structure which is functional, attractive and reflective of the heritage of Sunderland's unique coastline.

4.10 Events

A small number of respondents stated more events should be held at the seafront. Establishing new events at the seafront is outside the scope of the masterplan; however the masterplan does propose the installation of infrastructure which will support the development of the extensive events calendar, including the creation of two flexible event spaces and improved lighting to extend the lifetime of the seafront into the evening. The events team is seeking to build on the existing events calendar to ensure these new spaces will be used to their full potential.

5.0 Consultation responses and changes to the Seafront Regeneration Strategy

5.1 87 comment forms were completed and returned by members of the public. In addition 28 emails were submitted. 72 of the respondents supported the proposals and 43 respondents did not specify if they supported or objected. There were no objections to the strategy.

5.2 Thirteen responses were received from formal consultees. They were generally supportive of the draft Seafront Regeneration Strategy. Further consideration of the representations submitted by the Sunderland Branch of the Green Party, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Environment Agency and Natural England have resulted in minor changes to the Seafront Regeneration Strategy.

5.3 A full list of the representations received, together with the City Council's response and how, if necessary, the masterplan has been amended to reflect the representations are set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

5.4 The main comments received are summarised below.

5.5 Toilet facilities

A number of respondents felt there is a requirement for better toilet facilities at the seafront, including improved provision for people with disabilities. Toilet provision was highlighted as a key issue in the initial seafront consultation which took place between 16 February and 3 April 2009. Many people commented that toilets at the seafront should be open throughout the year. As a result the council has secured funding to ensure toilets at Seaburn Shelter, Cat and Dog Steps, Marine Walk and Pier View will remain open throughout the year. Only the toilet located under the tram shelter at Seaburn will close during the winter. The council is now in the process of undertaking a full review of toilet provision at the seafront including disabled facilities, with a view to allocating funding to improve provision as necessary.

5.6 Wet weather facilities

Sixteen respondents commented on the need to provide 'all weather facilities' at the seafront. Similarly there were a number of separate comments about the need to provide 'wet weather' facilities, another eleven comments about the need for play facilities for children and young people and three for family activities. The Seafront Regeneration Strategy identifies that the Ocean Park site presents the opportunity for mixed-use leisure-led development including wet weather facilities. It is proposed that a detailed masterplan is drawn up for Seaburn which will help guide the regeneration of the Ocean Park site.

5.7 Dog litter/dog ban zones

Seventeen comments received related to dogs. Seven of these were opposed to a dog ban on the beaches but supported better enforcement of the existing by-laws, three were against dogs on the beaches, two others raised concerns about the control of dogs, four complained about dog litter and the need for

more dog bins and one asked for provision of drinking bowls for dogs. Dog-bans are by-laws and are set out in the councils Coastal Code. It is not the purpose of the strategy to deal with day to day management issues but the comments are noted and will be referred to the relevant Council Directorate. These comments will also be considered in the ongoing review of the management and maintenance of the seafront.

5.8 Quality of the strategy

There were twelve comments praising the strategy and commenting positively about it.

5.9 Maintenance

There were twelve comments about the need for better maintenance of the public realm and seven relating to the need for more litter bins. The council is in the process of reviewing the management and maintenance of the seafront. These comments will be considered as part of this review. The strategy proposes street furniture including litter bins will be renewed. This will be carried out in consultation with the team responsible for the cleansing of the seafront and where necessary additional bins will be provided.

6.0 **Reasons for decision**

6.1 The adoption of the Marine Walk Masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document and the approval of the Seafront Regeneration Strategy as formal planning and investment guidance will help facilitate the planning and regeneration of the seafronts at Roker and Seaburn. The masterplan and strategy will be used by the council and developers as a basis for preparing and assessing detailed proposals for the seafront and would be afforded weight as a material consideration when determining future planning applications. In addition the strategy will identify opportunities for public investment in the seafront.

7.0 **Alternative options**

7.1 The alternative option is not to adopt the Marine Walk Masterplan or approve the Seafront Regeneration Strategy as proposed. The consequences of this would be not to have clear guidance from the council as Planning Authority on appropriate forms of development for the seafronts at Roker and Seaburn. This would weaken the council's ability to control the type of development and the design quality of new structures at the seafront and would allow for an ad hoc approach to be taken to the redevelopment of the area. The failure to adopt a strategy or masterplan would result in a lower standard of development than would otherwise be achieved, making the city less attractive to residents, visitors and investors.

8.0 **Recommendation**

8.1 Committee is recommended to consider the amended Marine Walk Masterplan and Seafront Regeneration Strategy and refer its comments to Cabinet for consideration.

9.0 List of appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Marine Walk Masterplan and draft Seafront Regeneration Strategy public consultation – schedule of representations on the Masterplan and Strategy and City Council responses.

10.0 Background Papers

- Marine Walk Masterplan (2010)
- Seafront Regeneration Strategy (2010)
- Sustainability Appraisal of Marine Walk Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (2009)