

23 NOVEMBER 2011

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

INFLUENCING PRACTICE, POLICY AND STRATEGY: City Village Concept

1. Why has it come to Committee?

- 1.1. This report offers Members the opportunity to be consulted on plans and strategies relevant to the area. It also provides information and updates which will encourage Members to feed into proposals for service or policy change and facilitates the referral of outcomes of issues previously identified.

2. The City Village Concept

2.1. Background Information

- 2.1.1 The Sunderland Economic Masterplan identified the promotion of City Villages as a fundamental part of Sunderland's economic development. It sets out the need for a comprehensive approach to regenerating communities across Sunderland, to help the people in those communities to engage in the wider economy of the City, to make their neighbourhoods attractive places where people want to live and to help promote Sunderland as 'a national hub of the low carbon economy'.
- 2.1.2 The City Village concept has also been recognised and referenced in the recent Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee's Policy Review into Sunderland 'the Place'.
- 2.1.3 In addition, Members may recall contributing to work undertaken in 2009 to identify Sunderland's 'natural neighbourhoods, i.e. those geographical areas that, when asked "where do you live?" residents would respond with that place name. The whole City was mapped on this basis and divided into a total of 65 natural neighbourhoods which provides the starting point for City village boundaries. (See **Annex 1**)
- 2.1.3 Although the City Village concept sits within the Economic Masterplan and can be used to help tackle economic issues, it can also contribute to influencing change, and encouraging communities to become active in tackling local problems and making decisions in developing community resilience and the social capital of their neighbourhood because it is the place with which many of the identify.
- 2.1.4 The City Village concept identifies a number of characteristics which make a neighbourhood or a group of neighbourhoods, a good place to live (See **Annex 2**). It is envisaged that those characteristics will be utilised as criteria for the long term improvement of existing neighbourhoods, and the design of new neighbourhoods and major developments. The concept has the clear potential to be developed into a place-shaping and prioritisation tool to be used within Sunderland, but which could also have wider application. In times of restricted funding, it will not be possible to do everything at once, so work has begun to test the City Village concept with residents by finding out more about what matters to them in their neighbourhood at their particular time of life and circumstances. This is with a view

to a Second Stage which will identify opportunities and their deliverability so that future improvements can be prioritised more easily.

- 2.1.5 The work is being aligned with key programmes, strategies and plans including the review of Area Arrangements, Corporate Outcomes Framework, Community Resilience, Community Leadership Programme, the Business Transformation Programme and the review of the Sunderland Strategy.

2.2. Progress Update

- 2.2.1 A piece of work is currently underway to develop a place shaping (long term) and place shielding (short term) methodology based upon the City's concept of the City Village. The work is required to not only promote City Villages as a fundamental part of Sunderland's economic development, but also influence, inform and contribute to emerging plans and strategies.

The proposed approach will:

- Embed a single approach to place shaping and place shielding of our neighbourhoods.
- There is also a requirement to embed the principles of developing greater community resilience. Community resilience can be used as part of a framework for developing interventions to promote both the social and economic well being of our communities.

- 2.2.2 Key outcomes will include a robust and practical mechanism which will be used to help shape the further development of area arrangements, and help inform and contribute to the commissioning of services at a local level.

- 2.2.3 Over the coming months, there is an opportunity through dialogue with Elected Members and partners and service providers, to identify those neighbourhoods with the greatest scope for change and need for improvement – in line with the things that are important to residents at each stage of their lives.

2.3. Next steps

- 2.3.1 A Project Management Team is in place and working with the appointed consultants Genecon to:

- Identify data sets and indicators to enable a robust assessment of the city's 65 statistical neighbourhoods, in line with the City Village characteristics
- To consult with residents to assess what makes a good neighbourhood and what is important to people about where they live.
- Engage Elected Members, partners and service providers in the process and utilise the in-depth local knowledge of neighbourhoods to inform investment planning and service delivery and development.
- Develop a practical approach which uses the City Village criteria and the sustainable communities concept commencing with a pilot in a small number of neighbourhoods with specific issues that can be addressed in the short term and a plan for key physical changes to be taken forward in the longer term. This will lead to establishing goals for each 'pilot' neighbourhood as well as a methodology, and framework for evaluation

Ultimately the work will identify a single approach which will allow the proposed place shaping and place shielding methodology to inform service planning and investment planning.

3.0 Recommendation

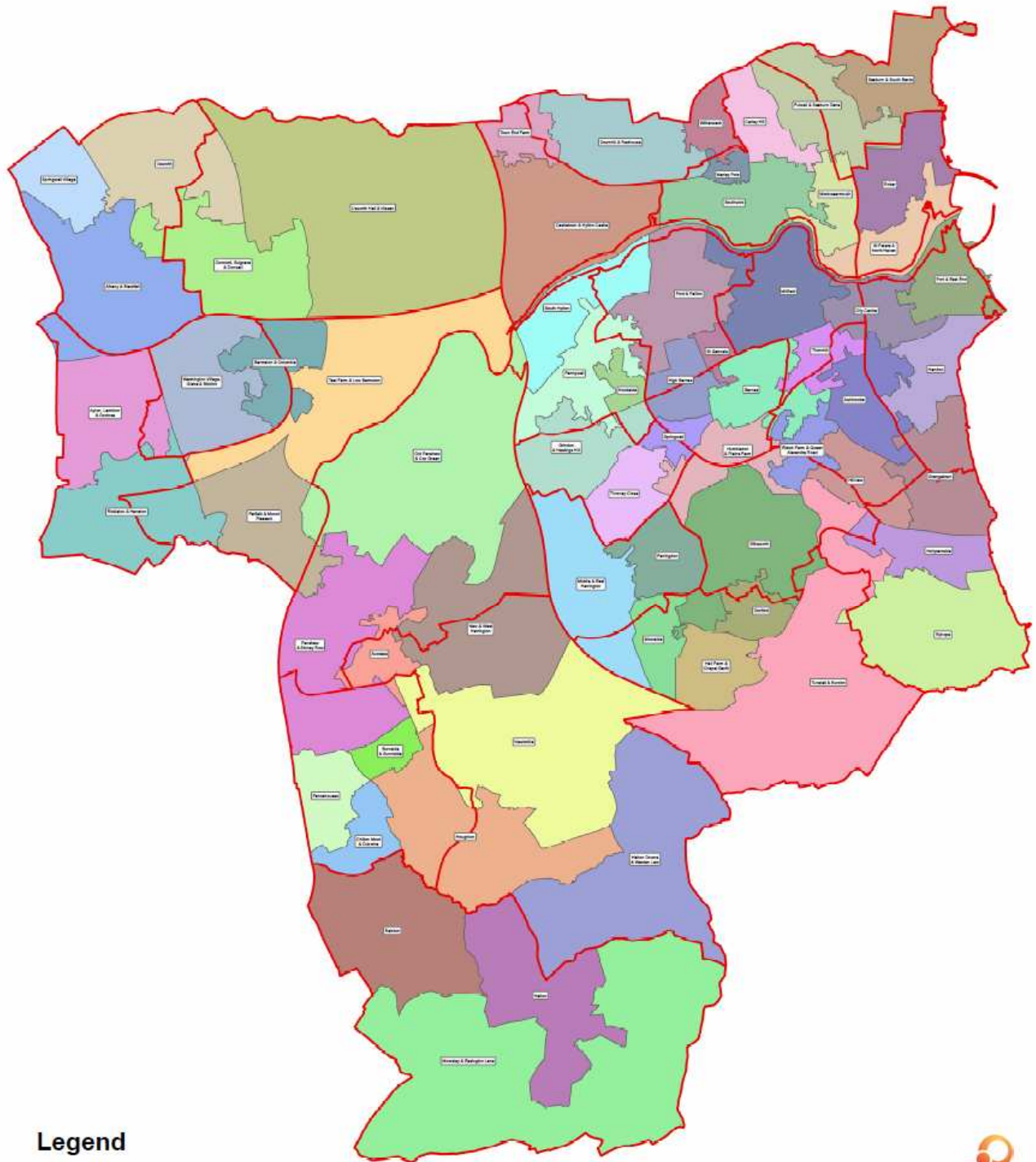
Members are requested to

- Note the information in the report
- Agree to future engagement and consultation with regard to the development of the City Village pilot areas and the benefits it could bring to area arrangements.



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Annex 1: Statistical Neighbourhoods
Annex 2: Characteristics of City Village

Statistical Neighbourhoods



Legend

-  Statistical Neighbourhoods
-  Wards



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Characteristics of City Village

What is a City Village

A City Village is described as “a sustainable place with all the advantages of a city suburb and all the charm, warmth and human scale of a rural village. It will have its own sense of identity and belonging, and a resilient community with the skills, energy, resources and ambition to do better for all its residents.

The City Village concept identifies a number of characteristics which make a neighbourhood or a group of neighbourhoods, a good place to live. They are:

- Having a **commercial centre** that is economically sustainable and serves its community with at least the basics.
- With a **school or learning institution** near-at-hand that is at the heart of the community and provides a route through to skills provision for all ages.
- Offering a **good choice of homes in an attractive setting** to suit a range of incomes so that families that are close can stay close.
- A community that is **low on crime/fear of crime and high on tolerance**.
- A clean and **cared-for environment**
- **Green spaces** for recreation and exercise, within or close by.
- A **GP surgery** or health centre close at hand.
- **Environmentally sustainable** in physical form and personal behaviour.
- Good **transport connections** (public and private) to the nearest major commercial centre and to employment centres. Good **digital connectivity** at a reasonable cost.
- Offering **space to set up in business** within a reasonable travelling distance.
- Possessing **effective routes for solving community problems**, whereby people can come together, influence decisions and lead change, if they want to.
- **Well managed** with excellent accessible and **responsive services** that meet people’s needs.
- Residents engage in **good neighbourly behaviour** and a have sense of **community identity and belonging**.
- Places and opportunities for people to **meet and socialise** in a safe and secure environment.