



**Sunderland City Council**

Local Plan

Core Strategy and Development Plan

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Phase 2 – May 2018

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This plan has been prepared in compliance with our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) February 2015.

Sunderland is focused on securing its long-term economic future, encouraging inward investment, advanced manufacturing, the development of hi-tech industries and new employment opportunities. Sunderland can build upon the opportunities opened up by significant new infrastructure, and look to the development of a city centre with a reputation for vibrancy and creativity that matches and complements its success as a manufacturing and business hub.

The Local Plan is a vital document that will shape how Sunderland develops between now and 2033. It is required by Government and plays a huge role in the continued transformation of Sunderland by ensuring that we have a clear understanding of how the city's land and property assets need to be developed to meet the challenges facing the city. To deliver these outcomes we need to create an environment that supports economic growth.

The Local Plan will ensure that Sunderland is a city that is open for business and growth, providing jobs and prosperity for local people, delivering housing to meet the needs of all of our communities, and tackling deprivation within the city. Once adopted, the Local Plan will be the starting point for the consideration of planning applications for the development and use of land. It is therefore an important tool to give certainty and transparency to residents and businesses as to how development proposals will be considered. This will enable the city to attract funding and attract investment from businesses, residents and visitors and be a sustainable, attractive and prosperous place to live and work.

## 2 BACKGROUND

The National Planning Policy Framework states that early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and set agreed priorities for the development of the area.

Experience in neighbouring areas that have already developed their Local Plans suggests the process is little understood by the public and can generate strong views amongst residents.

In Sunderland response rates to similar public consultations have typically been low; around 100-150 responses, representing less than 0.1% of the population of the city. However, experience during phase 1 consultation of the draft Core Strategy and Development Plan in 2017 highlighted that the contents of the Plan are emotive which resulted in over 6,000 responses.

There is a need through communications during phase 2 consultations to demonstrate that the Publication Draft of the Plan (Phase 2) reflects the views of the respondents in Phase 1 and where possible responses have been considered and reflected in the next stage of the Plan.

### **Communications principles relating to the project**

- Positive and pro-active
- Honest and straightforward
- Transparent
- The city council is ambitious for Sunderland and the North East region
- Decisions are based on the best information available at the time
- Accessibility and inclusiveness

## **3 COMMUNICATIONS AIMS**

The main aims of the communications work planned to support the Local Plan are:

- To maximise understanding among all applicable audiences of the importance of a Local Plan being in place for Sunderland
- To improve knowledge of what the draft Core Strategy and Development Plan contains, how it relates to the Local Plan and how it will steer positive development over the coming years
- To ensure that consultation engages with as many interested parties as possible as early in the process as possible
- To support the Local Plan throughout the process up to adoption
- Maintaining momentum and public engagement and understanding throughout the process to adoption
- To maximise the level of public response to the Plan

## 4 KEY MESSAGES

Strong and consistent messaging is of great importance to a project such as this where understanding at the outset amongst many of the audiences will be limited.

These key messages will be utilised in all communications materials.

Supported by other appropriate messaging at relevant times the key messages will be used throughout the project to create a narrative that helps residents understand the need for the Local Plan and how they can play a role in the creation of it.

- Local authorities are required by law to demonstrate how they will meet demand for new homes and create space for new jobs. Councils have to use realistic and independent research and data when forecasting demand.
- All councils are guided in how they can meet demand by national planning policies, set by Government. Every Local Plan is considered and assessed by an independent inspector, appointed by Government.
- Without an adopted Local Plan that is considered to be sound and deliverable, the city council will not have the ability to control new development in the city and may not be able to prevent inappropriate developments.
- Growth is positive and it is the only way we can ensure a prosperous Sunderland for the future. Without growth, new and improved facilities will not be possible and existing facilities may be threatened. We all want to see a better city centre, better transport and more jobs... this plan is the best way we have to achieve that.
- Predicted population growth and other factors like changes in lifestyle mean that it is estimated that 13,410 extra homes will need to be built in Sunderland by 2033.
- In order to protect existing and create new jobs it is predicted that around 95 hectares of extra land will be required for additional factories, offices, shops and other employment creation.
- We want to discuss how we can best meet these needs with Sunderland residents to help create a really high quality Local Plan that will benefit the city and its residents.
- We need to consider all of the information available to us in order to make the right decisions and we will listen to everyone. The decisions won't be easy to make, it's impossible to please everyone, but we must be objective.

## 5 COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

The Communication and Engagement Plan will focus on a strategic approach and effective engagement with stakeholders.

Communications and engagement is vital in supporting the Local Plan through the promotion of key messages and updates on progress with stakeholders.

This involves managing the media and developing and managing key messages, including:

- Communications with those who live, work, study in and visit Sunderland - locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
- Stakeholder engagement with key partners
- Internal communications – Sunderland City Council
- Public relations and media
- Influencing and corporate affairs

#### **5.1 Protocols are established whereby:**

- Activity within the communications and engagement plan must support delivery of the Local Plan;
- It will deliver this through a balance of direct liaison with statutory/ non-statutory stakeholders, businesses and residents, proactive media opportunities, on-going communications and marketing, and reacting as required to developments in the Local Plan;
- Communications will continue to develop its plans in line with the Local Plan timetable and update the Project Board on media and communications developments.

## **6 STAKEHOLDER GROUPS**

The following are seen as the key audiences for the project. Each audience should be approached using the most relevant method to engage them in the process.

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Messaging principles</b>
<b>Sunderland residents with no specific interest in any single site</b>	Includes Sunderland residents, businesses, schools and service providers. The Local Plan is vital to the future of Sunderland it will help to create new homes and new jobs. Engagement will be open, honest and accessible to gather and maintain support.
<b>Sunderland residents with specific</b>	The views of residents are absolutely

<b>interest in a site of relevance to them</b>	essential in the creation of a successful Local Plan; we will listen to local people and take their views into account.
<b>Members, MPs and pressure or campaign groups</b>	We are required by central Government to produce a Local Plan. We will consider all of the facts and the views of as many people as possible. This is a vital document for the future of Sunderland and requires all manner of different needs to be balanced, we must get it right. This can translate in them being active promoters of the plan.
<b>General consultees</b> - Landowners, developers and other organisations such as neighbouring authorities and VCS with a specific stake or essential interest in the Local Plan	We're looking at all of the options to meet the demand for new homes and space for job creation. All potential sites will be considered against the robust criteria and the most appropriate sites considered for future development.
<b>Statutory consultees - Local partners</b> (including Police, Ambulance, Fire Service and Road Associations, VCS)	Kept informed on how the Plan is developing, and of any measures introduced to address issues or problems that they may have raised through the Plan development phases.
<b>City Council Employees</b>	Require on-going communication to ensure they are aware of the Plan development, particularly those working in services on which the Plan will have significant impact. Communications will generate a spirit of buy-in and result in employees acting as ambassadors for the Plan.

## 6.1 Hard to reach groups

The term 'hard to reach' is widely used to describe those groups or communities which experience social exclusion and disempowerment. It is important to note that many of these communities are, in reality, not particularly hard to reach – it is simply that many organisations have not put enough effort into seeking their views.

Hard to reach groups are most commonly defined as sections of the community which are difficult to engage in a consultation process. These can include young people (under 25), retired people, people with disabilities, people on low incomes, black and minority ethnic communities and those with language barriers (e.g. first generation immigrants to the UK).

Hard to reach group	Suggested approach
Time limited individuals: This group includes people in full time employment, professionals or people in employment with families.	Consultation events will be organised for different times of the day, with events in the evening. A variety of methods are proposed, including web-based consultation and a short video animation. People in this category have limited time so it's important we take the info to them rather than them having to seek it out. Use of social media is essential.
Older people: Over 65s are less likely to have access to the internet than younger people and tend to prefer more traditional methods of consultation, such as public exhibitions. However, if mobility is a problem, some older people can find access to events such as public exhibitions and stakeholder workshops difficult.	Public exhibitions will be held in accessible, local venues.
People with disabilities: Similar issues of mobility and access to information apply to people with disabilities.	Exhibition venues should be made as accessible as possible for people with mobility issues and consultation materials adapted wherever possible – for example by providing larger text versions of newsletters for partially-sighted readers on request.
People on low incomes: This group is less likely to have access to private transport than wealthier residents and are also less likely to be property owners. Planning consultations can often therefore leave people feeling disenfranchised and without access to the information needed to become involved.	Location of public exhibitions is particularly important for this group and as such they will be held in a number of local venues so that they are held as close as possible to affected residents and the issue of transport is minimised.
Young people: Young people (under 25) are likely to be turned off by formal processes. This group does however	Online consultation can be particularly effective in engaging with young people. The project website will include copies of



tend to be more technically adept, with the vast majority being active on social media.	project materials, a short video animation and response forms. Social media will also be used to signpost to online info. Youth Parliament will be engaged with using existing forums.
Language barriers and ethnic minorities: consideration will need to be given to those in the community where English is not the first language or reading could be a barrier.	If required, steps will be taken to provide materials in alternative languages and employing interpreters. There will also be opportunities for individuals to attend exhibitions where staff will be on hand to verbally explain the proposal.
Travellers: consideration will be given to the traveller community who as well as literacy difficulties could also be suspicious of agencies.	Many of the groups termed 'hard to reach' will have community based and voluntary organisations working with them on a regular and intensive basis. Many of the services in the councils will have useful contacts with those who are hard to reach – for instance the education directorate has teachers who work with Travellers. It will be essential to fully utilise the existing relationships within the councils to consult with this hard to reach group.

## 7 PLATFORMS TO BE USED

As a general rule it is recommended that existing platforms are maximised for the Plan as the best way to reach the largest potential audience. Creating new platforms is not seen as viable owing to the complicated nature of the messages that need to be conveyed.

- Media relations; high quality proactive and reactive media relations work is vital to ensure that correct information is disseminated and that any incorrect information is challenged. A single individual, elected member or senior officer, will be identified early on and will be quoted in all media releases/responses and put forward for any interviews.
- Social media; existing social media platforms will be utilised to make full use of established audiences. Social media will play a key role in ensuring maximum reach during consultation phases. Social media does however carry risks and is resource intensive if negativity and incorrect information is to be challenged.
- Web; again existing platforms will be used, a dedicated page with friendly URL on [Sunderland.gov.uk](http://Sunderland.gov.uk) will be used. Content needs to include a quick simple guide to what the local plan is, why it is important etc and links to

documents, consultation information etc. The use of a short online animation will be used to explain key messages. This will also provide a link to Objective encouraging where possible online feedback during consultation.

- Publications such as The Vibe Magazine; wherever deadlines permit consultation dates will be publicised using Vibe, the platform is also seen as an important tool for keeping residents up to date with progress through to adoption.
- Internal communications; using members update, Workwise, Managers Briefing and the Chief Executives blog, staff and members will be kept up to date with progress and consultation opportunities in order for them to be able to provide high quality information to any parties they come into contact with.
- Print; printed materials still carry an extra element of trust amongst many audiences. During Phase 1 a leaflet distribution to all relevant properties was carried out. Although this was a costly option, it was deemed necessary to minimise the risk of creating problems during inspection if it cannot be adequately proved that all reasonable effort has been made to inform residents of the local plan consultation would be considerably higher without it. Phase 2 – no door to door mail out is deemed necessary.
- Staffed exhibitions, drop-ins and similar events are resource intensive. But, carefully planned events, timed and located with a view to maximising attendance, still have a role to play and offer potential for informed consultation responses. A programme of events in carefully chosen venues at various times will be prepared for each stage of consultation. Utilising the same locations at similar times throughout the process will increase familiarity and trust.
- Using existing networks:
  - Area Officer links with VCS networks; targeted presentations if appropriate
  - School networks
- Static information; using SCC venues to make consultation materials readily available throughout the city during consultation period. For example, city libraries, civic centre, doctors surgeries, hospital etc
- Hard to reach accessibility. Work with partners to maximise opportunity for feedback from hard to reach groups.
- Sunderland Enterprise; use of presentation or /and briefing document

## 8 MILESTONES AND DEADLINES

Milestones for communications activity are identified in the table below. A more detailed level of activity, focused around the engagement activity tabled in the Appendices, will cover the period from now until the completion of the Project.

DATE	DESCRIPTION	ACTION
Aug 2017	Phase 1 – Core Strategy & Development Plan draft - consultation	Complete Phase 1 communications (app A)
June 2018	Phase 2 – Publication Plan - consultation	Complete Phase 2 communications (app B)
December 2018	Submission	Complete Phase 3 communications (app C)
	Examination	Complete Phase 4 communications (app D)
	Adoption	Complete Phase 5 communications (app E)

### **CORE STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015-2033**

#### **Appendix A**

#### **PHASE 1 – Draft plan - consultation date Aug 2017**

**PR** – Announce dates for draft Core Strategy consultation

**Social media** - Announce dates for draft Core Strategy consultation

**Web** – What is core strategy, consultation dates, how does the consultation work etc

**Print** – as per material scope

**PR** – Reminder of times and locations for second half of consultation

**Social media** - Reminder of times and locations for consultation – continue throughout the consultation (as per social media plan)

**PR** – Reminder of deadline for consultation responses

**Social media** - Reminder of deadline for consultation responses

**PR** – Details of response level to consultation and next steps

**Social media** - Details of response level to consultation and next steps with link to web

**Web** - Details of response level to consultation and next steps

## **Appendix B**

### **PHASE 2 – Publication draft – consultation date June 2018**

**PR** – Final consultation before inspection of local plan

**Social media** - Final consultation before inspection of local plan to start (see social media plan App G)

**Web** – Details and locations of final consultation before inspection

**Print** – Final consultation materials

**PR** – Details of response level to consultation and next steps

**Social media** - Details of response level to consultation and next steps with link to web

**Web** - Details of response level to consultation and next steps, how examination will work

**Regulations** – Statutory press notice published informing of commencement of Examination

## **Appendix C**

### **SUBMISSION**

#### **Stage one**

**PR** – Cabinet to consider Submission draft of local plan this week

**Social media** - Cabinet to consider submission of local plan this week

#### **Stage two**

**PR** – Cabinet agree to submission of local plan to Sec of State

**Social media** - Cabinet agree to submission of local plan to Sec of State

**Web** - Cabinet agree to submission of local plan to Sec of State, next steps

**Regulations** - Statutory press notice published

## **Appendix D**

### **EXAMINATION**

#### **Stage one**

**PR** – Examination of local plan by independent inspector to begin

**Social media** - Examination of local plan by independent inspector to begin, link to web

**Web** – Times, dates etc for examination, how examination works

#### **Stage two**

**PR** – Inspectors initial report received, details of modifications

**Social media** - Inspectors initial report received, link to web

**Web** – Inspectors report received, details of modifications, how it works, next steps

#### **Stage three**

**PR** – Cabinet to consider modifications this week

#### **Stage four**

**PR** – Consultation on modifications required by inspector starts next week

**Social media** – Consultation on modifications required by inspector starts next week

**Web** - Consultation on modifications required by inspector starts next week, how it works

**Print** – Delivery completed of leaflets for modifications consultation (TO CONSULTEES ONLY)

## **Appendix E**

### **ADOPTION**

#### **Stage one**

**PR** – Inspectors report received

**Web** – Inspectors report received, next steps, towards adoption

#### **Stage two**

**PR** – Cabinet “minded to adopt” local plan

**Social media** – Cabinet “minded to adopt” local plan

## Appendix F

### Analysis of the main phases of activity

#### PHASE 2 – CORE STRATEGY & DEVELOPMENT PLAN PUBLICATION DRAFT – 2015-2033 CONSULTATION JUNE 2018

ACTIVITY	KEY MESSAGES	TARGET AUDIENCE	METHOD	TIMESCALES
Print and consultation materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertise dates for consultation</li> <li>• Awareness of Local Plan, key messages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunderland residents (all)</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Businesses</li> <li>• Key stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print materials</li> <li>• Exhibitions x 10</li> <li>• Static info in Civic Centre</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 2018</li> </ul>
Direct communications and online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announce dates for consultation</li> <li>• All key messages as outlined in section 4 above</li> <li>• Developments since Phase 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunderland residents (all)</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Businesses</li> <li>• Stakeholders</li> <li>• Members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website updates</li> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• Stakeholder letter</li> <li>• Members Update</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 2018</li> </ul>
PR and media opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All key messages as outlined in section 4 above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunderland residents (all)</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PR and media opportunities</li> <li>• Press release</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 2018</li> </ul>
Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key messages</li> <li>• Awareness of Local Plan</li> <li>• Developments since Phase 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developers</li> <li>• Key Stakeholders</li> <li>• Elected Members</li> <li>• Internal staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 2018</li> </ul>
<b>STAGE 2</b>				
PR and media opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder of times and locations for second half of consultation</li> <li>• Reminder of deadline for responses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunderland residents (all)</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Businesses</li> <li>• Key stakeholders</li> <li>• Members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PR</li> <li>• Social Media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 2018</li> </ul>
<b>STAGE 3</b>				
PR and media opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detail of response level and next steps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunderland residents (all)</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Business</li> <li>• Key stakeholders</li> <li>• Members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PR</li> <li>• Social Media</li> <li>• Web</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End consultation</li> </ul>

