Sunderland City Council

Item No. 5

CABINET MEETING – 20 July 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:
Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code Supplementary Planning Document

Author(s):
Deputy Chief Executive

Purpose of Report:
The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the responses received following public consultation on the Draft Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code and to seek Cabinet's approval to adopt the revised Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Description of Decision:
Cabinet is recommended to:

(i) Note the amendments made to the draft Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code in light of responses received during the public consultation on the document and other considerations;

(ii) Adopt the amended Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code as a Supplementary Planning Document.

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 adoption of the Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code as a Supplementary Planning Document will help facilitate the planning and regeneration of the Seaburn area in accordance with the aspirations of the Sunderland Strategy and overarching Seafront Regeneration Strategy. The Masterplan and Design Code will be used by developers as a basis for preparing detailed proposals for this area of Seaburn and would be afforded weight as a material consideration when determining future planning applications.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected: The alternative option is not to prepare a masterplan for Seaburn. The consequences of this would be not to have clear guidance on appropriate forms of development for Seaburn. This would weaken the council's ability to control the type of development and design quality at the seafront leaving the area to be developed on an ad hoc basis. Not having an approved masterplan would result in a lower standard of development than would otherwise be achieved, failing to make the best use of Seaburn's potential as a main attraction in the City for residents visitors and investors.	
Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution? Yes **Is it included in the Forward Plan?** Yes	**Relevant Scrutiny Committee:** Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee Planning and Highways Committee Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee

CABINET **20h July 2011**

SEABURN MASTERPLAN AND DESIGN CODE

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the responses received following public consultation on the Draft Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code and to seek Cabinet's approval to adopt the revised Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code as a Supplementary Planning Document.

2.0 Description of Decision

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

(i) Note the amendments made to the draft Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code in light of responses received during the public consultation on the document and other considerations;

(ii) Adopt the amended Seaburn Masterplan Design Code as a Supplementary Planning Document.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Seafront Regeneration Strategy was adopted in February 2010. This provides an overarching framework to guide future development at the seafront and identifies a vision for both Seaburn and Roker. Building upon this vision the strategy identifies a series of 'Character Areas' and sets out key development principles for each.

3.2 The Seafront Regeneration Strategy also establishes the need for a suite of delivery documents, designed to expand upon the ambitions of the strategy and provide detailed design guidance for the Character Areas identified. For example a Masterplan for Marine Walk was produced alongside the Seafront Regeneration Strategy to provide specific design guidance for this area of Roker. This was adopted as Supplementary Planning Document in February 2010 and now forms part of the Local Development Framework.

3.3 A masterplan has now been prepared for Seaburn to provide specific development guidance and planning principles for the Seaburn Promenade and Ocean Park areas of the Seafront Regeneration Strategy. The vision for Seaburn is for a family focused resort offering high quality indoor and outdoor facilities for both residents and visitors. Accordingly a leisure-led development is advocated, featuring a mix of uses that will be available all year round.

3.4 Based on an assessment of the Seaburn area; including consideration of the physical characteristics of the site, market conditions, land ownership and planning issues the masterplan concludes that the delivery of the vision for Seaburn will best be achieved by taking a comprehensive approach to development.

3.5 In line with this approach a series of character areas at Seaburn and broad principles for each are identified:

- Ocean Park is identified as a 'Leisure and entertainment core' which will be the heart of the masterplan area. A mix of tourism leisure-led uses will be encouraged which will be open during the day and into evening and will be available throughout the year. This area is to incorporate a pedestrian boulevard through the centre of the site and open plaza across Whitburn Road in order to maximise pedestrian movement through the area.
- A low density residential development is directed towards a 'Residential Park' to the west of the area on vacant and underused land comprising the public car park and former miniature golf course. This development will serve as a transition between the 'Leisure and entertainment core' and existing areas of housing. A linear park through the residential area will link with the seafront area through a series of green routes. The quality of the new linear park will compensate for any loss of existing green space in the area.
- Land to the south of the Masterplan area is identified as the 'Cut Throat Dene' character area and will incorporate the former boating lake and land to the south of Seafields. This area will be retained as open space; however will benefit from enhancements focused on improving the biodiversity value Seaburn. Measures will also encourage safe pedestrian and cycle routes and future proof against the impacts of climate change; particularly in relation to flood risk associated with Cut Throat Dene. The masterplan also identifies this area as a suitable site for a new equipped play area to replace the current Pirate Play Park.
- The 'Seaburn Promenade' character area to the east and overlooking Whitburn Bay will be retained as promenade with the focus on protecting the panoramic views across the seafront. Interventions will primarily include upgrading of the public realm.

- Existing businesses in the area to be retained as part of the masterplan include the Marriott Hotel, businesses at Queen's Parade, Martino's amusements and arcade and Morrisons supermarket. No redevelopment of these areas is proposed; however opportunities for enhancements to the public realm will be sought.

3.6 A design code for Seaburn has been prepared to accompany a spatial masterplan for the area to ensure the quality of proposals will reflect the Council's ambition for the site. The code will offer greater detail on the urban design principles guiding the masterplan and will cover matters relating to: block principles, building height and density, gateways and landmarks, building types and frontages, street types, access arrangements; and landscape and public realm.

3.7 Copies of the Seaburn Masterplan and supporting documents (Appropriate Assessment Scoping Report for the Seaburn Masterplan and Sustainability Appraisal of the Seaburn Masterplan) are available in the Member's Library. The indicative masterplan drawing can be found attached in the appendices to this report.

4.0 Consultations on the draft Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code

4.1 Cabinet approved a draft Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code for the purposes of consultation at its October 2010 meeting. Subsequently, the document and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment were subject to a statutory public consultation between 19 October and 29 November 2010.

4.2 During this period all information relating to the consultation, including the draft Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code was made available online at www.sunderland.gov.uk/seaburn.

4.3 Letters were delivered to all households and businesses within the Seaburn study area and its immediate surroundings. The letter notified recipients of the consultation period and the online link to view the relevant documents.

4.4 A leaflet enclosed with every letter provided a summary of key proposals and invited recipients to view the main proposals plan at exhibitions displayed at the Sunderland Civic Centre 3rd floor reception, the City Library at Fawcett Street, Sunderland Aquatic Centre, Seaburn Centre, the Hetton Centre and Washington Leisure Centre. The leaflet notified that officers from the City Council would be on hand to discuss the proposals at:

- Seaburn Centre (26th October and 18th November)
- Sunderland Aquatic Centre (2nd November and 25th November)
- Hetton Centre (28th October and 8th November)
- Washington Leisure Centre (4th November and 16th November)
- Sunderland Civic Centre 3rd floor reception by appointment during normal office hours

4.5 Comments slips were also enclosed with every letter, which could be returned by freepost. Responses could also be made by email or by completing an online consultation form at www.sunderland.gov.uk/seaburn.

4.6 The relevant documents, summary leaflets and comments slips were available at all venues as well as all local libraries across the city.

4.7 Statutory and formal consultees including a range of businesses, organisations and other individuals were consulted by letter.

5.0 Consultation responses and changes to the development framework

5.1 In total 196 responses were received, 95 (52%) expressing support, 46 (25%) objecting, 42 (23%) expressing neither support or objection and 2 stating that they support some elements of the plan and object to others.

5.2 Sixteen responses were received from statutory and non-statutory consultees. These were generally supportive of the draft Seaburn masterplan and Design Code. Consideration of representations submitted by the Environment Agency, Natural England, Nexus, Homes and Communities Agency, Disability Alliance Sunderland and ONE North East have resulted in minor changes to sections of the masterplan and design code.

5.3 The itemised representations received, together with the City Council's response to them and details of any necessary changes can be found in the appendices of this report.

6.0 Key Consultation Issues

Although the majority of responses supported the proposals set out in the Seaburn masterplan, it is possible to identify a number of key areas of concern amongst those consulted. These were the identification of housing as a use to the west of the site, the future of the Seaburn Centre, the standard of toilet provision in the area and potential future problems with car parking. These issues are dealt with in more detail below.

6.1 Housing and loss of Green Space

The identification of housing as a potential use for land to the west of the masterplan study area caused concern as well as the resulting loss of open green space. In total 17 respondents expressed concern with this element of the plan.

6.2 Council response

The key aspiration for Seaburn largely supported by consultation response is a family focused resort offering high quality indoor and outdoor facilities which can be enjoyed all year round. In developing a masterplan for Seaburn which will deliver a successful leisure-led development a comprehensive approach has been taken to addressing fundamental issues in the area such as access, movement, building type and form, public realm and green space. There are a number of reasons for the development of housing and for the development of this housing on some elements of green space as part of this comprehensive approach. These reasons are set out below.

6.3 **a) Why housing?**

The council is committed to delivering the vision for Seaburn. However it is recognised through market testing that to make a leisure-led scheme viable and to ensure the development has a sustainable mix of uses to ensure its long term success, it will be necessary to incorporate housing development into the scheme. Consequently the masterplan allows for the inclusion of housing in the form of apartments on upper floors above commercial uses within Ocean Park and family-sized higher value houses on land to the west of the masterplan area.

6.4 As well as viability considerations, the development of housing of this type would also play a role in addressing key housing supply and demand issues affecting the Seaburn area and Sunderland as a whole.

6.5 Research carried out as part of the 2010 Sunderland Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has indicated that in North Sunderland there is pressure on the existing housing stock. Firstly, there is a limited availability of land for housing in the north area, which is a key constraint to development. Secondly, and more specifically for Fulwell ward within which Seaburn sits, demand exceeds supply for larger family homes and smaller 1 bedroom apartments. This trend is partly representative of the shortage of upper Council Tax band housing in Sunderland generally but also as a consequence of an aging population in Seaburn. Currently there is little purpose built accommodation for elderly people who wish to continue living in Seaburn and – as a result - many elderly households continue to live in large semi-detached or detached former family homes. The knock on effect of this has been to restrict further the availability of larger family-sized or upper council tax-band homes available. There is clearly a need to address both pressures in this instance.

6.6 This need to meet local demand is recognised in overarching strategic policy. Sunderland's Economic Masterplan, the Sunderland Strategy 2008-2025 and Housing Strategy for Sunderland set out a clear aspiration to improve the choice, type, location and price of housing, which meets the needs demands and aspirations of Sunderland's population and reverses the current trend of out migration. The emerging Core Strategy also recognises the need in particular to address issues in the North area, despite the shortfall of available land. In addition, policy H1 of the Unitary Development Plan seeks to promote housing where this maximises choice caters for reduced out migration and assists in the regeneration of existing residential areas.

6.7 In the context of the above evidence and policy, it is considered that the development of apartments as part of the scheme at Ocean Park could potentially provide suitable accommodation for elderly people who do not wish to move from the Seaburn area. For example extra care housing could be accommodated at Ocean Park and could help older households move out of larger family homes into accommodation specially designed to support independent living and well-being. Likewise the provision of new family sized, higher value dwellings on land to the west of the study area would play a role in easing the city wide under supply of higher value family homes and reduce pressure on the demand for existing stock.

6.8 **b) Why development on green space?**
In response to the above housing issues, the masterplan has introduced the opportunity to develop certain elements of housing on existing areas of green space within the Seaburn masterplan study area.

6.9 **Quality of green space**
Whilst the considerable amount of green space at Seaburn is clearly an asset to the Seaburn area, the council has identified that land to the west of the Morrison's and public car park including the former pitch and putt green is of poor quality. Given its proximity to existing residential areas, the masterplan identifies the site as potentially suitable for housing in future as part of the wider regeneration of the Seaburn Masterplan study area.

6.10 It has been identified that this green space to the west of the area does not function as intended and suffers from problems associated with under-use. The site is a somewhat isolated space away from the major areas of footfall and with no apparent use to draw people to the area. This gives rise to a 'backland' feel which is insecure and intimidating.

6.11 Northumbria Police have confirmed that whilst the Seaburn area does not suffer from particularly high levels of crime generally, the western side of the masterplan area around the former pitch and putt site does attract most anti-social behaviour. Site visits have also shown evidence of drinking and vandalism in the area. The City Council's parks services have also indicated that the pitch and putt area and the derelict worm garden have become maintenance liabilities due to the ongoing cost of replacing or repairing vandalised street furniture. It has become clear that these areas of green space are most in need of intervention.

6.12 **Planning policy including need to meet strategic issues (replacement of greenspace)**

The potential selective development of residential dwellings in the area of low quality amenity space to the west of the public car park is considered a potential solution to issues in the area as part of a wider masterplanning approach.

6.13 Whilst the land in question is allocated as open amenity space, any alternative development would therefore be considered as a departure from planning policy and would need to be referred to the Secretary of State. Furthermore, planning policies L1, L7 and B3 in the UDP make it clear that continuing provision of amenity open space will be a priority for the City. There is a general presumption to resist proposals which would result in the loss of amenity space - particularly in areas of deficiency, which would adversely affect open space areas or would detract from the character of the locality. However it is also the case that this approach needs to be balanced against the wider regeneration needs of the City.

6.14 **c) High quality design**

In the context described above it is considered that a carefully composed comprehensive approach in the Seaburn Masterplan provides a regeneration solution to the poorer quality areas of greenspace, and plays a role in meeting the wider strategic aims of the City through the provision of housing.

6.15 In setting out clear design parameters for a comprehensive approach to development, the masterplan seeks to tightly control how much open space is lost by setting out criteria requiring high levels of open space, larger size houses with large gardens or a landscaped setting. As a consequence, the council expects the number of houses thought to be appropriate for the site to be driven by these criteria. It is made very clear in the document and through the indicative layout that any scheme which is not well designed and proposes a significant loss of green space will not be permitted.

6.16 However in taking a comprehensive approach, the masterplan also takes steps to ensure that replacement areas of open space will be designed to the highest standard or be of superior quality to those areas of underused open space currently in place. The masterplan sets out design criteria for new open spaces to ensure that these new green spaces will be centrally located, incorporate new pedestrian routes and be well over-looked from surrounding buildings. Careful planting and landscaping to improve the quality of the open space further is also promoted. In addition to this, the masterplan sets out green space and biodiversity improvements for the area, which will funded specifically from the proposed housing development.

6.17 Seaburn Centre

The indicative comprehensive masterplan shows the removal of the Seaburn Centre building. This caused concern among a number of respondents, mainly with regard to the future of the facilities and events that take place within the building. In total 22 respondees expressed concern with this element of the plan.

6.18 Council Response:

The Masterplan is clear in stating that the document represents a long term 10-15 year plan for Seaburn (although proposals may well come forward before then). As such there are no immediate plans to close the Seaburn Centre. The Seaburn Centre will continue to operate, providing leisure facilities to the surrounding areas.

6.19 Nevertheless it is considered that the Seaburn Centre building in its current form is somewhat underused, lacks architectural merit and adds very little aesthetic value to the seafront. The masterplan seeks to provide an attractive and coherent frontage along the seafront with Ocean Park, providing a gateway and focus point to the masterplan area. Currently the positioning and relationship of the Seaburn Centre with surrounding buildings contributes to a fragmented development. In addition, as a large building, the Seaburn Centre's location at the heart of the Ocean Park development site constrains opportunities for a comprehensive regeneration of the entire area.

6.20 However, it is also recognised that facilities within the building such as the Wellness Centre are valued by the local community. The Council will therefore seek to encourage any new developments to include appropriate sport and leisure provision as part of the wider redevelopment of the Seaburn masterplan area.

6.21 Toilets

A total of 16 respondees expressed concern over the quality, quantity and availability of toilets at Seaburn.

6.22 Council Response:

The Council recognises need for increased provision of toilets open all year round and for increased provision of accessible toilets.

6.23 An assessment of toilet provision at the seafront has been carried out and as a consequence a number of improvements are being planned including: the refurbishment of the Cat and Dog Steps toilet block; and new toilet facilities as part of the redevelopment of the Seaburn seating shelter which is identified in the masterplan.

6.24 The proposed redevelopment of the Seaburn Shelter on the promenade subject to offer and the grant of planning permission will incorporate new public toilets facilities, including disabled facilities and baby changing. The City Council is also seeking to incorporate Changing Places toilets, which provide additional features to standard disabled facilities, including more space for a disabled person and up to two carers, a privacy screen, hoist and height adjustable adult sized changing bench.

6.25 In future it is anticipated that the public toilets provided by the Council will be supplemented by additional customer toilets provided by private operators as new leisure proposals come forward at Ocean Park. The Council also will continue to provide temporary toilets during key events such as the Air Show to accommodate high numbers of visitors.

6.26 Parking

Parking problems relating to the increase in development were highlighted particularly due to the perceived removal of the public car park to the rear of the Seaburn Centre on the masterplan drawing. Impacts such as increased parking on residential streets surrounding Ocean Park were of particular concern. A total of 15 respondees expressed concern with this element of the plan.

6.27 Council Response:

When preparing the masterplan, car parking and congestion was a recognised constraint, particularly on event days such as the air show. The need to accommodate potentially significant numbers of car-borne visitors has influenced design considerations. However it has also been necessary to balance this with the aspiration to encourage alternative modes of transport and deliver an attractive seafront destination, which will not be dominated by swathes of surface car parking during off-peak times. Access and servicing is therefore dealt with in some detail in section 9.8 of the masterplan.

6.28 **a) Public car parking**

The masterplan is clear in stating that there is a need to provide sufficient public parking for those visiting the seafront and new facilities that will come forward. It is emphasised that throughout the development of the site, the council will ensure that appropriate levels of public car parking is provided at all times, either through the retention of existing parking spaces in the short term, or the construction of new public car parking facilities in the longer term as development proposals emerge.

6.29 As part of the comprehensive approach, the masterplan does indicate the re-location of the existing surface public car park. The relocation of public parking would enable the redevelopment of the land to the west of the masterplan zone as part of a coherent, landscaped linear park. Furthermore, to rationalise provision, it is envisaged that there may be scope to share public parking with commercial uses, particularly when the peak use times of these businesses differ (for example shops, open during the day may be able to share parking spaces with evening uses such as restaurants). This would ensure the efficient use of parking facilities and minimise the land given over to surface parking.

6.30 Specific numbers of public parking spaces are to be determined during the delivery stages of the masterplan.

6.31 **b) Private Parking (non-residential)**

It is acknowledged that the increase in development needs to provide for an appropriate level of parking. In all cases, new commercial developments at Seaburn will need to provide sufficient on-site parking to meet reasonable demands.

6.32 The masterplan requires that at the planning submission stages, developers will be expected to provide parking in line with provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 13: Transport. Where a developer proposes a lower provision of parking than that advocated in policy, the onus will be on the developer to demonstrate that the proposal provides appropriate parking provision.

6.33 As with public parking, the masterplan advocates the potential to rationalise parking numbers through the sharing of parking spaces by non-residential uses that operate at different times of the day/night. This approach seeks to ensure sufficient spaces are provided for the scale of development coming forward, yet minimises the amount of space devoted to car parking spaces.

6.34 **c) Encouraging alternative modes and relieving congestion**
Whilst the masterplan sets out a clear approach as to how appropriate levels of parking will be provided as development progresses, it is also necessary to minimise reliance on the car and encourage a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport. The masterplan proposes a number of measures to encourage this:

6.35 **Improving cycle and pedestrian links**
The aim to provide improved cycle and pedestrian links, which connect to existing pathways outside the masterplan area, is set out. Mechanisms for the delivery of these schemes through developer contributions towards public realm are set out in the document and will be developed further during the site disposal process

6.36 **Cycle parking**
The masterplan seeks to improve facilities for cyclists further by requiring that new developments provide a mix of short stay and long stay cycle parking facilities in addition to car parking.

6.37 **Bus improvements**
Whilst the provision of additional bus services is dependent upon independent operators, the Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code seeks to encourage public transport by requiring contributions to be sought from developers towards infrastructure such as bus stops and a seasonal shuttle bus service between Seaburn and the City Centre to supplement existing public transport.

6.38 To cater for the potential increase in numbers to the seafront the Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code acknowledges the need to ensure that roads will be able to accommodate potential increases in traffic. Therefore the masterplan indicates the reconfiguration of Lowry Road. This includes improving traffic junctions, improving the access to the Morrison's Foodstore, taking out tight bends and widening roads to better accommodate a potential increase in capacity. Details of the delivery of this through developer contributions are set out in the masterplan and will be developed further as development progresses.

6.39 The measures set out above are intended to reduce demand along the seafront itself (Whitburn Road) and allow for this section of road to be remodelled to make it easier for pedestrians to cross and create a more pleasant and relaxing environment

6.40 As set out in the masterplan, the City Council will seek to prepare an outline Travel Plan for Seaburn, which will set out the broad principals to be addressed through the redevelopment of the site. Developers will be expected to funding towards a travel plan coordinator and submit a robust travel plan in line with the principles set out in the Travel Plan.

7.0 Reasons for Decision

7.1 The adoption of the Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code as a Supplementary Planning Document will help facilitate the planning and regeneration of the Seaburn area in accordance with the aspirations of the Sunderland Strategy and overarching Seafront Regeneration Strategy. The Masterplan and Design Code will be used by developers as a basis for preparing detailed proposals for this area of Seaburn and would be afforded weight as a material consideration when determining future planning applications.

8.0 Alternative Options

8.1 The alternative option is not to prepare a masterplan for Seaburn. The consequences of this would be not to have clear guidance on appropriate forms of development for Seaburn. This would weaken the council's ability to control the type of development and design quality at the seafront leaving the area to be developed on an ad-hoc basis. Not having an approved masterplan would result in a lower standard of development than would otherwise be achieved, failing to make the best use of Seaburn's potential as a main attraction in the City for residents, visitors and investors

9.0 Relevant consultations

9.1 Financial implications - there are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the adoption of the amended Supplementary Planning Document.

9.2 Legal Implications - The adoption process for the Masterplan and Design Code has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. Following adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document, the Masterplan and Design Code will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for new development in the Seaburn area.

10.0 List of appendices

Appendix 1: Indicative Seaburn Masterplan drawing
Appendix 2: Schedule of representations received from statutory and formal stakeholders during public consultation and the City Council's response.
Appendix 3: Schedule of representations received from members of the public during the consultation and the City Council's response.

11.0 Background Papers

a) Amended Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code Supplementary Planning Document, 2011
b) Amended Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code Supplementary Planning Document Sustainability Appraisal Report, 2011
c) Seaburn Masterplan and Design Code Supplementary Planning Document Task 1 Appropriate Assessment, Regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994, 2009
d) Schedule of representations received from statutory and formal stakeholders during public consultation and the City Council's response.
e) Schedule of representations received from members of the public during the consultation and the City Council's response.