

Growth options consultation



What is this consultation all about?

Sunderland City Council is preparing a Local Plan to help guide how Sunderland develops between now and 2033. All local authorities are required by central government to prepare a Local Plan.

A key part of the Local Plan is the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy sets out the direction for planning in the city including the number of new homes needed, where offices and factories could be built and what new roads and other infrastructure will be needed to support development.

The last draft of the Core Strategy was produced in 2013. Since then new developments have taken place in the city and new opportunities have arisen such as the emerging proposal to develop an International Advanced Manufacturing Park near the current Nissan factory. These changes mean that we need to review and update the Core Strategy. New evidence on the city's population and economy has been prepared to support this review.

As part of that review we need to consider options for how growth in Sunderland could take place. This consultation is about your views on those options. The City Council needs to know which option is the best for Sunderland and the people who live and work here so it can be built into our future plan.



Some of the issues Sunderland faces

In recent years Sunderland has seen significant jobs growth, but figures suggest that an increasing number of these jobs are taken by people who live outside of Sunderland and commute into the city for work. This means that more people travel into the city for work, but live elsewhere. It also means that Sunderland is not getting the full financial benefit of the extra jobs created.

The number of new houses completed in Sunderland has been generally high; around 700 each year over the past 10-15 years, but this number has been affected quite considerably by demolitions that have taken place. These losses reduced the annual net average to around 300 houses per year. However, these demolitions have now largely come to an end and last year saw 895 new houses being built in the city.

Between 2001 and 2011, Sunderland's population fell from 284,000 to just under 276,000. Sunderland was the only city in the United Kingdom to see population fall during that period. Official Government projections show that Sunderland's population is expected to grow only slightly over the next 20 years. It is a concern that the number of people choosing to move out of Sunderland is highest amongst the 'working-age' population, particularly those aged 20-39.

These factors could have a major long term impact on the prosperity of the city and need to be addressed if the city is to prosper.

The Core Strategy is one of the most important documents that can influence future development and tackle some of these issues.

Assessing the future level of housing need for new homes in Sunderland has been carried out with a new in-depth study. This study, carried out by experts, includes what is known as the 'Objectively Assessed Need for Housing'. It has helped us to understand how many new homes might need to be built in the city.

What are growth options?

Sunderland City Council has been carrying out extensive research to fully understand the development needs of Sunderland in the foreseeable future. This includes likely changes to population in the city, to housing needs and employment.

Some of the research carried out includes:

- A Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which provides a detailed overview of the future housing needs of Sunderland
- An Employment Land Review, which looks into expected employment growth in the city
- A Demographic Analysis, which provides forecasts of Sunderland's population and household changes
- A Strategic Land Review, which details and assesses all potential development sites in the city
- A Green Belt Review, which looks at the role of the green belt and examines whether any parts could be amended.
- An updated Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

These documents provide a robust basis to identify possible options for the growth of Sunderland between now and 2033. Copies of all of these documents are available to view in your local library, at the Civic Centre (during office hours) and also online at www.sunderland.gov.uk/growthoptions

We would welcome your comments on any of these documents, particularly the Strategic Land Review and Green Belt Review.

Growth options map

Washington

55,200 residents

Key issues/constraints

- There is limited potential for new housing and employment allocations within the built-up area
- Limited brownfield land

Opportunities/growth

- Washington's location on the strategic road network makes it highly marketable for industry and business
- The development of IAMP

Sunderland North

55,100 residents

Key issues/constraints

- The area is highly urbanised and limited in land for new housing and future employment allocations
- The coast has Natura 2000 European wildlife protection

Opportunities/growth

- The Seafront Strategy and Marine Walk Masterplan will assist in revitalising the seafront



Sunderland North

Central Area

City Centre

Sunderland South

Coalfield

Houghton-le-Spring Town Centre

Central Area

3,200 residents

Key issues/constraints

- Declining city centre vitality and viability
- Need to develop the city centre office market
- Limited residential population

Opportunities/growth

- Development of the Vaux site will enhance the vitality and viability of the city centre
- The University and Software City are key drivers in the city's knowledge-based economy

Coalfield

46,000 residents

Key issues/constraints

- Poor access to employment areas
- Poor housing choice leading to out-migration
- The Coalfield has more flood risk areas than elsewhere in the city

Opportunities/growth

- Release of unviable employment land provides regeneration opportunities
- The re-opening of the Leamside line would improve accessibility for the area
- The Central Route would improve access to the area

Sunderland South

116,000 residents

Key issues/constraints

- Parts of the coast has European wildlife protection

Opportunities/growth

- The South Sunderland Growth Area will add to housing choice
- The South Sunderland Transport Corridor will provide access opportunities for sites along the river corridor

The options

Low growth

The low growth option broadly follows current predictions from Central Government about population growth. This will see a declining working age population in the city. It is likely that continuing low population growth would see declining public services such as schools and could further reduce shopping activity in the city centre and local centres. The low level of housebuilding would result in limited choices in new housing.

What this option could look like:

Housing: Construction of around 515 new homes a year across the city. This would give a limited choice in the housing types needed to meet the needs of a resident workforce. It would not meet the Objectively Assessed Need for housing.

Economy and Employment: Likely decline of almost 10,000 in the working age population by 2033. Economic growth in the city could be harmed through a lack of local workforce to fill potential new jobs. This will have an adverse impact on investment and the planned economic growth for Sunderland.

Sustainable Communities: The continued decrease in the working age population and in the number of children means that there may be a need to close some services as demand reduces. In parallel there will be an increase in the proportion of residents who are over 70.

Transport: Would not provide all the homes needed for a local resident labour force. High levels of commuting would still occur, having the significant impact on transport infrastructure across the city.

Environment: Development would be delivered on currently identified 'brown field' and 'green field' sites. No additional areas of greenfield land will be required.

Medium growth

This option would see improved growth that could help to maintain existing services. There would be some increase in overall population. A higher number of new homes would help to reduce the number of people choosing to move out of the area and increase the working age population. With a greater choice in housing types, there would be economic benefits as more people choose to live in Sunderland. A moderate increase of commuting to meet the expected jobs growth would also mean a lower impact on transport infrastructure.

What this option could look like:

Housing: Construction of around 820 new homes each year across the city, with more choice in types of housing encouraging fewer people to leave Sunderland.

Economy and Employment: An increase of around 2,000 in the working age population of the city. Some improvement in access to local employment, with jobs across all skill levels.

Sustainable Communities: A modest increase in the population of the city. The higher working age population supports economic growth, protects local services such as schools and maintains demand for shops and services in local centres and the city centre.

Transport: The limited increase in the working age population means that commuting into Sunderland will continue.

Environment: Very likely that additional greenfield sites and land in settlement breaks will be required. Option could potentially accommodate growth but does not provide for flexibility in the land supply in the long term, so some Green Belt land could be required.

Higher growth

This option would see the biggest increase in housing numbers. Higher numbers and much improved choice in housing would significantly reduce the number of people choosing to leave the city and attract more people to live in Sunderland. The high levels of housing development would deliver a growing population, completely reversing current trends.

What this option could look like:

Housing: Construction of around 1,055 new homes each year across the city with significant improvement in the choice of housing types and tenures. This is a high number bearing in mind the recent level of housing completions in the city.

Economy and Employment: An increase of around 7,000 in the working age population. Improved access to local employment, with more jobs across all skill levels.

Sustainable Communities: Increased resident population will help support vibrant town and local centres. There may also be other benefits for communities through funding of services through Section 106 money and potentially Community Infrastructure Levy from developers. This option could result in additional schools being needed due to increasing pressure from the higher population.

Transport: High growth would see an increase in traffic movement across the city. To an extent this would be offset by the reduction in in-commuting.

Environment: Increased risk to landscape character as significant land would need to be released from Settlement Breaks and Green Belt.

'Green field' sites are those that have not been developed in any way. Sites that have previously been used for homes or industry or other development are known as 'brown field'. Settlement Breaks are areas of open land that lie between villages or between parts of the built area of the City, separating different communities. Green Belt is a specific term used for land that is formally protected from most types of new development unless an exceptional need can be shown.

In your area:

In order to deal with planning effectively, in the 2013 Core Strategy Sunderland is split into 5 areas. Each of these has a different character and range of planning issues and opportunities.

- The **Central Area** is a small area straddling both sides of the Wear, close to the mouth of the river. It has a modest population of 3,200 residents. It houses the main commercial and administrative area of Sunderland, including the city centre. On the northern bank of the river sits the Stadium Park and Sheepfolds development sites. **In the 2013 Core Strategy the Central Area is proposed to be the main location for major office, retail and leisure uses.**
- The **Sunderland South** area covers 4,284 hectares and is the most populated part of the city, with 116,000 people living in it (around 42% of the city population). It has natural boundaries of the River Wear to the north and the coast to the east. The A19 is the boundary to the west and south. **In the 2013 Core Strategy the Sunderland South area is proposed to be the location for major growth of new housing in the city.**
- The **Sunderland North** area is mainly urban with just over 55,100 residents, or 20% of the city's population. It is bounded by the coast to the east, the Green Belt to the north, the A19 to the west and River Wear to the south. **In the 2013 Core Strategy, emphasis in Sunderland North was given to the regeneration of the sea front with new housing in the area developed when opportunities arise.**
- **Washington** began building in the 1960s as part of the 'new towns' programme. It has the second largest population of all of the sub-areas, with approximately 55,200 residents (20% of the total population). Developed as a series of villages, it also has modern employment areas. Washington is surrounded by Green Belt. **In the 2013 Core Strategy, Washington is seen as a key location for new economic development and job creation. Only a low amount of new housing was proposed.**
- The **Coalfield** is the largest of the areas in the city, covering over 5,500 hectares or around 42% of the city. It is made up of a number of former mining towns and villages that include Houghton-le-Spring and Hetton-le-Hole. It is the least densely populated of the areas with 46,000 residents (17% of the city's population). **In the 2013 Core Strategy, regeneration in the Coalfield is proposed to focus on building new homes.**

Sunderland City Council needs to consider whether the approach for each area as set out in the 2013 Core Strategy is still appropriate to meet the growth of the city. Findings from the recent evidence documents suggest that:

- There is a need for more housing in Washington; there is also a lack of employment land in this area;
- There may be a need to reconsider the capacity of the Coalfield to accommodate new housing due to infrastructure constraints such as road access;
- The role of North and South Sunderland could change with the completion of the new bridge across the Wear effectively joining these areas. There is a current lack of employment land in Sunderland North but an over-supply in Sunderland South.

Further work is being carried out on retail need in the city and at this stage we would welcome your thoughts on where any new shopping facilities might be located.

More information

For further information on the Growth Options please visit the council's website:
www.sunderland.gov.uk/growthoptions

The best way to comment on the Growth Options is on-line and you can do this through the website
You can also e-mail your comments to us at: planningpolicy@sunderland.gov.uk
Or you can also write to us with your comments at:-
Policy Section (Growth Options) Room 3.94, Civic Centre, Sunderland, SR2 7DN

Where can you meet us?

Policy officers will be available to answer your questions at the following venues:-

Date	Venue	Time
Saturday 21 May	City Library, Fawcett Street SR1 1RE	10am – 12.30pm
Monday 23 May	Houghton Library, Newbottle Street DH4 4AF Bunnyhill Centre, Hylton Lane SR5 4BW	10am – 12pm 3.30pm – 6.30 pm
Tuesday 24 May	Kayll Road Library SR4 7TW Ryhope Library, Black Road SR2 0RX	10am – 1pm 2pm – 5pm
Wednesday 25 May	Washington Library, The Galleries NE38 7RZ Fulwell Library, Dene Lane SR6 8EH	10am – 1.30pm 4.30pm – 6.30pm
Thursday 26 May	Sandhill Centre, Grindon Lane SR3 4EN Shiney Row Library, Chester Road DH4 4RB	10am – 1pm 2pm – 4pm
Friday 27 May	Hetton Centre Library, Welfare Road DH5 9NE Washington Millennium Centre, Concord NE37 2QD	10am – 12pm 2pm – 5pm
Monday 6 June	City Library, Fawcett Street SR1 1RE Washington Millennium Centre, Concord NE37 2QD	10am – 2pm 3.30pm – 6pm
Tuesday 7 June	Shiney Row Library, Chester Road DH4 4RB Ryhope Library, Black Road SR2 0RX	10am – 12pm 2pm – 4pm
Wednesday 8 June	Hetton Centre Library, Welfare Road DH5 9NE Sandhill View, Grindon Lane SR3 4EN	10am – 1pm 2pm – 5pm
Thursday 9 June	Bunnyhill Library, Hylton Lane SR5 4BW Wearside Health & Racquets Club, Camberwell Way, Doxford Park, SR3 3XN	10am – 12pm 3pm – 7pm
Friday 10 June	Kayll Road Library SR4 7TW Fulwell Library, Dene Lane SR6 8EH	11am – 1pm 3pm – 5pm
Saturday 11 June	Houghton Library, Newbottle Street DH4 4AF Washington Library, The Galleries NE38 7RZ	10am – 12pm 1pm – 3pm

What happens next?

All responses that we receive on the Growth Options will be used to shape the next version of the Core Strategy. This will be known as the “Publication Plan” and marks the next stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy. It is due out later in 2016.

The Core Strategy will then be submitted to the Secretary of State in early 2017. It will be examined by an independent Government Inspector during summer 2017 before it can be formally adopted by the council as the statutory development plan for the city.

Remember to submit your comments to us by 1 July 2016

What are your views on the growth options?

1. Of the three Growth Options proposed which one do you think is the most appropriate for the city and should be taken forward in the Core Strategy?

☐ Low Growth ☐ Medium Growth ☐ High Growth

2. Are there any other options that you think should be considered?

As set out previously, the 2013 draft Core Strategy divides the city into 5 sub-areas and proposes a different approach to how each of these areas might be developed over the next 20 years.

3. Do you think that these approaches are still appropriate and should be used as a basis for the next version of the Core Strategy?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. If No, do you think different approaches should be used? What proportion of land for development do you think should be used in each sub-area? More/less for housing? More/less for employment? What are your views on the location of new retailing? Please set out your views below:

Sub-area	Housing	Employment	Retailing	Your views or suggestions:
Central				
Sunderland South				
Sunderland North				
Washington				
Coalfield				

Your Name:

e-mail:

Address:

☐ Please tick here if you do not wish to be kept informed of future consultations on the Core Strategy

Please submit your comments to us by 1 July 2016