

Questions on Local Plan Consultation Documents 2013

1. The word 'sustainable' is frequently used throughout the main consultation document – please explain what is implied by this word in general – and for its use in policy DM/10.10 (on page 141) in particular.

In a planning context the word 'sustainable' is described in the National Planning Policy Framework as "ensuring that better lives for ourselves don't mean worse lives for future generations."

The Local Plan promotes 'sustainable development' which, again in the NPFF, is defined as "change for the better, and not only in our built environment." There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental and these factors are balanced in the policies and proposals in the Local Plan, it is about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations.

Policy DM/10.10 refers to 'sustainable drainage', which is sometimes known as 'Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems' (SUDS), are designed to reduce the potential impact of new and existing developments with respect to surface water drainage discharges. SUDS are a sequence of water management practices and facilities designed to drain surface water in a manner that will provide a more sustainable approach than what has been the conventional practice of routing run-off through a pipe to a watercourse.

2. Are the policies 'material considerations' in the assessment of planning applications by council members and council officers?

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The current development plan for North Tyneside is the Unitary Development Plan 2002. Once adopted the Local Plan will replace the Unitary Development Plan and become the development plan for the borough.

The draft policies within this consultation version of the Local Plan are material considerations in the assessment of planning applications, but given the Local Plan is at an early stage of preparation, it will have very limited weight. However, as the Local Plan advances towards adoption, the weight attached to the policies in it will increase.

3. In DM/10.10 the term 'in due course' appears with a reference (2) superscripted. I could not find the superscripted reference – to what does it refer?

The (2) is available to view at the foot of the page and says "NB regulations not yet approved." This refers to the fact that the Council are expecting to become the SUDs approval body that will sign off and take ownership of all SUDs. However, the regulations which will bring this into force are not yet approved.

4. The term 'in due course' appears many times – insofar as these refer to policies – do they make the policies ineffective? When would such references be removed?

The current document is the latest draft of the Local Plan. It is not a finalised version and will be subject to change until it is adopted (currently anticipated for late 2015). Local Plan policies are required to be supported by robust evidence. Whilst we hold a comprehensive evidence base, we are required to keep this up to date. Presently the Council is updating and/or adding to its existing evidence base (e.g. a revised Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Employment Land Study). When these studies are complete, they too will inform policies within future iterations of the Local Plan. Where necessary, this version of the Local Plan makes reference to those instances where new studies are underway or will be required and therefore puts a marker down that these policies may well be subject to change.

However in this context, with particular regard to infrastructure, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which supports the Local Plan and is currently in draft form and part of this consultation process, is a key document.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) outlines the infrastructure requirements necessary to support the delivery of the emerging Local Plan to 2030. This includes a schedule of investment across a range of infrastructure areas that have been reported through consultation. The schedule gives a financial breakdown of investment stating what infrastructure funding is in place and highlighting where it is required in the future and where major funding gaps are.

The IDP will be updated on a regular basis and once sites have been selected through consultation there will be more in depth analysis and discussion with key organisations to understand the infrastructure requirements for identified sites subject to scale and location.

5. S/3.1 b on page 38 refers to the Green Belt preventing the merging of Whitley Bay with Shiremoor – how does it do this?

The current Green Belt designation was defined in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and remains unchanged in the Local Plan: Consultation Draft. The relevant UDP policy is E20.

The Green Belt retains a break between Shiremoor and Wellfield (to the north of the Metro line) and will continue to prevent the merging of settlements. However the land to the south of the Metro line (around Murton village) was designated as 'Safeguarded Land' through the UDP and is now under consideration as a potential area for development. If sites in the Murton area were to be selected as preferred ones then the coalescence of communities would have to be carefully considered through the planning process.

6. Many of the potential development sites summarised on pages 150 – 168 for which more detail is given in the potential sites background paper refer to 'Potential Homes' (if applicable). How are they to be judged 'applicable' or 'not applicable'?

This reference solely refers to whether a site has been identified as having potential for residential development or not. This is determined initially through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which is an annually updated technical assessment of the physical capacity and suitability of sites to accommodated housing.

The SHLAA purely considers whether a site technically could accommodate housing and an assessment of a site's suitability for housing would not mean that it could then necessarily be considered positively by the Council through a planning application or as a potential allocation. For the purposes of this Local Plan: Consultation Draft paragraph 11.4 within the 'Potential Development Sites' chapter provides some further detail on the inclusion of sites with housing potential within this Local Plan: Consultation Draft. Most of the 110 potential development sites are identified for a number of potential uses and where residential development is one of these an indicative 'potential homes' figure is given.

Sites 106 to 110 are not identified as having residential potential, then this is shown as 'N/A' with the site information. These sites are ones which are principally felt to be most appropriate to use as employment/industrial sites. They are sites which the council propose to keep in employment use and have not been assessed as being suitable for residential development, often due to the proximity to impact surrounding industrial uses could have on any residential scheme and the impact housing might have in those locations on the economic base of the Borough, hence this not being presented as an option through the plan.

7. As examples, I have looked at sites 35 to 41 (in the area around Murton) for housing density. The housing densities vary from 5.4/Ha to 23/Ha. Why do the densities vary so much and upon what basis have they been chosen?

Across the Plan the potential development density of sites is informed by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This SHLAA assesses sites potential for housing development and applies an indicative density of 30, 40 or 50 dwellings per hectare (30dph). This is based upon the types, accessibility and location of each site – so for example a site within a town centre may have a density of 50 dwellings per hectare reflecting its location. In the case of large sites 25% of the total area is removed before this calculation is made, in order to reflect the need to provide infrastructure, facilities and open space.

The sites around Murton are subject to this 25% reduction and within the SHLAA were assessed at a potential density of 30dph due to the nature of the site and. Within the SHLAA a number of the sites within Murton were assessed as not becoming available for development until later in the plan period, and if development came forward this would extend beyond the plan period to 2030.

Whilst this is the assessment from the SHLAA it is also important to note that there is now additional uncertainty surrounding the scale of developable land for residential purposes at Murton. As you may be aware flood alleviation schemes are currently being planned. These will see significant parts of the site used to hold water on the fields during serious downpours, reducing flood risk to properties in West Monkseaton. Any development of this site would need to build in provisions both to maintain this degree of protection for existing properties and prevent additional run-off from the development scheme itself.

Meanwhile any major housing development at this location would also require significant open space provision, provision of land to accommodate education requirements, for shops and services and depending upon the scale of any housing development – some provision for employment. These competing requirements all have implications for the calculated density of residential development and will only be capable of being developed in greater detail if through this process sites at Murton

were to be a preferred development site and further work had been undertaken in developing a master plan for potential development of the area.

Therefore whilst the densities may appear very low for some of the Murton sites it is on the understanding that a limited amount of the site will actually be developed and there will be substantial greenspace/green infrastructure provided as part of any development.

8. Site 48, former site of Marine and Coquet Park first schools gives 41 potential homes in the area of 0.59 Ha. I recall that planning permission was given to 'Places for People' (land owners) for 78 homes. Is it intended to restrict the number of homes to 41?

The original planning application for this site (07/03702/REM) was for 94 apartment/flats. This has now lapsed as this type of scheme comprised entirely of apartments, were particularly impacted by the housing downturn from 2008 onwards and un-attractive to developers in the current housing market. Therefore we have made a reassessment of the potential yield from this site through the SHLAA.

Whilst this capacity has been revised down, there is no policy that would limit the number of homes to 41. If this was to be selected as a preferred site then further work would be carried out to develop greater detail as to the development of the site as a potential Local Plan allocation. Given this is a 15 year plan; we will always need to be mindful of the fact that demands for particular house types will change over time. So, as with any of these potential Local Plan sites, should they be taken forward through the formal planning application process, any scheme would be considered on its individual merits which may well include the implications arising from any increase or decrease in densities that reflect market demands at that point in time.

9. Is there any policy that restricts the density of homes in built-up areas of townships? (Marden Court built on the former site of the YMCA in W/Bay has 25 apartments giving a density of 93/Ha. Had the original planning application for 34 apartments been permitted it would have a density of 126/Ha.)

There are no longer any national policies on minimum density requirements (previously set at 30 dwellings per hectare). It is now the remit of each local authority to determine whether or not it wishes to set any such density requirements. For the purposes of this Local Plan, it is considered more appropriate not to set such requirements. Instead issues such as the scale, mass and density of development would all considered through the planning process and the relationship to the existing built up areas. The Local Plan reflects this approach accordingly in its policies. As outlined above, the only instance where we have used some basic minimum densities calculations is to derive the theoretical capacities of the potential development sites.

In the meantime, any planning application is judged on individual merits and in light of policies in the development plan – currently the Unitary Development Plan.

Comments:-

See 1.31 – was the Tardis employed for the cabinet meeting?!

Noted – this paragraph should refer to June 2013 rather than June 2014.

See 1.44 – Authorities should be Authority's!

Noted and agreed.