

Northumberland Local Development Plan

A Brief Guide to the Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation

Why do a plan?

As your council, Northumberland County Council has a duty to plan new homes, workplaces, services and facilities in the right places. At the same time, we have to make sure that our unique environment is properly protected. This is why we are drawing up the 'Core Strategy' - a vision and plan for the next 20 years. **We would like you to help us plan the future of Northumberland.**

Our new plan—the Core Strategy—will be:

A plan for new homes, employment and other development - where it should be located and when planning permission can be given.

A sustainable plan, making sure that Northumberland's communities and economy can survive and grow, while the environment is properly protected.

Locally driven - with the people of Northumberland themselves playing a part in what the plan actually says

A guide for more detailed plans on particular areas or sites, including neighbourhood plans which communities themselves may want to draw up.

Generally in line with national policies and the plans of our neighbours in Tyneside, Durham, Cumbria and Scotland.



What's happened so far?

- After the new Northumberland County Council was formed in 2009, we gathered information about the County, its people's needs, its economy and its environment. This helped us identify issues to be tackled and how best to shape Northumberland as a place to live, work and visit in future.
- Between May and August 2012, we held the first public consultation on the Core Strategy. This asked people questions on different planning issues. We held over 30 public drop-in events across the County, met Town and Parish councils and community groups and received over 12,000 written responses.
- Since then, what people have told us during the consultation has helped us to put together the next version of the draft Core Strategy - the 'Preferred Options'. We explain the Preferred Options inside this pamphlet.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council



Northumberland - a vision

There are many conflicting issues in a county like Northumberland with its valued heritage, countryside and coast contrasting with areas of housing and employment. There are pressures on the environment and communities coming from such factors as commuting, changing energy needs and increased tourism. Therefore the Core Strategy must seek to balance economic, social and environmental needs. It reflects the Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy which seeks to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Northumberland's communities, the aims of which are:

- Making climate change work to our advantage;
- Maintaining and creating sustainable communities;
- Rebalancing our economy;
- Giving everyone a voice and influence;
- Providing healthy lifestyle choice;
- Supporting our young people into adulthood; and
- Delivering services differently.

Leading on from this, the Vision that will underpin the Core Strategy is:

By 2030 Northumberland's diverse communities will be healthy and resilient and set within a diverse and strong economy. The County's significant resources will be utilised in a sustainable way and the unique and varied qualities of the natural, historic and built environment will be protected and enhanced.



What does "Preferred Options" mean?

"Preferred Options" is the second stage of preparing the Core Strategy. It sets out a vision of the sort of place that the County should be in 2030 and eight objectives for getting there. This is based on what people have told us they want to see and on all the data we have gathered. The main 'Preferred Options' document then sets out some of the policies that we think need to be put in place for the vision to work.

What are we asking?

At this stage we would like your opinion on how we plan to guide development in the County in future. You may like to answer some of the questions that we pose or simply comment on the draft policies that we have drawn up. Don't forget, we have based these policies, in part, on views already received.

There will also be further opportunities to comment as the plan takes shape. In summer 2013 we will be asking people to comment on the level of housing and economic development needed across Northumberland, as well as the future Green Belt. After that we will produce a final draft Core Strategy and consult you again on that.

Objectives

The eight objectives below will form the basis for delivering the vision set out opposite. (They are not in priority order):

- **Objective 1:** To place sustainable development and responsible future economic growth at the heart of planning decisions in Northumberland;
- **Objective 2:** To meet Northumberland's objectively assessed development needs and demands including: new homes, employment space, health and community services, and infrastructure;
- **Objective 3:** To maintain and create sustainable communities throughout Northumberland to support health, social and cultural well-being for all including responding to the needs and opportunities created by an ageing population;
- **Objective 4:** To facilitate investment which stimulates employment opportunities and supports job retention in a resilient and strong Northumberland economy;
- **Objective 5:** To make Northumberland resilient to climate change and contribute to mitigating against its effects, whilst also creating sustainable job opportunities in green industries;
- **Objective 6:** To protect and enhance Northumberland's distinctive and valued natural, historic and built environment;
- **Objective 7:** To manage the prudent use of Northumberland's natural resources, including minerals, energy, land, existing built fabric and water while producing less waste and minimising adverse impacts on communities and the environment;
- **Objective 8:** To ensure all development makes best use of, and safeguards, Northumberland's infrastructure securing necessary up-grades and promotes sustainable modes of transport where appropriate.



Sustainable Development

Under National planning policy, the Core Strategy has to allow for "sustainable development". This means that new building should normally be accepted where it will not damage the environment, communities, or the economy in the longer term.

Our preferred policy on sustainable development is to support this approach by ensuring that new building takes account of the eight objectives above. Wherever possible new areas of development should: help the local economy or help to meet the need for new housing and community facilities; it should be well designed, while making efficient use of resources (e.g. land, water, minerals and buildings) and take account of climatic change.

How much growth?

It is important to decide if the vision and sustainable planning objectives will best be met simply by planning for Northumberland's existing population or whether also to allow for an element of growth to boost the local economy and add vitality to the community.

Our preferred approach is to plan for increases in building in certain places where the needs of Northumberland residents and workers are not being met, while, overall, aiming for population stability. In addition we propose to make an allowance for some additional growth to bring about regeneration where this is needed. This approach received most support during the Issues and Options consultation.

Delivery Areas

The Council proposes to divide Northumberland into four different 'Delivery Areas' so that development is guided according to the distinct characteristics of sections of the County. They are shown on the map but, in practice, the boundaries are not meant to be rigid. Even with these delivery areas, a countywide approach will still be taken on many planning issues.

North Northumberland Delivery Area

Contains the historic market towns of Berwick-upon-Tweed and Alnwick, as well as the key service centres of Belford, Rothbury, Seahouses and Wooler.

Includes Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site, as well as most of the North Northumberland Heritage Coast. It borders the part of the Northumberland National Park that contains the Cheviot Hills.

The Core Strategy will help tackle issues including:

- the high proportion of older residents and low average incomes;
- high levels of second homes – especially along the coastal strip;
- the effects of tourism on internationally important nature sites; and
- remoteness from both Edinburgh and Tyneside, while both do still have an influence on the area.

West Northumberland Delivery Area

Centred on the small town of Haltwhistle and including also the key rural service centres of Bellingham, Haydon Bridge and Allendale. Includes parts of North Pennines AONB and Hadrian's Wall World Heritage site, as well as Kielder Water and Forest Park. The area straddles the Northumberland National Park.

The Core Strategy will help tackle issues including:

- Difficult access to and from areas away from the east-west 'Tyne Gap' transport corridor.
- The relatively low level of investment in new jobs and housing, even during boom times, due to the distance from main regional centres.
- Low average earnings of those in work coupled with an ageing population;
- The need to strike a balance between opportunities to increase tourism in the North Pennines and close to Hadrian's Wall, and the need to protect the environment.
- The tourism potential at Kielder despite its remoteness.

Central Northumberland Delivery Area

Contains the historic market towns of Morpeth and Hexham, and the locally important town of Prudhoe, as well as the key service centres of Ponteland and Corbridge.

Includes much of the Green Belt that protects Tyneside from urban sprawl, as well as parts of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage site and a large proportion of Northumberland's lowland, farmed countryside.

The Core Strategy will help tackle issues including:

- Balancing different aspects of the roles of the market towns – as centres for wide rural areas and as places where commuters and retired people choose to live.
- The additional role of Morpeth as a growth location and better linking it with south-east Northumberland.
- High house prices;
- Maintaining the important role of the Green Belt including defining its extension around Morpeth;
- Pressure for opencast coal extraction in parts of the area east and south of Morpeth and also south of Prudhoe.



Key to Delivery Areas

- North Northumberland
- West Northumberland
- Central Northumberland
- South-East Northumberland

South-east Northumberland Delivery Area

The most densely populated part of Northumberland with the main towns of Blyth, Cramlington, Ashington, Bedlington and Amble. The smaller settlements of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea and Seaton Delaval perform an important role as service centres.

Contains many of Northumberland's important centres of employment including industry and business parks and, in Blyth, the National Renewable Energy Centre (with Enterprise Zone status). Other key activities include the port of Blyth, the fishing industry at Amble and opencast coal. The area has seen long-term decline of traditional industries – most recently, the closure of the aluminium smelter at Lynemouth.

The Core Strategy will help tackle issues including:

- Realising proposed growth locations – regenerating Blyth, and Ashington and maintaining a sub-regional employment role for Cramlington;
- Tackling deprivation and poorer quality housing that are a longer term legacy of the loss of traditional industries;
- Pressure for coal extraction especially in the northern part of the area;
- The opportunity to reverse the decline in public transport through reintroducing passengers on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Line;
- Strategic employment sites - West Hartford and 'BEREZ', the Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone.



Levels of development in towns, villages and beyond

Previous plans for Northumberland have tended to direct new house building to existing towns and larger villages, and away from smaller villages which generally have few services of their own. Following the Issues and Options consultation, we are now proposing a more flexible approach that could help sustain rural communities. This will still involve most new homes being built in the main towns and service centres, especially Blyth, Cramlington, Ashington and Morpeth but also the other, rural market towns and more local service centres (large villages).

However, in smaller rural settlements, schemes of an appropriate scale would also be allowed, particularly if they would meet local needs and help maintain or enhance local services and facilities.

We would still protect the countryside from widespread new development.

This approach recognises that there are clusters of small villages which, between them, can offer an array of services.

Other issues across the County

The Preferred Options document contains many other important issues and we would like as many people as possible to look through the document and comment on how the issues and draft policies affect you. Issues include:

- Supplying enough affordable or specialist homes to meet the needs of residents
- Finding land to accommodate new jobs, houses and services
- Keeping our town centres vibrant and serving the needs of local people and visitors
- Meeting the need for minerals and energy development without damaging the environment
- Making our buildings more energy efficient and recycling waste
- Preventing flooding and planning against its impacts
- Improving communications including broadband connections
- Keeping important services as accessible as possible
- Conserving the natural and historic environment for future generations
- Providing better access to open space and countryside



How to take part



When?

The Preferred Options consultation period runs from 6 February 2013 to 20 March 2013.

How to see the Preferred Options in full

The full Preferred Options document is online at www.northumberland.gov.uk/corestrategy.

The document can be viewed in paper form in all libraries and in Council planning offices at County Hall, Morpeth; Allerburn House, Alnwick; and Hadrian House, Hexham. Your local Town or Parish Council will also have a copy.



Drop-ins and Workshops

We are holding seven drop-in sessions across the County, where you can chat with Council officers about the plan. Sessions will run from 10.30am to 8.00pm.

- Tuesday 12th February. Blyth - Blyth Community Enterprise Centre, Quayside, NE24 3AG.
- Tuesday 19th February. Morpeth - Town Hall, Market Place, NE61 1LZ.
- Wednesday 20th February. Alnwick - St James's Centre, Pottergate NE66 1JW.
- Thursday 21st February. Haltwhistle - The Library, Westgate, NE49 0AX.
- Wednesday 27th February. Ashington - Hirst Welfare Centre, Alexandra Road, NE63 9HN.
- Thursday 28th February. Berwick-upon-Tweed - The William Elder Building, 56 - 58 Castlegate, TD15 1JT.
- Thursday 7th March. Hexham - Hexham Auction Mart, Tyne Green, NE46 3SG.

During each of the drop-ins, workshop discussions will be held between 11.00am and 1.00pm and again between 6.00pm and 8.00pm. If you want to attend these you will need to register using the contact details overleaf.

In addition, separate sessions on particular topics will take place at Choppington Social Welfare Centre, Colliery Road, Choppington, NE62 5SS, as follows:

- Monday 11th March, 10.00am to 12.00pm - Renewable Energy
- Monday 11th March, 2.00pm to 4.00pm - Sustainable Communities
- Friday 15th March, 10.00am to 12.00pm - The Natural and Historic Environment

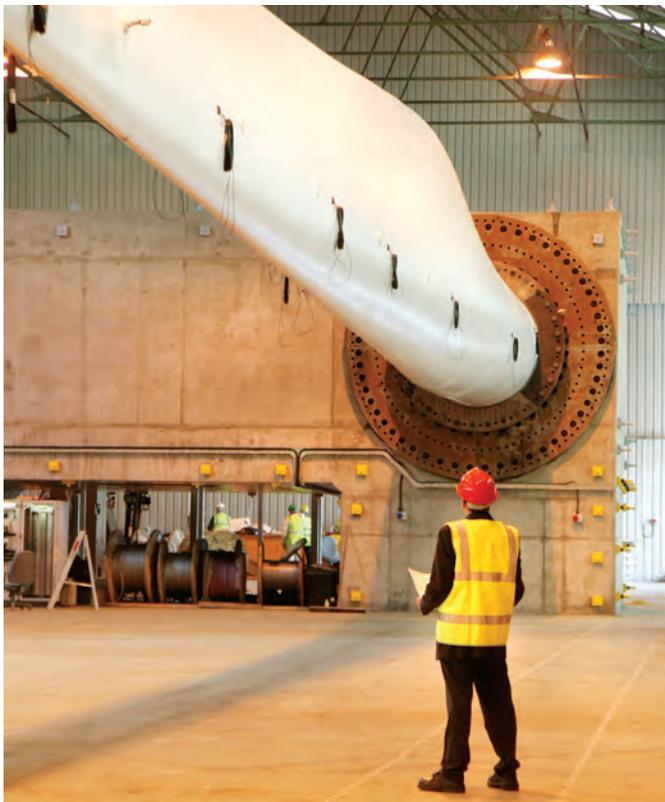
If you would like to attend these topic based workshop sessions please register for them using the contact details overleaf.

How to comment

The Council is encouraging people to submit comments online using a simple online form but you can also comment by email or letter. If commenting online and you submitted comments during the Issues and Options consultation, please use the same log-in details you used previously. If you have not previously submitted comments, you will need to complete a short registration process.

What happens next?

Further work is currently being carried out to look at levels of housing and economic development needed to help deliver the vision and objectives and if any changes are needed to the Green Belt. There will be consultation on the results of this work in summer 2013. Then, in the autumn, we will produce a draft Core Strategy and consult again on this before submitting the document to the Government early in 2014. Again, there will be an opportunity to comment on the submission document. During 2014 there will be a "Public Examination" under an independent Inspector before the Core Strategy is finally adopted in early 2015.



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