

Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 9 October 2013

NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL PLAN – CORE STRATEGY HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT AND GREEN BELT PREFERRED OPTIONS

Report of the Corporate Director of Local Services: Barry Rowland
Policy Board Member: Councillor Allan Hepple

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the preparation of the Core Strategy, and outline the strategic approach of the next consultation document covering draft Housing, Employment and Green Belt policy. The report highlights results of the evidence base work and provides a further opportunity for Members to input to the Core Strategy.

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Note and comment on the strategic approach of the consultation on draft housing, employment and Green Belt policy;**
- 2. Note the next steps and key milestones (as set out within section 8); and**
- 3. Note and comment on the proposed approach to consultation (as set out within section 9)**

Key Issues:

1. There has been a significant level of evidence work to inform the Core Strategy particularly in relation to housing and employment. This has highlighted that there is not a one size fits all approach for a County as diverse as Northumberland.
2. The County faces a number of challenges and opportunities which the Core Strategy will need to consider and address. A key issue is the projected loss of working age population and the impact of this on the ability to strengthen and diversify the economy of Northumberland as well as supporting the future sustainability of communities.
3. If housing development continues to be delivered across Northumberland in the way it has over the last 5 years this could result in an unbalanced distribution of new development and unsustainable population change across the County.
4. In addition to providing an approach that supports the growth of the economy it is vital that housing in Northumberland must compliment, and not constrain the economic growth aspirations for the County. Specifically the policies in the Core Strategy must seek to boost the supply of housing to retain and attract families into Northumberland, increase the labour force and support diverse and resilient communities.

4. In order to demonstrate that the County's plans are deliverable, the Core Strategy also needs to identify appropriate housing and employment sites and consider where there is likely to be a need to remove land from the Green Belt. In addition, the Core Strategy needs to define appropriate inner and outer Green Belt boundaries around Morpeth.

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NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL PLAN – CORE STRATEGY HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT AND GREEN BELT PREFERRED OPTIONS

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The first significant level of public engagement on the emerging Core Strategy was the Issues and Options consultation which took place between May and August 2012 over a 12 week period. There were substantial levels of engagement during the consultation period.
- 1.2 The next stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy was developing the 'Preferred Options' document. The responses to the Issues and Options consultation highlighted that there was a requirement for a significant amount of work on the housing and employment evidence base before housing numbers and employment land requirements could be accurately defined.
- 1.3 Consultation on Stage 1 of a Preferred Options document took place during February and March 2013. The Stage 1 consultation document did not include housing numbers, or policies for employment and Green Belt as additional detailed work was still being undertaken. The Stage 1 consultation proposed draft policies for all other relevant issues, including: renewable energy, minerals, waste, built and natural environment, transport and community facilities. It advised that there would be further consultation on Stage 2 of the Preferred Options, covering housing, employment and Green Belt policies later in 2013.
- 1.4 The next stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy is engagement on Stage 2 of the 'Preferred Options' which proposes draft policies for housing, employment and the Green Belt.

Member and Officer input

- 1.5 Given the strategic importance of the Core Strategy, since work started following Local Government Reorganisation in 2009, the cross party LDF Member Working Group has provided a significant and important input. In addition, at each stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy all Member workshops have taken place to help inform and raise awareness of the Core Strategy. Most recently, an all Member workshop, covering the emerging housing, employment and Green Belt policies, took place on the 11 September 2013. This is currently being followed up with 3 further area based workshops for Members. There are also a number of officer groups which input to the preparation of the document. These include: a Steering Group, led by the Corporate Director of Local Services including the Deputy Chief Executive, Corporate Director of Adult Services and the Head of Development Services; a Project Team and a Stakeholder Group.

Scope of the consultation

- 1.6 The Stage 2 Preferred Options consultation document will identify the Council's preferred policy approach to housing, employment and Green Belt. The consultation document will:
 - Define the preferred levels of housing and economic growth required;

- Define the broad distribution of development;
- Propose the policy approach to Green Belt, which will include identifying:
 - the locations where land will be required to be deleted from the Green Belt, in order to deliver the preferred approach;
 - the preferred boundary for the Green Belt north of Morpeth; and
- Identify reasonable alternatives that have been considered as part of defining the preferred option and the potential impact of alternative options.

1.7 It will be important as part of the consultation to clearly explain the relationship of the document with the earlier Stage 1 Preferred Options consultation. The Stage 1 Core Strategy Preferred Options document, published for consultation in February 2013, defined the emerging overarching spatial vision and objectives and identified 57 draft policies for comment covering a wide range of issues including renewable energy, minerals, waste, built and natural environment, transport and community facilities. The Stage 2 consultation document should therefore be read alongside the Stage 1 document. If as a result of the proposals within the Stage 2 consultation document people wish to make further comments on the Stage 1 document the Council will also encourage additional comments.

2. The Evidence Base

Background

- 2.1 In order to strengthen the existing evidence base and inform the preferred strategy for population, housing, employment and Green Belt the Council:
- Commissioned population and household modelling work to enable different growth scenarios to be tested both at the Countywide and local level. The local level areas correspond to those used within the Housing Needs Survey;
 - Commissioned a refresh of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment to take into account the impact of policy changes such as Welfare Reform legislation, 2011 Census data, and more up to date housing market data;
 - Updated the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment;
 - Updated employment land availability and land take up information to inform likely future needs and demands;
 - Developed a methodology for undertaking a strategic land review in order to establish whether there is suitable development land within or adjoining Main Towns and Service Centres to deliver the level of development proposed by the strategy; and
 - Carried out further assessment of appropriate options for the inner and outer Green Belt boundaries to the extension around Morpeth.

Population profile

2.3 The population is ageing, by 2031¹, 31% of the population of Northumberland is projected to be over 65, the second highest proportion in England (compared to 24% in the North East and 22% in England). Northumberland has the lowest number of children under 16 in the region (17%), and there are high levels (53%) of out migration from people aged 25-64. People in the 15 to 24 age group leave the County, predominantly for further and higher education. The Council acknowledges

¹ 2010 Sub National Population Projections

that an ageing population will create new employment opportunities for example through the expansion of support services and increased levels of disposable income. However there are potentially high costs to the social and economic well-being of local communities. Unless future local policy seeks to rebalance the composition of the population, it will continue to age. Net inward migration is the only reason why the County's population has increased over recent years; this is largely as a result of older people moving into the county who are approaching or at retirement age.

- 2.4 Due to these demographic and migration patterns it is predicted that the County's population is projected to increase by only 4.2% over the plan period (from 312,500 in 2011 to 325,700 in 2031); by comparison over the same period the UK population is forecast to increase by 15.3%². If this does occur, in line with past trends and the age structure of the population it could result in a shrinking working age population and a reduction in the number of families in Northumberland, impacting on the sustainability and resilience of Northumberland's communities. As a result, there could be a consequent reduction in the ability of Northumberland to provide a labour force to existing or potential employers.

Impact of different policy approaches

- 2.5 To inform the long term requirement for housing within Northumberland a range of different scenarios have been considered to inform the preferred strategy. The Core Strategy the Council is required to consider a number of reasonable alternative approaches for housing growth, a summary of the possible impacts based on: population projections, projecting forward past delivery and continuation of current policy are described below. Table 1 provides a comparison of the impact of the alternatives in terms of population change.

Sub national population projections

- 2.5.1 The 2010 sub national population projections indicate that between 2011 and 2031 the population of Northumberland would increase by 4.2% (13,300). To sustain this population increase would require an additional 812 dwellings to be built each year, equating to 16,240 over the plan period. When considering the impact of the projections at a local level, this indicates an unbalanced and unstable population change across the County. For example Amble, Cramlington, Haltwhistle and Morpeth, Main Towns within the County, are projected to lose population over the plan period. Compared to significant increases projected in some of the Service Centres e.g. Belford/ Seahouses, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea and Rothbury.

Continuation of past housing delivery

- 2.5.2 An assessment of past housing delivery rates over the past 5 years shows that an average of 780 dwellings has been built per year across the County. If this level of delivery continued forward to 2031, it would provide for only 15,600 new houses. This could result in an even lower population increase of 3.7% (11,700). The assessment of the possible impact of continuing past delivery at the local level suggests a similar result to the impact of the sub national population projections. The Main Towns of Amble, Bedlington, Cramlington, Haltwhistle and Prudhoe are projected to lose population as are the Service Centres of Corbridge, Guidepost/ Stakeford/ Choppington, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea and Rothbury. With significant

² 2010 Sub National Population Projections

increases projected in the Service Centres of Allendale/ Haydon Bridge, and Belford/ Seahouses.

Continuation of current housing numbers

2.5.3 Current housing numbers for Northumberland are those defined within the Regional Spatial Strategy. This equates to 875 dwellings per year, resulting in 17,500 over the plan period. Although this is higher than both required by national projections and past delivery, it still may only result in a population increase of 5.1% (16,000). The assessment of impact at the local level shows that all of the Main Towns, except Cramlington, would show an increase in population. However, there is a wide range of increase projected from only 0.1% in Prudhoe to 20% in Blyth. All but three of the Service Centres show a decline in population.

Table 1 Projected population change

	Projected Population Change		
	SNPP 2010	Past Delivery	Current housing numbers
Main Town			
Alnwick ³	+12.2%	+6.4%	+0.8%
Amble	-4.6%	-9.1%	+10.5%
Ashington	+6.4%	+0.4%	+12.0%
Bedlington	+8.9%	-5.8%	+6.1%
Berwick-upon-Tweed	+10.7%	+12.6%	+13.0%
Blyth	+10.8%	+6.5%	+20.5%
Cramlington	-16.4%	-8.2%	-2.3%
Haltwhistle	-2.2%	-4.4%	+2.7%
Hexham	+4.8%	+0.5%	+1.5%
Morpeth ⁴	-1.6%	+5.2%	+7.9%
Prudhoe	+8.1%	-6.6%	+0.1%
Service Centre			
Allendale/Haydon Bridge	+5.2%	+16.7%	-1.0%
Belford/Seahouses	+12.9%	+37.1%	-1.2%
Bellingham	+7.2%	+3.4%	-6.9%
Corbridge	+1.7%	-7.0%	-1.6%
Guidepost/Stakeford/Choppington	-2.9%	-2.5%	+8.1%
Newbiggin-by-the-Sea	+16.0%	-0.5%	+20.8%
Ponteland	+2.3%	+0.9%	+3.7%
Rothbury	+15.6%	-2.7%	-1.3%
Seaton Valley	+3.4%	+8.8%	-2.4%
Wooler	+1.2%	+4.2%	-0.1%

3. The preferred strategy – planning for growth

3.1 The Core Strategy needs to define the level of growth that is required to deliver the vision which was set out within Stage 1 of the Preferred Options:

³ Figures presented are combined figures for Alnwick and its hinterland to reflect that the Alnwick Neighbourhood Plan covers adjoining Parishes.

⁴ Figures presented are combined figures for Morpeth and its hinterland to reflect that the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan covers adjoining Parishes.

By 2031 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.

- 3.2 In order to deliver the strategy for the Northumberland economy as set out within the emerging Growth and Resilience Framework and to support the creation of 3,000 new private sector jobs in the County, the Core Strategy will:

Plan positively to grow and diversity the Northumberland economy by making it an attractive and competitive place to start, grow and invest in a broad range of businesses, and so increase the number and quality of jobs available to raise levels of employment of Northumberland residents, and attract working age migrants.

- 3.3 Particular emphasis will be placed on:

- Attracting inward investment by globally connected, export orientated companies and supporting initiatives to grow local businesses by connecting them to new supply chains and markets;
- Supporting the growth and clustering of Northumberland's key economic sectors - low carbon and environmental industries, energy, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, engineering, and tourism;
- Growing the number of businesses and high value jobs in professional business services;
- The development of knowledge based and creative industries, building on the attractiveness of Northumberland's lifestyle to highly skilled, mobile labour;
- Increasing the number of local business start-ups;
- Developing the supporting infrastructure needed by the County's businesses to grow;
- Improving skills levels of residents to match the needs of expanding economic sectors.

- 3.4 This will be achieved by:

- Providing a portfolio of high quality sites in the right locations which are attractive to the market;
- Protecting established centres of B-class activity and available sites in the best locations to attract development, and promote a mix of employment generating activity on other employment sites;
- Supporting locations in the South East and Central Delivery Areas as cost effective alternatives to the Tyneside market for industrial development;
- Providing a diverse range of interconnected sites around the Blyth Estuary to provide for growth of the strategically important sectors – low carbon and environmental goods, energy generation, and offshore engineering;
- The development of high quality office accommodation at Northumberland Business Park, and key locations in the other main towns;
- Supporting the creation and expansion of hubs for business services and creative industries in the County's historic market towns, rural business developments, and through more home run enterprises;
- Supporting spatially initiatives to improve skills levels in Northumberland's resident work force;
- Supporting the growth of tourism facilities and accommodation;

- Supporting improvements to transport and telecommunications infrastructure, and the County's gateways to international growth – The Ports of Blyth and Berwick, and Newcastle International Airport.

3.5 The strategy for housing in Northumberland will compliment, the economic growth aspirations for the County. Specifically the policies in the Core Strategy must seek to boost significantly the supply of housing to retain and attract families into Northumberland, increase the labour force and support diverse and resilient communities.

4. Location of development

Delivery Areas

- 4.1 The strategic approach to the location of development is based around four Delivery Areas (see appendix 1). The Delivery Area boundaries were proposed as part of Stage 1 of the Preferred Options consultation. They reflect areas which are similar in terms of their social, economic, and cultural characteristics. They take account of the roles and relationship between towns and villages across Northumberland and the interaction of places with adjoining areas, particularly Tyneside and Scotland, using more than a reliance on housing markets. There was positive feedback from the last consultation on the proposed Areas.
- 4.2 Dividing Northumberland into different areas for the delivery of new development will allow the Council to develop policies which are relevant to each area and which describes the way in which development will be distributed across the area. The overall aim is to guide the delivery of development according to local need, taking into account: the scale and function of individual towns and villages, their shared characteristics and capacity to accommodate additional development, functional relationships and connections with their hinterlands.
- 4.3 The Delivery Areas have defined boundaries in order to enable the Council to monitor development in these areas. To ensure consistency and correlation with the Housing Needs Study, the boundaries comprise groupings of the 'sub areas' used in the Countywide Housing Needs Study.

Distribution of development

- 4.4 Stage 1 of the Core Strategy Preferred Options document proposed:
- To focus the majority of development in the **Main Towns** of: Alnwick, Amble, Ashington, Bedlington, Berwick upon Tweed, Blyth, Cramlington, Haltwhistle, Hexham, Morpeth and Prudhoe and the **Service Centres** of: Allendale, Belford, Bellingham, Corbridge, Haydon Bridge, Newbiggin by the Sea, Ponteland, Rothbury, Seahouses, Seaton Delaval and Wooler;
 - To take advantage of key locations in Blyth, Cramlington, Ashington and Morpeth to support the renewal and revitalisation of their respective communities by identifying and supporting targeted levels of development; and
 - A flexible approach to new development outside the Main Towns and Service Centres.
- 4.6 The Stage 2 consultation document does not propose to change this approach.

5. Level of economic development required to deliver the strategy

5.1 The NPPF sets out that the planning system should do everything it can to support economic growth, and have a clear economic vision and strategy for the area. Central to this is providing the right sites in the right locations based on objectively assessed needs of business, including providing for new sectors and business clusters. However, NPPF also stresses that policy needs to be adaptable to change and to accommodate unanticipated need, and so should be flexible to other uses on poorly performing allocated land. The strategy and policies for Northumberland therefore need to be based on an understanding of business needs, and the supply of land sufficient and suitable to provide for identified needs.

5.3 In order to deliver the strategy for Northumberland the evidence base has identified the need for the following land to be allocated through the Core Strategy:

	South East	Central	North	West	Total
Strategic Employment Land	221	0	0	0	221ha
Land Protected for B-class use	71.3	24.2	15.1	2	112.6ha
Proposed new land for B-class uses.	5	18	5	0	28ha
Mixed use Employment	28	7.6	4.3	0.8	40.7ha
Retained employment land suitable for other land uses.	1.2	0	3	0	4.2ha
Land for Airport related uses.	0	15	0	0	15ha
Total Available Land	326.5ha	64.8	27.4ha	2.8ha	421.5ha

5.4 The proposed Employment Land Portfolio would provide 421.5ha of available land. This is much higher than the 133-161ha identified in the Employment Land Review; however, this includes the strategic BEREZ allocation of around 207ha. This is intended to provide for specific emerging sectors, requiring large amounts of land. For example if RWE realise their long term plans to build a clean coal fired power station this would use up most of the land.

6. Level of housing required to deliver the strategy

6.1 As explained in section 2, in order to identify the housing requirement, the impact of different development scenarios have been tested both at the Northumberland level and at a local level to understand the potential impact – this is particularly important given the strategy to focus the majority of new development in main towns and service centres, with additional growth in key locations.

- 6.2 As a result of the diversity of the County, this work has highlighted that there is not a one size fits all approach across Northumberland. Table 1 in section 2 identifies the impact of different approaches in the Main Towns and Service Centres.
- 6.3 To seek to ensure that the impact would be as intended by the strategy and that the level of development proposed is appropriate across Northumberland an assessment of the impact of different growth scenarios has been considered at each of the 34 local areas. When assessing this impact, consideration has been given to a number of issues, including:
- The role and function of the area e.g. Main Town, Service Centre, rural area, not only in relation to housing;
 - Impact of past policy on the delivery of new homes;
 - Projected population change;
 - Housing demand;
 - Land suitability and availability; and
 - Constraints to development e.g. flood risk.
- 6.4 The results of this local level analysis have informed decisions on the scale of housing required at the County wide level to deliver the preferred strategy. The preferred option for the scale of housing in Northumberland is to plan for the provision of around 24,000 new dwellings (average of 1,200 dwellings per annum) over the plan period; resulting in an increase in population across Northumberland of 10%. For each Delivery Area this would equate to:
- South East Northumberland Delivery Area: almost 13,000 dwellings, equating to around 650 per year, resulting in population growth of around 11% over the plan period;
 - Central Northumberland Delivery Area: around 6,000 dwellings, equating to around 300 on average per year, resulting in population growth of around 11% over the plan period;
 - North Northumberland Delivery Area: almost 4,000 dwellings, equating to almost 200 on average per year, resulting in population growth of almost 7%;
 - West Northumberland Delivery Area: around 1,500 dwellings, equating to 75 on average per year, resulting in population growth of around 6%.

7. Preferred approach to the Green Belt

Background

- 7.1 Nationally, the Government attaches great importance to the Green Belt and through the NPPF sets out the policy approach to Green Belt. The NPPF states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and that a key attribute of land in the Green Belt is its openness. NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances; through the preparation or review of Local Plans, and that their boundaries need to have permanence enduring beyond the plan period.

Existing boundaries

- 7.2 All consultation to date on the Core Strategy has highlighted that because existing Green Belt boundaries around settlements are tightly drawn, there may not be sufficient capacity to accommodate the level growth required to deliver the vision set out within the Core Strategy. In order to reflect the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development, it was recognised that it may be necessary to undertake localised boundary reviews to provide settlements with sufficient space for economic and/or residential development.
- 7.3 In order to deliver the level of economic and housing development required to deliver the preferred strategy, Hexham, Prudhoe, and Ponteland will require land to be deleted from the Green Belt. Feedback on the general locations will be sought through the consultation.

Green Belt extension

- 7.4 An extension to the Tyne and Wear Green Belt around Morpeth was identified in the 1996 Northumberland Structure Plan, Regional Planning Guidance in 2002, with the Policy S5 of the revised Northumberland Structure Plan (2005) defining the general extent.
- 7.5 The 2008 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) sought to continue to safeguard the countryside from encroachment, check the unrestricted sprawl of Tyne and Wear and maintain the broad extent of the Green Belt with detailed boundaries to be defined in relevant Local Plans, around Morpeth. When RSS was revoked, the saved Structure Plan Policy S5 relating to the Green Belt at Morpeth was retained by the Government to enable the extension of the Green Belt around Morpeth, reflecting the Government's commitment to safeguarding Green Belt protection.

Morpeth inner Green Belt boundary

- 7.6 As Green Belt is a long term planning tool their boundaries are required to have permanence over a long period, around 30 years. The Morpeth inner Green Belt boundary therefore needs to provide for sufficient capacity to meet strategic land requirements, both in the current plan period and subsequent plan periods.
- 7.7 Alternative inner Green Belt boundary options for Morpeth, have been identified and assessed. The assessment work has identified:
- the eastern and western boundaries should be drawn tightly to the existing settlement edges to maintain and protect the strong River Wansbeck green infrastructure corridor and setting of Morpeth;
 - the preferred option for the northern boundary, will allow for most development to place to the north of Morpeth, including the previously developed St George's Hospital and Northgate Hospital sites, in association with the recently Government funded Morpeth Northern Bypass, which is expected to provide better access to promote economic regeneration and improve social inclusion across South East Northumberland; and
 - In relation to the southern boundary, the preferred option would allow for some limited long term development potential whilst retaining the rural character of the rising ground to the south and ensuring separation from Clifton and Hepscoth.

Morpeth outer Green Belt boundary

- 7.8 As defined within adopted policy, the purpose of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth is to:
- Preserve the special setting and character of Morpeth;
 - Prevent Morpeth merging with neighbouring settlements;
 - Assist regeneration of main settlements and coalfield villages in South East Northumberland beyond the Green Belt; and
 - Safeguard the countryside from encroachment.
- 7.9 Although Policy S5 did not define the detailed outer boundary, the policy provided a detailed description of where the boundary should be defined. However, given the length of time that has elapsed since the adoption of Policy S5 and the importance of having a robust evidence base and methodology to underpin the emerging Core Strategy; a range of alternative boundary options to Policy S5 were tested against the nationally established purposes of Green Belt and the vision of the emerging Core Strategy.
- 7.10 The results of the assessment identified that all of the options would deliver the long established purposes of the strategic extension around Morpeth. However, the preferred boundary option, which is tighter than that proposed by Structure Plan Policy S5, would allow for appropriate sustainable development in smaller rural settlements to take place. This will therefore support the development of a diverse and strong rural economy. Development in the wider area, beyond the Green Belt boundary would be controlled through the use of both national and local policies which would restrict inappropriate development in the open countryside and seek to protect its character.

8. Next steps/ key milestones

- 8.1 The key next steps in the preparation of the Core Strategy are set out in the table below:

Date	Milestone/ Meeting
21 October	Special Policy Board (alongside draft Housing Strategy) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft Housing, Employment and Green Belt Preferred Options document• Draft revised Statement of Community Involvement• Viability methodology• Draft scope of Delivery Document• Updated Local Development Scheme
31 Oct – 2 January 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation – 9 weeks• Ongoing work/ Member input to revision of other policies
January - February 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback key issues from Housing/ Employment/ Green Belt consultation• Refining policy approaches
April - May 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation on full draft Core Strategy
Summer 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submission Consultation (publication stage)
Autumn 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal submission
Winter 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examination
Spring 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adoption

9. Engagement Plan

Summary of previous engagement activities

- 9.1 It is considered that previous engagement on the emerging Core Strategy has been successful in terms of the level of engagement at events, written responses and feedback particularly from Town and Parish Councils.
- 9.2 Consultation on Issues and Options stage was over a 12 week period, between May and August 2010, it resulted in over 12,600 comments from over 1,150 individuals/ organisations and included. Over the consultation period 33 drop-in sessions were held during daytime, evenings and weekends in 21 different locations across the County. At least 950 people attended the drop-in sessions. In addition, officers attended 23 Parish Council meetings / clusters of Parish Councils, organised at the request of those Parish Councils.
- 9.3 Following the Issues and Options consultation feedback sessions were held with Town and Parish Councils to share and validate the responses received to the consultation. Feedback at these sessions was generally positive about the extent of work undertaken in looking to engage with communities and the efforts made by the Council to get people to make their views known. These sessions helped to validate the general nature of representations through an interactive voting system.
- 9.4 Consultation on stage 1 of the Preferred Options took place for 6 weeks during February and March 2013, it resulted in the submission of comments from 633 individuals, businesses or organisations. As a result of the short consultation period advance notification of the consultation was provided via email and on the website. 7 drop-in events were held in the main settlements, each event included two workshop sessions - one at lunchtime and one in the evening – drop in sessions were attended by 260 people and workshop sessions by 90 people. In addition, 3 topic based workshops were held towards the end of the consultation period at Choppington Welfare. These covered renewable energy; sustainable communities; and the natural and historic environment. Workshops were well attended (by over 80 people) and led to useful debate on some of the main topics covered by the Plan. Also, 8 presentations were given to Parish Council and associated groups at their request (attended by 96 people).
- 9.5 There was a good level of interest in the drop in sessions; however attendance was low at the sessions held in the South East of the County. There was more interest in the three themed workshop sessions that took place at the end of the consultation period than the workshops that were held at the same venues as the drop in sessions. The sessions requested by clusters of Town and Parish Councils were well attended.

Engagement on the Preferred Options – stage 2

- 9.6 The approach and the guiding principles used in the last rounds of engagement and consultation will form the basis for the consultation. However, it is important to recognise that consultation on policies and proposals associated with housing and employment allocations and Green Belt designation will have particular impacts in certain areas.

9.7 Consultation will to start on 31 October 2013 and run for a period of 9 weeks, ending on 2 January 2013:

- early emails to statutory and advisory consultees, Town and Parish Councils and those registered on the consultation database – at least twice before consultation period starts (end of September and mid October);
- formal consultation letters and emails - end of October 2013;
- press releases to be drip fed with at least 3 provided before consultation formally commences – requires quotes from lead Members and Chief Officers where relevant based on progress towards formal consultation;
- publicity material to be professionally designed and tested for accuracy and clarity on content and purpose prior to release;
- publicity material to be made available at a range of venues – more than the usual libraries and council offices;
- Information sharing drop-in events (3-6pm, Monday-Thursday) in all 11 Main Towns, plus Ponteland followed by workshops by registration (6.30-8.30pm);
- Separate workshop to be held at a central location for wider stakeholders;
- Offer will be given to present proposals to Parish Councils - encourage groups of Parish Councils to group together so that additional requests are manageable;
- Easy to read guide to be prepared and made available on the website and at key locations such as Council offices, libraries and info points; and other suitable accessible venues;
- Hard copy of the consultation documents to be sent to all Town and Parish Councils;
- Limit use of social media to awareness raising about start of consultation event with continuing publicity throughout the consultation period signposting people to the relevant pages on our website;

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Northumberland Core Strategy Preferred Options Document, February 2012

Northumberland Core Strategy Issues and Options Document, May 2012.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy:	The Core Strategy when adopted will form part of the Council's policy framework.
Finance and value for money:	Plan preparation costs will be met from within existing Council's budgets.
Human Resources:	Work on the Core Strategy involves both Council Officers and Members.
Property:	The adopted Core Strategy will apply to land and buildings owned by the County Council as they apply to land and buildings owned by others.
Equalities	The Northumberland Core Strategy Preferred Options document was been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. The Assessment was published alongside the Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation document.
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment:	The preparation of the Northumberland Local Development Framework has been the subject of a risk

	assessment.
Crime & Disorder:	Crime and disorder considerations will be taken into account in the preparation of the Core Strategy.
Customer Considerations:	The Core Strategy once adopted will bring together and supersede many older planning policies from the former county and district council planning documents into a single document, ensuring consistency in planning policies across the county and thereby making it easier for the public to understand.
Carbon Reduction:	The Northumberland Core Strategy Preferred Options document includes policies relating to climate change and carbon reduction.
Consultation:	Engagement work has already taken place on the preparation of the Northumberland LDF Core Strategy through the Issues and Options and Preferred Options Consultation. The Northumberland LDF Core Strategy documents are considered by the LDF Members Working Group and the Senior Management Team. The Northumberland LDF Core Strategy Preferred Options (stage 2) Consultation Document will be the subject of 7 weeks consultation, in accordance with statutory requirements, the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.
Wards:	All

Appendix 1 Delivery Areas

