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North Tyneside Council Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Post Adoption Statement

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1. Introduction

1.1 This document provides the Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement for the North Tyneside Local Plan 2017 (the Local Plan), which was adopted on 20 July 2017 by North Tyneside Council. *(Currently pending Council approval, May 2017)*

1.2 The Local Plan sets out a comprehensive framework of site allocations and strategic and development management policies that will shape development in North Tyneside to 2032. Originally, North Tyneside Council was working towards the preparation of a Core Strategy and three Area Action Plans. From 2013, these documents have been combined within an emerging Local Plan.

1.3 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was undertaken whilst developing the Local Plan. The purpose of the SA was to ensure that the environmental, social and economic issues were considered throughout the development of the Local Plan with the aim of achieving sustainable development through its implementation.

1.4 The purpose of this Adoption Statement is to satisfy the legislative requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004).

2. Legislative background

2.1 European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the affects of certain plans and programmes on the environment ('the SEA Directive') states that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is mandatory for plans prepared for town and country planning and land use purposes. The SEA Directive is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), which requires the SA of local development plan documents.

2.2 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations (2012) states that a SA report must be completed for Local Plan documents in accordance with section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). In accordance with these regulations, SA, incorporating SEA was prepared completed for the North Tyneside Local Plan.

2.3 Article 9 of the SEA Directive requires that when a plan or programme is adopted, the Council makes available a statement summarising *"how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 have been taken into account in accordance with Article 8 and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with."*

2.4 This requirement in European law has been transposed into UK law through Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), which requires the responsible authority to produce a statement containing the following information as soon as reasonably practical after the adoption of a plan or programme:

- a) *How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;*
- b) *How the environmental report has been taken into account;*
- c) *How opinions expressed in response to:*

- i. The invitation referred to in Regulation 13(2)(d);*
- ii. Action taken by the responsible authority in accordance with Regulation 13(4), have been taken into account;*
- d) How the results of any consultations entered into under Regulation 14(4) have been taken into account;*
- f) The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and*
- e) The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.*

2.5 The following sections will set out how the North Tyneside Local plan has been prepared in accordance with these requirements.

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3. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Local Plan

3.1 A scoping stage is required as part of the SA. This sets out a framework for how the SA would be carried out. Scoping must, as set out in Annex 1 of the SEA Directive and Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), consider a range of environmental factors including biodiversity, human health and cultural heritage.

3.2 The SA scoping for the Local Plan is documented in a series of revised reports:

- Core Strategy Issues and Options 2006 - Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report;
- Wallsend and North Shields Area Action Plans Issues and Options 2007 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report;
- Coastal Area Action Plan Issues and Options 2009 - Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report;
- Local Plan Consultation Draft 2013 - Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report; and,
- Local Plan - Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (September 2015).

3.3 The Scoping Reports have looked at a wide range of topic areas and:

- Identified relevant international, national, regional and local policies, plans, programmes, strategies and initiatives (PPPSIs) that would have links and/or effects on the Local Plan;
- Set out what the aims and objectives of these PPPSIs are;
- Set out what the baseline situation is for North Tyneside and what the main issues are;
- Suggested how all the above together need to be addressed in the Local Plan;
- Put forward SA objectives that would measure through the SA process how well the Local Plan did address these issues.

3.4 From the August 2015 scoping exercise, 19 SA objectives were derived that were deemed sound indicators to test emerging Local Plan policies and proposed development sites against to ensure they were addressing the issues that North Tyneside faces. They cover social, environmental and economic elements.

The 19 SA objectives are:

1	To create a diversified and forward looking economy with high and stable levels of employment where everyone can share and contribute to a greater and sustainable prosperity.
2	To increase the diversity and quality of jobs.
3	To create higher and more stable levels of employment with more local jobs within the Borough, particularly in the socially deprived areas.
4	To develop further a sustainable tourism sector.
5	To improve access to a wide range of education and training opportunities.
6	To enable all people to have a choice of decent homes, in a range of tenures, sizes and types, to meet their needs, including affordable homes.
7	To create harmonious, crime free neighbourhoods with strong identities and high levels of participation in community activities.
8	To prevent disease, prolong life, promote health and support all residents to adopt healthy lifestyles, while targeting action to reduce health inequalities.
9	To afford everyone in the Borough with equality of access to the range of community facilities and services they require in meeting their needs.
10	To maintain and improve the quality of ground and surface waters.
11	Adapt to the impacts of climate change whilst addressing the contribution made by the Borough by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and maintaining good local air quality through more efficient use of resources.
12	To reduce the need to travel, encourage sustainable transport options and make the best use of existing transport infrastructure.
13	To avoid adverse effects to the areas ecological network, including designated wildlife sites and protected species, and to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
14	To reduce waste and improve waste management by encouraging re-use, recycling and

	composting.
15	To maintain and enhance areas of Green Belt and network of multifunctional green infrastructure as a community resource to support local wildlife initiatives and for amenity and recreation.
16	To preserve, conserve and enhance North Tyneside’s landscape character, cultural and historic environment, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place.
17	To reduce Flood risk to people and property.
18	To avoid the loss of the area’s best and most versatile agricultural land and bring contaminated land back into beneficial use.
19	To reduce noise pollution.

3.5 The Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England were consulted as statutory consultees during the SA Scoping stages. This ensured that the sustainability framework addressed the key environmental considerations of other organisations.

4. How the environmental report has been taken into account

4.1 An updated version of the SA (or the “environmental report”) has been prepared at each draft stage in the preparation for the Local Plan (and prior to this, the Core Strategy and Area Action Plans):

- Core Strategy Issues and Options - Sustainability Appraisal Report 2006;
- Wallsend Area Action Plan Issues and Options 2008 - Sustainability Appraisal;
- North Shields Area Action Plan Issues and Options 2008 – Sustainability Appraisal;
- Coastal Area Action Plan Issues and Options 2009 - Sustainability Appraisal;
- Core Strategy Preferred Options - Sustainability Appraisal 2010;
- Area Action Plans Preferred Options - Sustainability Appraisal 2012;
- Local Plan Consultation Draft 2013 - Sustainability Appraisal Report;
- Local Plan Consultation Draft 2015 - Sustainability Appraisal Report;
- Local Plan - Sustainability Appraisal Report (November 2015);
- Sustainability Appraisal for Local Plan (June 2016); and
- Sustainability Appraisal Report Addendum: Main Modifications (January 2017).

4.2 The Local Plan has evolved with input from the SA as an integral part of the process. Recommendations from the SA were considered alongside information from the Councils’ evidence base, and consultation responses. This process has informed both the overall scope of the Local Plan and the content of individual policies and the suitability of site allocations.

4.3 The SA process was an important tool in the early stages of plan formation. The Core Strategy Preferred Options 2010 and its associate SA reviewed and assessed potential spatial strategies, providing a steer on overall development strategy.

4.4 When assessing policies and potential development sites, the SA process considered alternative options. In many cases, alternative options were either not reasonable or not feasible, and in some cases, preferred options were assessed as having the potential for some adverse impacts. Mitigation was considered as part of the SA process; this allowed for the consideration of how adverse impacts could be reduced or avoided. This meant that in

preparing the Local Plan, thought could be given to the range of policies that must be included to provide that necessary mitigation so that when implemented as whole, it would be in the interests of sustainable development.

4.5 The Local Plan includes two strategic sites, at Killingworth Moor and Murton Gap, which together would provide approximately 50% of the Plan's housing growth. For both of the strategic sites, a "concept plan" has been prepared to give a clearer understanding to residents of the proposals and how they could support the Authority's vision for North Tyneside. The principles of sustainable development have been incorporated into their production; the conclusions of the SA reports relating to the two sites have allowed for in-depth discussions and studies on various matters that have steered the concept plan in a way that manages the sustainability "unknowns" that were assessed. This includes:

- The incorporation of new areas of formal and informal open space (including landscape buffers);
- Measures to protect, create and enhance areas for wildlife and biodiversity;
- The provision of sustainable drainage solutions to address flood risk which can be integrated with open space and biodiversity;
- The broad locations for the 'blocks' of residential development (to include employment at Killingworth Moor) that allows for the protection of those most significant landscape and built environment features;
- The specific key infrastructure requirements and broadly where these could be located. This includes the provision of a primary school for Murton Gap and both a primary and secondary school for Killingworth Moor, the key points of access into the sites and the provision of community facilities / local centres.

5. How Consultation Representations have been taken into account

5.1 The adopted Local Plan has evolved through several stages of public consultation. At each stage, consultation on the Local Plan has been accompanied by an SA report.

5.2 The key stage in initiating the SA process is the Scoping stage. In preparation of the Local Plan, five Scoping Reports have prepared and each consulted on. For each, the input of at least the statutory consultees of Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England was sought. The feedback received was, where appropriate taken into account in finalising the scope of the SA, including the SA framework and SA Objectives.

5.3 Consultation on SA reports took place alongside consultation on the emerging Plan. The consultation invited all statutory consultees, other key stakeholders and the community to comment. Throughout the various consultation exercises, very little feedback was received with regards to either the framework in which the SA was carried out or the conclusions and recommendations contained within the reports.

5.4 There have been a relatively very small number of occasions where objectors to the potential allocation of development sites have questioned the integrity and validity of the SA process. Where the SA has assessed a negative impact against one or more SA Objective, objectors have queried the acceptability of the proposals. The SA reports and the published responses to such objections make clear, however, that if the policies of the Local Plan as a whole are rigorously applied, the potential negative environmental impacts of new development will be mitigated (as referred to in paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 of this statement). Accommodating anticipated growth in housing and employment makes a strong contribution to achieving social and economic sustainability objectives, by providing new and existing residents with homes and opportunities for employment. Additionally, whilst the SA sets out a transparent assessment of the Local Plan's proposals, it cannot in itself singularly determine the particular direction the Local

Plan must take. The Local Plan fits into a hierarchy of planning documents, and is therefore influenced by Government policy that has also been subject, in some cases, to some form of SA. The Local Plan is guided by stakeholder input and suite of evidence that sets out and takes into account matters such as the aspirational objectives of the Borough, balanced against the realism and viability of the Plan being delivered.

5.5 Following a comment received about the methods employed in undertaking the SA of the Local Plan: Consultation Draft 2013, regarding the numerical approach to establishing the relative sustainability effects of policies and proposals. As a consequence an amendment was made to the framework employed in the SA of the Local Plan: Consultation Draft 2015 and subsequent versions.

5.6 The feedback helped identify that whilst seeming clear and comparable, the numerical approach (where -1 is a negative impact, 0 is a neutral impact and 1 is a positive impact and an overall impact can be derived by adding the score against each objective together) can become over-complicated, allowing for inconsistencies and a lack of clarity between the scoring of different policies/sites. Also, conclusions that are based on mathematical calculations can be too rigid in their outcomes, when the issues and impacts they represent are generally not succinct in their nature and require a more discussion-led conclusion. As a result the approach to considering the effects of proposals was amended from a numerical scoring system to a “RAG” approach. In this approach (R) red represents an envisaged negative effect, (A) amber represents an envisaged neutral or insignificant effect and (G) green represents an envisaged positive effect. The overall sustainability effect of each proposal is then taken from a general consideration of the overall balance of effects identified.

6. The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted

6.1 In accordance with the SEA Directive, it is important when assessing proposals to consider appropriate and reasonable alternatives. All aspects of the Local Plan have been considered as part of the SA process, along with alternatives.

6.2 The preparation of the Local Plan has considered alternative spatial strategies. The Core Strategy Preferred Options 2010 and associated SA reviewed and clearly set out the preferred options and reasonable alternatives that had been dismissed. Adjustments to the Spatial Strategy identified within the Core Strategy Preferred Options 2010 have taken place over subsequent preparation of the Local Plan and include:

- Incorporation of an area-specific strategy for the North West Villages, reflecting its gateway status and identified need for regeneration that emerged through engagement.
- Inclusion of the initially rejected strategic sites of Murton Gap and Killingworth Moor as part of the Spatial Strategy, to ensure the Local Plan could meet the overall housing requirement without triggering a need for review of the Green Belt.

6.3 The general strategy of distribution of development throughout the main urban area has remained. The spatial strategy put forward in the Local Plan in proposed policy S1.1 *Spatial Strategy for Sustainable Development* has been subject to the SA process. In this case, the preferred option of the spatial strategy set out in policy S1.1 was assessed as representing the more sustainable approach.

6.4 Several alternative strategies were suggested in representations but they were not assessed as representing reasonable alternative strategies and so should not be considered as such. The 2017 SA Addendum set out a summary of the alternatives that were identified as unreasonable. They are either not sufficiently distinct from the preferred strategy that has been pursued within the Local Plan to have been appraised

individually, or would be harmful to the Local Plan aim's of pursuing an approach that would ensure least environment impact. In this context at least two of the suggested alternatives relate to development of the Green Belt and Site Selection.

6.5 During 2014, Planning Policy officers worked closely with specialist consultants (Arup, Edge Analytics and Arc4) to provide expert, robust and impartial support in strengthening the Authority's evidence of employment and housing needs. From this work, 15 growth options were prepared. It was deemed important to assess the alternative options above through the SA process, so the potential sustainability impacts of each could be considered. Through this process, and through consideration of the evidence informing the various growth options, eight were not considered as representing a reasonable alternative to planning for growth in North Tyneside or would not provide a substantially alternative scenario for growth to be considered.

6.6 From the remaining options, three broad growth options were identified as potentially reasonable alternatives for the Borough over the Plan period to 2032. Growth Option B or "medium" growth was assessed as overall having the most sustainable outcome.

6.7 For each proposed policy and site allocation, an alternative was considered. For policies, this was usually "do nothing" – that is, do not implement the policy, leaving the situation as existing, which was the only alternative that was reasonable to consider. For sites, alternative uses and often a "do nothing" option were assessed.

7. The measures that are to be taken to monitor the implementation of the Local Plan

7.1 The SEA Directive requires the significant environmental effects of implementing the plan or programme to be monitored in order to identify unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake remedial action.

7.2 North Tyneside Council has established a monitoring framework for the Local Plan that includes the Implementation and Monitoring Framework, Housing Implementation Strategy and Annual Monitoring Report. These are supported by policy S9.1 *Local Plan Implementation and Monitoring* and together will be crucial to delivery of the Council's strategic policies and proposals.

7.3 The Implementation and Monitoring Framework considers:

- Policy Objective and Local Plan Objectives – to determine the purpose and role of the policy.
- Implementation/Delivery Mechanism – to establish how the policy is intended to be delivered.
- Key Agencies and Partners – to establish who will be responsible and support delivery of the policy.
- Monitoring Indicators – to measure performance against the objectives of the policy; these have been developed with consideration to the 19 SA Objectives developed in the Scoping process.
- Triggers for Action – to identify when analysis of performance would require additional measures to be taken.
- Potential Action or Contingency – summarising potential steps that will be taken to ensure performance improves.