



Redcar and Cleveland Local Plan Examination in Public

Opening Statement by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council September 2017



1.0 Welcomes and Introductions

- 1.1 My name is Neil Cole and I am the Planning Strategy Manager for Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council.
- 1.2 On behalf of the Council, I would like to welcome Mr Birkinshaw, the participants and everyone in the audience to Redcar and Cleveland.
- 1.3 I am pleased to have this opportunity of formally opening this Examination in Public into the soundness of the Redcar and Cleveland Local Plan. This Examination marks a crucial stage in the preparation of this key planning document for the Borough. Once adopted, it will replace in full the saved policies of the current Core Strategy and Development Policies Development Plan Documents (adopted in 2007) and those saved policies from the Local Plan (adopted in 1999).

2.0 The Local Plan Journey

- 2.1 The Council has a good track record in delivering development plan documents. It was one of the first in the country to adopt a Core Strategy in 2007 and then working in partnership with the other Tees Valley authorities went on to prepare and adopt the Tees Valley Joint Waste and Minerals Development Plan Documents in 2011.
- 2.2 Moving forward, the Council then responded positively to the publication of the Framework; Planning Practice Guidance; the Localism Act (introducing the Duty to Cooperate); and the abolition of regional spatial strategies. The Council embraced these changes and took the opportunity to move towards preparing a single Local Plan.
- 2.3 In accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, this Plan's journey effectively began in late 2012 which started to shape this Plan's key strategic priorities, policies and proposals. Extensive public consultation and engagement has been undertaken with local residents, interest groups, businesses, regional and national agencies and neighbouring authorities. This commenced with:
 - The Local Plan Scoping Report (Regulation 18) in 2012;
 - A Pre-Publication Draft (Regulation 20) in 2013.
- 2.4 Following a Council decision to review some of the emerging Plan's housing allocations in July 2014, the Council felt it appropriate to recommence production of the Plan with:
 - A revised Local Plan Scoping Report (Regulation 18) in 2015;
 - A Pre-Publication Draft (Regulation 20) in 2016;
 - The Publication Draft (Regulation 20) again in 2016 prior to its formal submission to the Secretary of State for examination in April 2017.

- 2.5 In parallel, the Council has gathered a wealth of evidence to underpin and feed into the Plan. To ensure this comprehensive body of evidence remains robust, the Council has made sure the evidence (and therefore the Plan) remains up to date.
- 2.6 The issues raised from both the evidence and the consultation have been carefully considered and examined prior to advancing the Plan through each stage. The journey has not been an easy one. The Council has had to balance a number of needs – supporting sustainable development and investment in our community and at the same time responding to the concerns of our residents about the scale of growth proposed and the impacts from the development proposed. All of this must be set within a framework which must be compliant with National and European legislation and regulations, and at the final call, be capable of standing up to scrutiny during this Examination.
- 2.7 The preparation of this Plan has therefore been challenging at times and some difficult decisions have had to be made. The Council has always sought to take a positive approach to meeting those challenges – not least in terms meeting the Borough’s objectively assessed housing needs.
- 2.8 Throughout the process, the Council has and continues to work with its neighbouring Local Authorities, those Prescribed Bodies and other key agencies. To that end, as set out within the Duty to Cooperate Statement (RC03/1/2), the Council is of the view that it has fully implemented its obligations required by the Duty to Cooperate.

3.0 The Redcar and Cleveland Local Plan

- 3.1 The Plan provides an opportunity for the Council to set out a long term framework for sustainable growth up to 2032. It will also provide certainty to communities, developers and other groups about how planning decisions will be taken. The preparation of the Plan has provided an opportunity to set out a positive vision and a suite of objectives for the Borough which are linked to the wider visions set out in the Council’s Regeneration Masterplan and Economic Growth Strategy.
- 3.2 The Plan must not only be aspirational – it must also strike the right balance with what can be realistically be achieved and by when (including the requirements for infrastructure).
- 3.3 Hence, with regards to future growth, the Council has a responsibility to unlock growth in a way that benefits existing and future residents of the Borough, the wider Tees Valley and the nation.

Employment

- 3.4 The Borough is home to a number of internationally and nationally important employment areas. At its heart, the steel, chemical, energy and logistics sectors have long provided the Borough’s industrial base – with the likes of Wilton International, the South Tees Area that includes Teesport (one of the country’s

biggest and busiest container terminals) and Skinningrove. These all provide high quality premises for these particular industries.

- 3.5 However, like so many areas, the Borough has not been immune to the economic downturn. Most notably the closure of the SSI Steelworks in late 2015 marked the end of steel making. Hence, it is an objective of the Council, the Combined Authority, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the newly elected Tees Valley Mayor to return such locations into to active and vibrant working areas. As a testament to the role such areas can and will play in the future, Enterprise Zones at the Kirkleatham Business Park, Wilton International and South Bank Wharf were designated 2011 by working in collaboration with Tees Valley Unlimited. Furthermore, in September 2017, the first Mayoral Development Corporation outside of London came into being for the South Tees Area. Totalling some 1,800 hectares and including the former SSI steelworks, this new body will lead in the transformational regeneration of the South Tees Area as a major employment-generating zone. The 'shadow body' of the Development Corporation has been actively working in partnership with the Council to finalise proposals for a Masterplan that will be consulted upon shortly.
- 3.5 Supporting these areas is a wider portfolio of employment sites that are capable of accommodating all forms of business across the Borough. This maximises the ability for the Borough to support future growth to meets its needs.

Housing

- 3.6 As one would expect, a core ambition of the Plan is to improve the range and offer of high quality and well-designed new homes over the Plan period. Realising the Borough's economic ambitions will in part rely on providing a wide housing choice to our existing and future residents that are located in sustainable locations where these people want to live. The Plan responds to this positively by allocating a range of sites which more than meet the Borough's objectively assessed need for homes in a way that is compatible with the specific context, constraints and opportunities.

Infrastructure

- 3.7 A key challenge which the Plan has sought to address has been to ensure it has planned for sufficient new infrastructure to support the proposed scale of development. This in part, is provide new facilities to serve planned developments and the future needs that then arise from them, such as provision for new schools, health facilities and 'green infrastructure' but to also ensure that residents, workers and visitors can move around the Borough. The Council considers that the infrastructure required to deliver the Plan has been identified, assessed, prioritised and costed as far as it can be at this stage whilst ensuring that the requirements of the Plan, as a whole, do not prejudice the viability of development.

The Environment

- 3.8 The Borough is home to a range of important historic and environmental assets. Whilst meeting those needs for growth, the Plan has also sought to ensure that those key assets that make the Borough special are also protected and enhanced. These include its sensitive wildlife areas of international, national and local significance, the coastline and those sensitive landscape areas including those that abut the North York Moors National Park.

The Need for the Plan

- 3.9 The importance of having an up to date local plan in place is paramount. The plan led system is the cornerstone of planning in this country and has been given renewed emphasis in the Government's White Papers "Fixing the Foundations : Creating a More Prosperous Nation" (July 2015) and "Fixing the Broken Housing Market (2017). These clearly highlight how such plans can help to meet the Government's objectives for housing and economic growth. It therefore comes as no surprise that Government is now raising the bar to ensure there is a complete and up to date coverage of development plans across the country.
- 3.11 Of course, having an up to date plan is equally important to this Council and its residents. Sir, you are obviously aware that the weight to be afforded to the relevant housing policies of the Council's Core Strategy have come under intense scrutiny by a number of decisions allowed on appeal in recent months. Without having a Plan in place, the Borough will continue to grow incrementally and in an uncoordinated and unplanned fashion. This is not in the best interests of the Borough. This Plan will therefore help to control and manage development and ensure that it is delivered in the right way and in the right places whilst ensuring the necessary infrastructure is delivered.

4.0 The Planning Strategy Team

- 4.1 An enormous amount of time and effort has gone into the production of this Plan by both officers and elected members with the sole aim of producing a Plan which is the best possible plan for the local community and which meets the necessary national requirements.
- 4.2 Sir, if I may, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce the Council's Planning Strategy Team. Some are present today, whilst others will be specifically addressing other matters over the course of this Examination.
- 4.3 As I explained from the start, I am the Planning Strategy Manager and took up this post up in April 2017. I am a chartered town planner with over 21 years of direct experience in successfully bringing forward development plans for authorities across the north east.

- 4.4 Mark Mein, is a Principal Strategic Planning Officer. He is a chartered town planner with over 15 years direct experience of bringing forward development plans for this Council. Mark has significant experience of undertaking site appraisals and has been the lead author in preparing all of the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and 5 Year Housing Land Supply Position Statements.
- 4.5 Roger Tait is a Principal Strategic Planning Officer. As a chartered town planner with over 12 years experience in promoting plans here and at Stockton-on-Tees, Roger has lead on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the related infrastructure policies such as transport, developer contributions and floodrisk.
- 4.6 Rebecca Wren is a Principal Strategic Planning Officer. Like Roger, she is a chartered town planner with over 12 years experience of preparing plans here and in Stockton-on-Tees. Rebecca is the Council's primary lead for retail and tourism matters but has also been involved in preparing a suite of wider policies.
- 4.7 With over 11 years of working in plan formulation, Fiona Hurworth is a chartered town planning and a Principal Strategic Planning Officer. Fiona previously worked in South Tyneside having successfully brought forward their Core Strategy. Her primary areas of expertise regarding this Plan have been in relation to employment land and bio-diversity and she oversaw delivery of the Council's sustainability appraisals and Habitat Regulation Assessments.
- 4.8 Tim Brown has been the Council's Conservation Advisor for over 3 years having previously worked for North Yorkshire County Council. Accordingly, Tim has lead and advised on the Plan's heritage matters.
- 4.12 Throughout the preparation of this Plan, the Team has been fully supported by other service teams from within the Council. This includes specialist input relating to business and economic development, drainage, education, asset management, and environmental health. Indeed Sir, you will hear specifically from Roger Kay (the Council's Housing Strategy Lead) in relation to the discussions on objectively assessed needs and affordable housing. Tony Gordon (the Transportation Strategy Lead) will also be present for the discussion around transport and accessibility matters.
- 4.13 Furthermore, the Council has engaged the specialist support from external consultants, most notably from the Tees Valley Combined Authority, Arc4, JBA, Peter Brett Associates and Lichfields (formerly Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners). The Council will where necessary be calling on representatives from these respective specialisms to directly respond to the questions you have raised.

5.0 Summary and Conclusions

- 5.1 The Council is of the view that the Plan takes account of the National Planning Policy Framework and has been prepared and advertised in accordance with the statutory procedures associated with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004 as

amended) and associated regulations. The Council is confident that the Plan is sound on the basis that it has been positively prepared, is justified, is effective and is consistent with national policy.

5.2 However, it is recognised some matters, as indeed you have highlighted, require close scrutiny during this Examination. As with nearly every plan, the scale and location of new housing growth remains the key unresolved matter for most participants. Whilst housing is one of many elements this Plan has had to address, we are all obviously awaiting the Government's proposals for its standardised OAN methodology with interest. Until that time, the Council welcomes the opportunity to proactively discuss such matters during the course of these upcoming hearing sessions.

5.3 That Sir, concludes the Council's Opening Statement and on behalf of the Council, I commend the Redcar and Cleveland Local Plan to you.

Neil Cole

Planning Strategy Manager