

South Sunderland Growth Area Briefing Note & Frequently Asked Questions

The area of land which makes up the SSGA has been seen as a future growth area for the city for many years now, with a number of sites allocated as development sites in the 1998 adopted Unitary Development Plan. (Chapelgarth, Cherry Knowle Hospitals and land south of Ryhope, along with the Ryhope to Doxford Link Road proposal).

The Planning Inspector in his report following the Inquiry into the Unitary Development Plan, also indicated the potential of the land between the Green Belt and the built –up area in this location as providing sufficient flexibility when assessing the need for further development in this area.

As such when developing the new plan for the city (The Core Strategy), the topic of utilising greenfield land, city-wide, (not site specific), was put forward during initial public consultations in 2005/6, which looked at broad development principles. The public response to this at that time was that it was accepted that some greenfield development may be necessary to enable growth where sites are in accessible location or would support local regeneration.

This approach was carried forward and included within the next stage of the plan, as such the preferred approach to future development within the city was indicated through public consultation (2009) as ‘local sub-area needs and priorities brought together to form a sustainable city-wide approach’.

This approach included strengths and weaknesses such as:

- Some development on greenfield sites and low value green spaces could be acceptable, though the broad extent of the Green Belt should be protected;
- Coalfield and South Sunderland would absorb needs of Washington and the North housing markets that cannot be accommodated there;
- Development concentrated on previously developed land, however a limited number of incursions into the urban fringe would be required as well as four significant greenfield urban extensions;
- Long term housing growth would involve using sites that are in peripheral and less accessible locations which could result in high car dependency and increased traffic congestion.

- Open countryside impacts on southern periphery.
- The principle of this approach was further developed and refined, taking forward the long standing land allocations at South Sunderland and forming the basis of the Preferred Option of the Core Strategy (CS), which included the SSGA as a key regeneration site. This document was subject to public consultation in 2013.

The CS (2013) identified four potential Locations for Major Development in South Sunderland collectively known as the South Sunderland Growth Area- (SSGA) comprising the sites of Chapelgarth, Cherry Knowles, Land North of Burdon Lane and South Ryhope.

- Chapelgarth - identified and allocated as a housing site in the Sunderland Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The site is in council ownership.
- Land North of Burdon Lane –falls within a designated ‘settlement break’ in the UDP.
- Cherry Knowle - is owned by the Homes and Communities Agency and will also accommodate a replacement health facility and a hospice (which are currently under construction)
- Land at South Ryhope - the site was allocated in the UDP for economic development. This allocation has been reviewed through the Employment Land Update and the draft Core Strategy now proposes the site be developed primarily for housing along with some employment uses.

A masterplan is being drafted for SSGA. The masterplan will focus on these 4 sites and provide further detail on what development and quantum of development would be suitable for each of the sites.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much housing do we need?

The amount of housing required in the city over the next 15-20 years is based on a number of factors including; Census, Population Projections, Household Projections, vacancy rates, growth aspirations, job creation etc

Based on the above information the council consider there to be a need for approximately 750 dwellings per annum. This equates to providing some 15,000 dwellings between 2012-32. The target is deemed to be both realistic / achievable whilst still being aspirational and will assist in delivering the visions and objectives of the Sunderland Strategy and Economic Masterplan. The 15,000 dwelling target was identified in the Core Strategy Preferred Options document that went out for public consultation in 2013.

The council continue to review the target and are currently in the process of calculating the city's Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for future growth. The council will be consulting on the OAN in spring 2016.

Why do we need so many houses?

The City continues to lose population, particularly young family forming households, to its adjacent authorities and yet commute back into the city to work. This is not a sustainable option. The key reason for this loss is the lack of suitable housing in the right location. Hence, the City needs to deliver sites which have high quality environments to encourage the development of larger family homes / executive properties. Few such sites currently exist in the City.

Why this part of the city and not elsewhere?

Results of the public consultation on the Core Strategy Alternative Approaches in 2009 identified that the preferred option for housing growth was to focus development in Sunderland South, with 60% of new housing proposed for this area.

There were insufficient available sites identified to meet this need, so studies/surveys had to be undertaken throughout the City to identify appropriate sustainable sites for expansion. The city is surrounded by Green Belt and Settlement Break, as such these areas had to be considered and difficult decisions made.

Two of the sites at SSGA are already allocated for housing, Chapelgarth and Cherry Knowle and 1 site identified for employment, South Ryhope. The employment land allocation is a historical allocation and the site is no longer required for such use.

In accordance with planning policy, the supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for large scale development rather than bringing forward small piecemeal sites, thus ensuring adequate infrastructure is provided and sustainable developments are brought forward.

Why not brownfield sites first?

The re-use of brownfield land remains a priority for the Council and in recent years over 90% of all our housing completions have been on such sites. However, there is only a finite supply of this type of land in sustainable locations. Whilst there remains a number of major brownfield sites across the city a number of these sites are not available in the short term as a result of various physical constraints and the costs of bringing them back into use, meaning they are not profitable for development (they have a negative land value).

All brownfield sites appropriate for residential development have been accounted for and are included in the city's list of housing sites, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLLA). The SHLLA includes land for approximately 16,000 dwellings of which 63% are on brownfield land, 37% on greenfield land.

The council are in discussions with the landowners of many of the large brownfield sites including Vaux, Groves, Philadelphia and the Gentoo sites of Pennywell, Ford and Doxford Park, to ensure these sites are brought forward. All these sites feature in the SHLAA.

Why is Chaplegarth coming forward now?

Chaplegarth has been an allocated development site since the UDP was adopted in 1998. The site has been earmarked for residential development since the 1960's, being allocated for housing in the Sunderland Periphery Town Map and referred to in the Tyne and Wear County Structure Plan.

Phase 1 of Chapelgarth was built out in the 1990s. The remaining phases did not come forward for development because, as detailed above in 'why not brownfield sites first?', the emphasis was on the development of brownfield sites first, directed by government policy. Government policy changed in 2012 and there are no longer brownfield development targets. In addition to this, due to the council's success in delivering on the brownfield targets there are no longer sufficient brownfield sites within the city and consequently greenfield sites, such as Chapelgarth, are now having to be considered.

Why are we promoting LNOBL when it is allocated as Settlement Break?

Settlement Breaks are a local designation and do not afford the same level of weight as national designations such as Green Belt. Hence there is no guarantee that they will be protected in perpetuity.

Where settlement breaks exist in other parts of the country Planning Inspectors are challenging local authorities to consider the release of such sites and not to treat them as sacrosanct. The council are seeking to retain settlement breaks, but as identified in the Settlement Break Review some can accommodate a proportion of development.

The Settlement Break at Land North of Burdon Lane was allocated to prevent the merging of Doxford Park, Ryhope and Tunstall. The Masterplan will retain some settlement break to ensure the areas do not merge.

NB The Inspector who oversaw the City's inquiry into the Unitary Development Plan in 1997 commented on the Settlement Break at Burdon Lane

"I have concluded in para.10.4.18 of the report that the area of unallocated land between the proposed Green Belt to the south of Sunderland and the edge of the built-up area would provide future decision-makers with sufficient flexibility when assessing the need for further development in this area beyond the Plan period...."

.....18 years on we now have to consider this area for development.