Allerdale
Local Development Framework

Core Strategy
Issues & Options Summary
September 2006
Introduction

The Council is preparing its Local Development Framework which must include a Core Strategy. The Core Strategy will set out the basic principles and policy direction for planning and development in Allerdale Borough (outside the Lake District National Park) up to 2021. In time it will be complemented by other detailed documents setting down land allocations and policies for the control of development. All these will collectively form the basis for decision making on development and the use of land across the plan area.
The purpose of this consultation is to assist in the discussion of the issues the Core Strategy should address and the options for the development of policies. This will in turn help in the choice of preferred options later in the process.

Each section which follows poses a series of questions/options on which we would welcome comments.

All the questions have been included in a questionnaire to assist with making comments. Copies of the questionnaire can be obtained by contacting the Planning Policy Team on 01900 702767 or by visiting the Council’s website: www.allerdale.gov.uk on the Planning Policy Pages.

If you wish to comment, please submit them in writing to:

Regeneration Strategy Manager
Allerdale Borough Council
Allerdale House
Workington
CA14 3YJ

Email: ldf@allerdale.gov.uk
Fax: 01900-702848

All comments must be received by no later than 27th October 2006

The Core Strategy Issues and Options Summary document is also available on the Council website www.allerdale.gov.uk

The Council has also prepared a full, more technical Core Strategy: Issues and Options Document and Comments Form, which is also available from the Planning Policy Section or from the Council’s website, for comment, by the same deadline as above.

Local Development Framework

In 2004, the Government introduced a new planning system through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. This Act requires all Local Planning Authorities to replace their Local Plans with a new form of development plan known as a Local Development Framework. In the case of Allerdale, this applies to that part of the District outside the National Park.

Unlike the Local Plan, which is a single, complete document, the new Local Development Framework will be made up of a series of separate documents. The Core Strategy is the first Development Plan Document to be produced. It is a key document within the Framework and will set out a spatial vision and strategic objectives for the area and the strategic policies required to deliver that vision.

A key part of the new system is to involve all sections of the community at an early stage to identify issues and policy options and as such develop a proactive approach to shaping the planning policy framework.

The Core Strategy will outline the main issues, which the Council considers the Local Development Framework needs to address. A number of options and questions are posed throughout the document and comments are welcome on these.

The following summary provides an overview of the economic, social and environmental issues facing the District and as such provides the context for the subsequent discussion on the policy options.

It must be emphasised that the LDF and the Core Strategy in particular, will not stand alone. The LDF will be one of the key tools for the delivery of a whole raft of local strategies, to name but a few:

- Regional Spatial Strategy
- Regional Economic Strategy
- Sub-Regional Action Plan
- West Cumbria Strategic Forum Masterplan
- Local Area Agreement
- “Sustainable Cumbria”
- Nuclear Decommissioning Agenda
- Cumbria Housing Strategy etc.
Allerdale: A Portrait

Allerdale borough covers 1,258 square kilometres and is located in the north west of Cumbria and forms part of the north-west region of England. As of 2001 the borough had a population of 93,492. The population of the area outside the Lake District National Park, is estimated to be approximately 83,000. The new Local Development Framework covers this area, as did the Allerdale Local Plan.
The Lake District National Park has its own Local Plan, the National Park Authority will replace this with a Local Development Framework in due course.

The Allerdale Local Development Framework has 6 main settlements – Workington (24,295), Maryport (11,275), Cockermouth (7,877), Wigton (5,360), Silloth (2,932) and Aspatria (2,718).

Allerdale is an area of contrasts. Whilst the majority of the Borough is rural and sparsely populated, there are major centres of population in the south and west. The economic and social history of these areas is dominated by past coal mining and iron and steel making, the decline of which has left a legacy of economic and social problems.

In contrast, the north and east of the District is rural with few substantial settlements. Agriculture and tourism still dominate this area, particularly in the Solway Coast and Lake District National Park.

**Allerdale in summary**

- Recent population decline has been reversed and projections forecast a rise to 95,900 by 2013, and 97,400 by 2023.
- The proportion of retirement age people in the population is rising.
- Allerdale’s population is not ethnically diverse.
- Average household size is decreasing and household numbers continue to increase. In 2001 there were 39,781 households compared to 37,867 in 1991.
- House prices have risen significantly recently. There is a lack of affordable housing in many parts of the Borough.
- Social deprivation in Allerdale varies enormously. The most deprived Ward is within the worst 1.5% nationally with the least deprived being in the top 5%.
- Educational achievement is generally better than average. However, in some areas, coincidental with the most deprived, educational achievement is poor.
- Crime levels are generally low. Allerdale is a relatively safe place to live.
- Health and life expectancy are generally better than average, though there are areas, where health is poor.
- The Borough is somewhat remote being some distance from the national motorway and main railway system. Accessibility to higher education facilities is poor.
- Car ownership levels are above average. Traffic levels are rising.
- Allerdale’s built environment includes 21 Conservation Areas, approximately 1500 Listed Buildings and 80 Ancient Monuments. Hadrian’s Wall is a World Heritage Site.
- The natural environment includes 19, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 23 Regional Important Geological Sites (RIGS) and 171 sites of County Importance.
- The quality of Allerdale’s river waters is high.
- Substantial areas of Allerdale are subject to flooding from rivers or the sea.
- Manufacturing and distribution are the principal areas of employment, proportionately both are above the national average. The banking and financial sectors are underrepresented.
- Unemployment rates in Allerdale have fallen drastically in recent years to below the regional average. Activity rates are now above the regional average although the figures hide pockets of higher unemployment in deprived wards.
- Agriculture has experienced decline and change in recent years but still dominates the economy of rural north Allerdale.
- Allerdale’s wealth creation has grown significantly less than the regional and national averages.
A Spatial Vision for Allerdale

Allerdale will, in 2021, be instantly recognisable as the Allerdale of today in that it will have retained the vast majority of its positive spatial characteristics. The scale of new development will have been appropriate to the needs and aspirations of Allerdale’s various communities and in places will have been transformational in promoting the regeneration and enhancement of our most deprived communities.
The principles of sustainable development will have been at the centre of all decision making on environmental, social and economic issues. Transformational, major development will have been confined to the larger urban areas of West Cumbria. Elsewhere, development on a more modest scale will have taken place to support the smaller urban communities, and in the more sparse rural areas will have been of an appropriate scale and located to support existing facilities.

All new development will have been sensitively located and designed. Environmental and heritage assets will have been given proper protection and where appropriate, enhanced. The amount of greenfield land taken up by development will have been minimised and the best use made of existing buildings and previously developed land.

House building will have taken place to meet the needs of all communities, including the need for affordable housing. In some communities housing market restructuring will have taken place through a combination of renewal and new build such that all Allerdale’s housing markets meet the aspirations and needs of Allerdale’s communities, and everyone has access to a decent home that meets their needs.

In short the Core Strategy will embrace and endorse the Vision of the Community Strategy prepared by West Cumbria Strategic Partnership:

“A community which is innovative and sustainable, and offers all its people, as individuals and in communities, a quality of life which enables them to play a full part in our society, through their work, their leisure, and their social networks.”

Q1 Do you agree with the Vision?

Elements of the above Vision will directly inform and guide the Spatial Objectives, basic principles and policy options of the LDF and so it is an important foundation upon which the LDF will be built.
The proposed Spatial Objectives are based upon a realistic view of the constraints within which planning policy works. The Council as a Local Planning Authority does not have a free hand to institute policies as it sees fit. Our policy must generally conform with policy at a national level, as enshrined in the Government’s Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), at the regional level with policy in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) of the North West Regional Assembly, and for the time being, with Policy in the Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan (JSP) which was recently adopted by Cumbria County Council and the National Park Authority.
Nevertheless, the proposed objectives are aspirational, and where appropriate, are transformational. They take into account the Council’s corporate aims, wider sustainability objectives, and the objectives of the Community Strategy.

- To plan, manage and enable development to meet the needs of the whole community.
- To protect and enhance the environmental, heritage and other cultural assets of Allerdale.
- To focus the majority of development into the main towns (Key Service Centres) and villages (Local Service Centres) of Allerdale.
- To ensure that the design and location of all development respects the character and local distinctiveness of Allerdale and promotes inclusiveness, safety, well being, and quality of life.
- To ensure that the natural and built environment can, where appropriate, be enjoyed by all people, now and for generations to come, and thereby, contribute to health, quality of life, and economic prospects.
- To support and enable transformational development in appropriate locations, to support the local economy and regenerate the most deprived communities.
- To support and enhance town centres. To support and enable development in sustainable locations to support rural communities.
- To protect and enhance community facilities and services, and to maximise their accessibility.
- To protect the countryside and important landscapes from unnecessary and/or damaging development.
- To encourage the use of natural resources in the most sustainable way including re-cycling and the re-use of previously developed land and buildings.
- To minimise the energy requirements of development and to encourage the use of renewable energy sources where appropriate, in order to mitigate the impact of climate change.
- To prevent pollution and minimise carbon emissions to further mitigate the impact of climate change.

Q2 Are the above objectives appropriate or should some be deleted and/or others added?
The Core Strategy must establish the policies which will provide the context for all the policies and land allocations in the Local Development Framework.
The scale of new development, principally housing.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) sets a target of 267 dwellings built per year in Allerdale. This figure is similar to past average building rates.

Q3 Is the allowance of 267 dwellings per year, in Allerdale sufficient to meet the needs of the community?

Q4 Should Allerdale seek a higher figure in order to boost the local economy?

The Broad Location of development

Guidance at national and regional levels is to concentrate most development into Allerdale’s 6 main towns, Workington, Maryport, Cockermouth, Wigton, Silloth and Aspatria which are called Key Service Centres (KSC’s).

In rural areas development should be concentrated in villages with the best facilities, to be called Local Service Centres (LSC’s). It will be up to Allerdale Council to choose which villages become LSC’s.

Q5 How should the Council allocate the 267 dwellings per year? Should the distribution:

i Reflect the existing population of a town or village?
ii Reflect the past building rate in a town or village?
iii Reflect local environmental circumstances? Or
iv Concentrate the great majority of new housing in the main towns (KSC’s).

Q6 Should the Core Strategy include a list of villages (LSCs) where some development could be located? Or, Should it merely include a list of criteria which a village would have to meet in order to allow future development?

Q7 Should the Core Strategy relate the scale of development in villages to the range of facilities available? In other words, should there be a hierarchy of villages similar to that in the current Allerdale Local Plan?

Q8 Which local facilities and services are most important and relevant to the choice of LSCs? Please rank in order of importance, 1-8 with 1 being the most important.

Q9 Which facilities should be present, as a minimum, in a town or village for it to be designated as a LSC where new housing may be acceptable? Please specify.

| Primary School | |
| Public House/Hotel | |
| Village Hall | |
| Rail/Bus Link | |
| Shops | |
| Post Office | |
| Doctor’s Surgery | |
| Church | |
| Other (specify and rank) | |
Q10 Should the Core Strategy be more restrictive than the current Local Plan and reduce the number of villages where development will be allowed?

Development Boundaries

The current Allerdale Local Plan draws boundaries around towns and villages to make a clear and simple distinction between those areas where housing will normally be allowed and open countryside where it normally will not. There is an alternative way of controlling the location of housing, this would be to not draw boundaries but rely on a criteria based policy. Whilst this gives a degree of flexibility, it does not give clear guidance to potential developers and certainty to local residents.

Q11 Should the Local Development Framework draw development boundaries around KSCs and LSCs or rely on a policy with list of criteria to control the location of development?

Remote/Sparse Areas

There are areas of Allerdale which are remote from towns and villages with a good range of facilities. If we rely solely on availability of facilities for the definition of LSCs, such sparse areas would be limited to essential development only.

Q12 Should the choice of villages, where development would be allowed, take account of geographical location in order to allow an even spread of development across the Borough?

Or

Would such a policy be essentially unsustainable, if the chosen settlements lack a good range of facilities?

Affordable Housing

This is a crucial issue in some parts of the Borough where high house prices meant that some local people are priced out of the market and there are no affordable dwellings available. The Council has powers to allocate land for affordable housing and to require developers to provide affordable houses as part of their developments. But should sustainable principles, ie. Locating housing close to facilities, apply to the location of affordable housing?

Q13 Where should affordable housing be located? Only in the larger towns? In the larger towns and large villages? Or Where the need arises?

Q14 Should all housing developments include a proportion of affordable housing? Or, Should there be more flexibility to reflect local need?

Q15 If it is decided that an element of affordable housing has to form part of all housing development how much should be provided on each site? Please choose one:
20% of the dwellings  
25% of the dwellings  
40% of the dwellings  
50% of the dwellings  
Or  
In line with the level of Borough-wide need?  

Q16 On what size of development should this requirement be imposed? Please choose one:  
5 dwellings or more?  
10 dwellings or more?  
15 dwellings or more?  
20 dwellings or more?  
Should such thresholds be lower in rural areas?  

Q17 Should single dwellings continue to be acceptable under the affordable housing policy?  

Gypsy/Travellers Accommodation  
The Government expects Local Authorities to address the issue of transit sites for the travelling community in Local Development Frameworks. If there is a need for such, a site or sites should be allocated in the Local Development Framework. If a Local Authority fails to allocate a site in such circumstances, their powers to deal with unauthorised sites may be curtailed. A survey is underway to ascertain if there is a need in Allerdale.  

Q18 If there is a need to provide a site for the travelling community, where should it be provided?  
In the larger towns with a good range of facilities?  
Or  
Where there is the greatest need?  

Protection of the Environment  
Allerdale possesses a high quality environment and not just in the Lake District National Park. There are nationally important landscapes, such as the Solway Coast AONB, and nature sites such as the Solway Mosses. There are other areas and sites of more local importance which have been designated in the current Local Plan. The Council wishes to continue to protect such areas. However, the current guidance from government says that we should do so by carefully worded policies rather than by designating local areas for protection.  

Q19 Should the Local Development Framework continue to designate local landscapes for protection?  
Or  
Rely on a range of criteria in policies to protect local landscapes?  

Green Space: Urban Landscape  
There are, within towns and villages, areas of green space, (not necessarily public open
space) which are important because of their contribution to character of these areas. Visually, they provide variety in the urban scene. Many such areas also offer opportunities for formal and informal recreation and for wildlife habitats.

The current Local Plan identifies some such areas for protection.

**Q20** Are there areas of green space in your area that should be protected?

**Q21** Are there areas that are important to wildlife in your area, that should be protected?

**Flooding**

Recent serious flooding has caused the Government to adopt more restrictive guidance on development in areas at risk of flooding. In Allerdale there are substantial built up areas which are at high risk of flooding. Would it be right to completely prevent development in such areas?

**Q22** What development should be allowed in high risk flood areas? Choose one:

i. No development

ii. Development for which there is no other suitable alternative site;

or

iii. Allow development in high risk areas but with built in measures to reduce the risk, such as flood defences?

**Built Heritage**

Allerdale has many areas and buildings of historic and architectural importance. These can be designated as Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments as appropriate. The Council has a statutory duty to protect and enhance these heritage assets of the Borough.

**Q23** Are there any historic areas of Allerdale’s towns and villages which justify designation as new Conservation Areas? If so, where?

Allerdale has a significant stock of historic buildings which are “Listed” as being of historic or architectural importance. Most of these are in a good state of repair but some are not and are “At Risk” according to English Heritage. The Council is actively pursuing the repair of these with their owners. But not all Listed Buildings have been surveyed for this purpose by English Heritage.

**Q24** Should the Council be more pro-active in seeking the repair of Listed Buildings “At Risk”?

**Q25** Should the Council compile a “local list” of buildings meriting preservation?

**Economic Development**

Fundamental to the Council’s vision for the future is the health of the local economy. Although enormous changes have occurred in the local economy in recent decades, there remain areas of concern where further transformation needs to occur. Allerdale has
traditionally retained a large supply of land allocated for employment use. Is there a case for reducing this supply and focusing land requirements on specific business needs?

Q26 In allocating land for employment should the Council: Choose one,

i. Retain a generous supply of employment land?

ii. Allocate in line with the Regional Spatial Strategy projections which are significantly less?

Or

iii. Allocate in line with past building rates?

Regeneration Strategies in West Cumbria seek to improve the quality of jobs available and the value added accruing to them. There may be a case for policy to focus on encouraging specific business needs.

Q27 Should employment policy focus on specific business needs such as high tech businesses?

manufacturing?

knowledge based?

Or

Should it be more flexible and open to a wide range of employment uses for each site?

Sustainable principles would normally dictate that employment sites be located close to residential areas and within transport nodes. Is this appropriate in Allerdale where most of our employment land is at Lillyhall.

Q28 Where should employment sites be located?

Only in main towns and larger villages?

Or

Throughout the Borough?

Rural Economy

The Council recognises the importance of local businesses to the rural economy. However, policy on the location of new businesses is a delicate balance between supporting rural communities, protecting the countryside, and allowing existing businesses to develop.

Current Local Plan Policy is to resist new businesses in open countryside but to allow appropriate expansion of existing businesses. The Council’s policy encourages farm diversification and allows the conversion of buildings to commercial use except in isolated locations. Within villages new businesses may be acceptable either by way of new-build or conversion.

Q29 Should the Local Development Framework carry forward the existing Local Plan’s policies for the rural economy?
Q30 What should be the Council’s approach towards conversion of buildings in the countryside to commercial use? Should it:

- Continue to resist the conversion of isolated or remote buildings?
- Be more restrictive and only allow conversions as part of farm diversification or the expansion of existing businesses?
- Or
- Allow conversions even in isolated or remote areas?

Town Centres

Government guidance encourages Local Authorities to support town centres as the prime location for retail, leisure and some office uses. It also encourages Council’s to adopt a hierarchy of town centres, giving each a complementary role. Current Council policy is to promote Workington as the prime shopping centre of Allerdale with other centres having the role of serving their local catchments and with some centres, e.g. Maryport and Cockermouth, having a tourism role.

Q31 Should the Core Strategy continue current policy to promote Workington as the main shopping centre in Allerdale?

Q32 Should other town centres continue to perform complementary roles?

Sport and Recreation

Participation in sport and recreation is known to be a key element in health and well-being. The Council is committed to working with partners to improve participation in sport and the Local Development Framework can play its part in this.

Q33 Are existing leisure facilities of the right quality and in the right place? If not, what is needed and where?

A key element of outdoor recreation is children’s play space, easy access to which encourages outdoor pursuits in children. National policy expects Council’s to provide adequate play areas to serve new housing development through the planning system. The current Local Plan requires housing developers to provide play areas as part of their developments.

Q34 Should the Council continue to require housing developers to provide children’s play areas as part of their developments?

Recycling

Allerdale Borough Council has a crucial role to play in encouraging people to recycle and in providing facilities for recycling. This is all part of a sustainable strategy to minimise the use of finite resources and reduce the volume of waste going to landfill sites. The planning system can play its part in this.
Q35 Should new development include the provision of re-cycling facilities?

Q36 Should the Council encourage the use of recycled materials in developments?

Energy Efficiency

Along with recycling, the efficient use of energy is crucial to a sustainable policy and to reduce greenhouse gases in order to mitigate the effects of climate change. The planning system can play its part in influencing the location, design and layout of development and improving energy efficiency.

Q37 Should developers be required to include energy efficiency measures in the design and construction of their developments?

Q38 Should new development (both residential and commercial) be required to generate some of its energy needs from renewable sources, including in its design such as solar panels, micro wind turbines, etc?

Renewable Energy

Recent experience shows that developers are concentrating on proposals to produce renewable energy through wind turbines, and also that these proposals are proving ever more controversial, largely because of their landscape and visual impact. The County Council, in partnership with all the District Councils in Cumbria, including the National Park Authority are in the process of preparing special guidance on wind energy proposals. Because this will be put through its own public consultation exercise soon, it is not proposed to raise the issue as part of this document.

Transport

Allerdale Borough Council is not a Local Highway Authority, that duty rests with Cumbria County Council. Nevertheless, Allerdale will work with partners to contribute to the reduction in journey times and increase safe connectivity within the Borough and between major urban areas to maximise economic and social prosperity.

The Local Development Framework has a key role in delivering these aspirations through shaping the pattern of development and influencing the location, scale, density and mix of land uses across the Borough.

Q39 Should the majority of new development be located close to various means of transport such as bus routes, rail links, cycleways and footpaths, in order to reduce the number of journeys and encourage more sustainable means of transport than the car?
The Core Strategy must be implemented and must be seen to be implemented. It will be subject to Sustainability Appraisal and the scoping exercise for the Sustainability Appraisal includes a number of statistical indicators which have been chosen to measure the successful implementation of the Local Development Framework.
The means of implementation will be through the development control system and the decisions on planning applications. The Core Strategy will feed into this process through the rest of the Local Development Framework, i.e. the site allocations and the specific development control policies.

The Council will produce an Annual Monitoring Report which will look at the indicators and make an assessment of the success or otherwise, of policy implementation. If policy is not being implemented or is having the wrong impact the Council must consider whether it may be appropriate to amend the relevant part of the Local Development Framework, and how they will set about doing so.

If you wish to comment on the Core Strategy issues and options document please submit them in writing to:

Regeneration Strategy Manager
Allerdale Borough Council
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Workington
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Or Email: ldf@allerdale.gov.uk
Fax: 01900-702848

Alternative Document Formats

This document and the comments form are also available on the Council’s website. Further information on the Local Development Framework is also available www.allerdale.gov.uk.

We can produce this document in large print, on audio tape and in other languages if you ask us. If you would like a copy in one of these formats please phone 01900 702767 or 01900 702765