

**Draft Sustainability Appraisal**

Gateshead Council

**Vision 2030  
Sustainable Community Strategy for Gateshead:  
Draft Sustainability Appraisal**

**March 2009**

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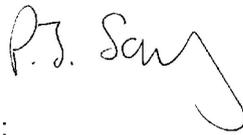
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Sustainable Community Strategy for Gateshead:  
Draft Sustainability Appraisal**

**March 2009**

For and on behalf of  
Natural Capital Ltd.

Draft approved by: Dr P.J.Say



Signed:

Position: Director

Date: March 2009

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Gateshead Council has started the process of putting together its Local Development Framework (LDF) that is made up of a range of documents that together will enable the Council to deliver its spatial planning strategy for the Borough.

The Core Strategy is the first of these documents and will set out the overall vision and spatial strategy for Gateshead. As a first stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy, Gateshead Council has published an Issues and Options Report that identifies a series of strategic issues for the Borough, discusses their implications and suggests some choices that need to be considered before moving onto the preferred options stage.

A scoping report has also been produced<sup>1</sup> which has set out the background and context of the LDF process together with the proposed methodology that will be used for a full sustainability appraisal and strategic environmental assessment (SA/SEA) of the Core Strategy and its key policies as they emerge. This scoping report has been the focus of detailed consultation with the appropriate statutory authorities who have commented on the scope and content of the proposed methodology. Overall the approach was considered to be appropriate and an appraisal methodology has been finalised. The scoping report contains all the details of this methodology and is available for review on the Gateshead Council web site ([www.gateshead.gov.uk](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk))

As part of assessing the foundations for the Core Strategy Gateshead Council has asked Natural Capital to carry out a brief sustainability appraisal of the Sustainable Community Strategy – Vision 2030. The Sustainable Community Strategy is the overarching strategy for Gateshead that will achieve sustainable development within the Borough. The Core Strategy will be one of the prime delivery mechanisms for the Sustainable Community Strategy so it is important that they are aligned at the earliest opportunity. The preparation of a sustainability appraisal report of Vision 2030 at this stage in the appraisal process is not a formal requirement but is regarded as good practice to make sure that sustainability principles are considered at the earliest opportunity in the planning process. It is therefore not intended that this should be a full SA/SEA of Vision 2030 but rather a brief statement that provides an overview of the key issues as far as they relate to sustainable development. The main purpose of the note is to inform the next stages of preparation of the Core Strategy, which will include further in depth participation and consultation.

The appraisal is provided in the form of a table (see *Table 1* below) and should be read in conjunction with the Sustainable Community Strategy. The sustainable development implications of each section of the Strategy are discussed section by section within the table as they appear in Vision 2030, and comments and recommendations are made where appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> Gateshead Council Local Development Framework - Core Strategy Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, Gateshead Council, May 2008.



**Table 1 Sustainability Screening of Vision 2030 – Sustainable Community Strategy for Gateshead**

Vision 2030 – Strategic Vision and ‘Big’ Ideas	Sustainable Development Implications	Comments and Recommendations
<p><b>Introductory Section</b></p> <p><i>What is a Sustainable Community Strategy?</i></p> <p>This section provides an introduction to the concept of the Sustainable Community Strategy and summarises how it will steer partners into action.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Box 1 – Vision 2030: Influencing Partners</b></p> <p><b>It will help partners to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continuously work together to make sure services are relevant to local people and value for money</li> <li>explore new ways to maximise the impact of services</li> <li>develop effective solutions and increase capacity</li> <li>set the direction and priorities for the Local Area Agreement; and</li> <li>clearly align resources with priorities.</li> </ul> </div> <p><i>The Evidence Base</i></p> <p>This describes the intention of building a picture of the quality of life and delivery of services in Gateshead, and summarises how engagement with local communities and wider consultation has informed the development of the Strategy.</p> <p>It describes how this process has led to the generation of 6 ‘Big Ideas’ –</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Box 2 – Vision 2030 – The 6 ‘Big Ideas’</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Gateshead</li> <li>Gateshead goes Global</li> <li>Creative Gateshead</li> <li>Sustainable Gateshead</li> <li>Active and Healthy Gateshead</li> <li>Gateshead Volunteers</li> </ul> </div>	<p>The approach described in this introductory section clearly reflects Government guidance on the preparation of Community Strategies, where it is suggested that the Community Strategy should :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>‘set out the strategic vision for the area;</i></li> <li><i>be prepared in consultation with partners.’</i></li> </ul> <p>The Community Strategy is seen as a vehicle for delivering sustainable development. Government guidance on how the development of the strategy can achieve this goal is summarised in Box 3 below.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Box 3 – Government Guidance on Community Strategy Development</b></p> <p><i>‘If this aim is to be realised, a community strategy will have to meet four objectives. It must:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>allow local communities (based upon geography and/or interest) to articulate their aspirations, needs and priorities;</i></li> <li><i>co-ordinate the actions of the council, and of the public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate locally;</i></li> <li><i>focus and shape existing and future activity of those organisations so that they effectively meet community needs and aspirations; and</i></li> <li><i>contribute to the achievement of sustainable development both locally and more widely, with local goals and priorities relating, where appropriate, to regional, national and even global aims.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>A community strategy must have four key components:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>a long-term vision for the area focusing on the outcomes that are to be achieved;</i></li> <li><i>an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes;</i></li> <li><i>a shared commitment to implement the action plan and proposals for doing so;</i></li> <li><i>arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the action plan, for periodically reviewing the community strategy, and for reporting progress to local communities.’</i></li> </ul> </div> <p>The introductory section to Vision 2030 summarises fairly extensive community engagement and describes how this consultation has fed into the development of the ‘6 Big ideas’. In order to develop the ideas further ‘key stakeholder workshops’ were organised and agreement was sought on the outcomes, pathways and targets for each of the ‘Big Ideas’.</p>	<p>It is encouraging to see that the development of the strategy has involved wide local community engagement and key stakeholder consultation – this is following the Government guidance and is fundamental to the practice of Sustainable Community Strategy development. The introduction is simple and straight forward and helps the reader understand the purpose behind the Sustainable Community Strategy.</p> <p>As shown in Box 1 it provides several bullet points that summarise how the Strategy will help partners. There is however a missed opportunity to emphasise that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sustainable development is what the Strategy is really all about; and</li> <li>the Strategy must be based on sound sustainability principles.</li> </ul> <p>We would have recommended that these bullet points be modified as follows:</p> <p><i>‘It will help partners to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>continuously work together to make sure services are relevant to local people and value for money</i></li> <li><i>explore new ways to maximise the impact of services <b>within a sustainable development framework</b></i></li> <li><i>develop effective solutions <b>based on sound sustainability principles</b> and increase capacity <b>to deliver them</b></i></li> <li><i>set the direction and priorities for the Local Area Agreement; and</i></li> <li><i>clearly align resources with priorities.’</i></li> </ul> <p>The 6 ‘Big Ideas’ is a good concept in that it helps to focus people’s minds into strategic activity areas and was probably a simple way to galvanise public/partner attention and activity towards the achievement of themed goals. We would, however, have reservations about separating out a ‘Big Idea’ entitled ‘Sustainable Gateshead’. We would argue that the purpose and focus of the entire strategy is about delivering a ‘Sustainable Gateshead’ given that that is what would be the prime focus of a Sustainable Community Strategy for Gateshead. By highlighting the word ‘Sustainable’ in a separate sub-bullet point it is, by definition, implying that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sustainability is a ‘bolt on’ additional initiative;</li> <li>sustainability is not necessarily an integral part of the other ‘Big Ideas’ and is somehow separate to them;</li> <li>the other ‘Big Ideas’ may not directly be contributing to a ‘Sustainable Gateshead’</li> </ul> <p>We would argue that all of the ‘Big Ideas’ should be contributing to a ‘Sustainable Gateshead’ and that really the whole purpose of the entire Strategy is working towards that single goal. By singling out ‘Sustainable Gateshead’ as a ‘sub-initiative’ within the Strategy it also seems to be mistakenly implying that sustainability is only about recycling and reducing the carbon footprint. We would have recommended that it would be better to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>emphasise that the whole Strategy is about achieving a ‘Sustainable Gateshead’;</li> <li>highlight how the other ‘Big ideas’ are helping to deliver that goal;</li> <li>include a ‘Big Idea’ that better connects with the natural and built environment of Gateshead</li> </ul> <p>Amended wording for these ‘Big Ideas’ is set out in Box 4:</p>

Vision 2030 – Strategic Vision and ‘Big’ Ideas	Sustainable Development Implications	Comments and Recommendations
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p><b>Box 4 – Vision 2030 – The 6 ‘Big Ideas’ amended</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Gateshead</li> <li>• Gateshead goes Global</li> <li>• Creative Gateshead</li> <li>• <u>Sustainable Greener Gateshead</u> <u>or</u></li> <li>• <u>Enhancing Gateshead’s environment</u></li> <li>• Active and Healthy Gateshead</li> <li>• Gateshead Volunteers</li> </ul> </div>
<p><b>The 2030 Vision</b></p> <p><i>“Local people realising their full potential enjoying the best quality of life in a healthy, equal, safe, prosperous and sustainable Gateshead.”</i></p> <p><b>What does this mean?</b></p> <p>An interesting quote is made here to emphasise how far Gateshead has come in dispelling the ‘old myths’. It also presents some interesting statistics on the changes that have taken place.</p>	<p>The Vision 2030’s vision statement emphasises its desire to seek an integrated approach (economic, environmental and social considerations) to future development.</p> <p>Unfortunately the changes highlighted here only appear to relate primarily to economic achievements with some social spin-offs as well. It is disappointing that in an introduction to a Sustainable Community Strategy that there are no environmental achievements highlighted so that a good balance is struck across the ‘three pillars’ of sustainability. The achievements should genuinely strike a clear chord with the sustainability agenda.</p>	<p>The environmental element is weak in this vision statement and would be strengthened if very slightly modified as follows:</p> <p><i>“Local people realising their full potential enjoying the best quality of life <b>and environment</b> in a healthy, equal, safe, prosperous and sustainable Gateshead.”</i></p> <p>If the reference to environment is left out, the implication is that the word sustainable as used in the vision is only referring to ‘environmental sustainability’ and this is misleading since it is placing limitations on the concept of sustainability and not using ‘sustainable’ accurately in its wider and truly comprehensive sense.</p> <p><b>Gateshead’s Achievements</b></p> <p>In the impressive changes to Gateshead it would be good to see here some clear environmental improvements highlighted to better strike a balance and to illustrate that Gateshead has made some environmental advances. One might have considered that since Gateshead was the location of a nationally renowned ‘Garden Festival’ in 1990 and that some 80 hectares of previously derelict land (the site of a former gasworks, a coal depot and a coking plant) were reclaimed and now used for housing, would have been among some good environmental headlines.</p>

Vision 2030 – Strategic Vision and ‘Big’ Ideas	Sustainable Development Implications	Comments and Recommendations
<p><b>Unlocking the Potential to 2030.....</b></p> <p><b>Our vision for the future.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Local people with high aspirations and opportunities to achieve</b> ...delivered through quality education, training and employment opportunities for young and old through public, private and voluntary sector organizations</li> <li>• <b>High rates of emotional and physical wellbeing</b> ... a healthy and happy population. We will achieve this through encouraging and promoting healthy lifestyles and narrowing the gap of inequality across Gateshead</li> <li>• <b>Sustainable and thriving communities</b> ... communities of people and place. We will do this through focusing on neighbourhoods which are well designed, sustainable, offer choice and are diverse</li> <li>• <b>Prosperous communities with a focus on creativity and the environment</b> ... We will do this through creating the conditions for business opportunities and sustainable growth in the Borough. Gateshead will be a place that continues year on year to attract and grow talent and ambition</li> </ul>	<p>The simple headline statement here has profound implications for future sustainable development since it is espousing an acceleration in the transformation and development of Gateshead.</p> <p>There is an important mix of aspirations here that potentially underpin a Sustainable Community Strategy. In terms of the sustainable development implications of this ‘vision for the future’ there is a strong emphasis on the social and economic elements of sustainability and little if any focus on the environmental element. The word ‘sustainable’ is mentioned three times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>‘Sustainable and thriving communities....’.</i></li> <li>• <i>‘We will do this through focusing on neighbourhoods which are well designed, <b>sustainable</b>, offer choice and diverse’</i></li> <li>• <i>‘...business opportunities and <b>sustainable</b> growth in the Borough’</i></li> </ul> <p>The use of the word ‘sustainable’ in these applications is unclear. It is not certain to what extent (if any) they refer to the environmental component of sustainability. Since sustainability embraces economic, social and environmental themes and topics the word should not be used in a narrow sense and there should be no inference that it only relates to the environment. If the word ‘sustainable’ is used too frequently and liberally it can confuse people and loses its significance.</p>	<p>Where this headlines on the ‘focus for the future’ and ‘transformation for Gateshead’ it would be good to see this set within stronger sustainability terms</p> <p>A suggested modified wording would be:</p> <p><i>‘Our focus for the future which is outlined in this strategy is one which continues to accelerate this transformation for Gateshead ... one which focuses on people and place <b>for a sustainable future</b>’.</i></p> <p>Some of the “bigger” or global level issues that could have a pronounced affect on the future of Gateshead including climate change, use of natural resources, living within environmental limits, sustainable consumption and production, protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage are not considered in this suite of bullet points. The vision as set out here seems to lack any real reference to the environment. This presents a ‘weaker’ vision in sustainability terms and misses the opportunity of highlighting important themes for a sustainable Gateshead by 2030.</p> <p>Suggested wording is set out in Box 5:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Box 5 – Amended Wording for the Vision:</b></p> <p><b>Our vision for the future.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Local people with high aspirations and opportunities to achieve</b> ...delivered through quality education, training and employment opportunities for young and old through public, private and voluntary sector organizations</li> <li>• <b>High rates of emotional and physical wellbeing</b> ... a healthy and happy population. We will achieve this through encouraging and promoting healthy lifestyles and narrowing the gap of inequality across Gateshead</li> <li>• <b>Sustainable and thriving communities</b> ... communities of people and place. We will do this through focusing on neighbourhoods which are well <b>designed and located, where new building adopts sustainable design and construction principles and there is a diversity of choice</b></li> <li>• <b>High quality natural environment.....</b>a clean and healthy environment is fundamental to a sustainable and thriving community. We will achieve this through public, private and community led projects and initiatives</li> <li>• <b>Vibrant cultural environment...</b>contributes to a healthy and happy community. We will continue to build on Gateshead’s rich historic and cultural heritage and build on the success of icons such as the Sage Music Centre</li> <li>• <b>Prosperous communities with a focus on creativity and the environment</b> ... We will do this through creating the conditions for business opportunities and sustainable growth in the Borough. Gateshead will be a place that continues year on year to attract and grow talent and ambition</li> </ul> </div>

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<p><b>How do we get there?</b></p>	<p>This section provides an opportunity to set out a range of sustainable development achievements from the previous Community Strategy that ran from 2004 to 2007. When the list set out here is assessed there is little if any recognition given to environmental achievements, thus creating an imbalance in the ‘sustainability mix’. Of the nine achievements listed the following indicates how they compare across the economic (EC), social (S) and environmental (ENV) mix:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed strong community spirit (S)</li> <li>• Increasing diversity (S)</li> <li>• International recognition (S) + (EC)</li> <li>• Excellent educational attainment (S)</li> <li>• More businesses in Gateshead, a consistent year on year increase (EC)</li> <li>• Continuous reduction in crime (S)</li> <li>• Significant reductions in teenage pregnancy (S)</li> <li>• Significant reductions in unemployment (EC) + (S)</li> <li>• Cleaner, Greener, Safer Gateshead (S) + (ENV)</li> </ul> <p>Environment only features in one achievement and is buried amongst ‘cleaner and safer’. This would appear to be greatly ‘underselling’ the importance of environment within the sustainability mix for Gateshead.</p>	<p>It is recommended that one or two ‘headline’ environmental achievements be included here to redress the balance and indicate the sorts of goal and objectives that can be achieved by a Sustainable Community Strategy.</p>
<p><b>Scenario 1 – Do nothing</b></p>	<p>Here a set of projections are given for how Gateshead could look, heading towards 2030, if no action was taken. This would be the literal ‘do nothing’ scenario.</p> <p>Again it is unfortunate that the focus of these implications are almost exclusively social or socio-economic (e.g. aging population, unplanned population growth, educational, health – e.g. obesity and life expectancy, crime and dysfunctional community) or economic (e.g. underperforming economy, tourism, educational performance).</p> <p>There is only one environmental indicator and this relates to improvements in recycling. This is regarded as a serious imbalance and missed opportunity to set out a balanced argument for sustainability action.</p> <p>No mention is made of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the implications to Gateshead of climate change, the need to adapt to climate change and of issues such as sea-level rise and flood risk;</li> <li>• the risks to Gateshead of not cutting carbon emissions and reducing the carbon footprint, of running out of finite resources (in particular fossil fuels) of the need to step up renewable energy options;</li> <li>• the implications of cutting consumption and sustainable sourcing of materials and products;</li> <li>• the need to promote sustainable transport options and what happens if we don’t;</li> <li>• risks to the natural environment air, water and greenspaces etc.</li> </ul>	<p>It is recommended that the balance is redressed in the ‘Do nothing’ scenario and that some environmental projections should be included to give a more balanced picture and to indicate that there are some serious issues ahead on the global environmental front that will have profound implications at the local level and that will need to be tackled locally as well as globally.</p>

Vision 2030 – Strategic Vision and ‘Big’ Ideas	Sustainable Development Implications	Comments and Recommendations	
<p><b>Scenario 2 – Greater Interventions to achieve Vision 2030</b></p> <p>This section attempts to set out an alternative scenario with strategic interventions that are based on the so-called ‘6 Big ideas’ that would be used to tackle the challenges described.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>City of Gateshead</b> - City of Gateshead is about achieving the qualities of great cities around the World in terms of design, growth, natural resources, people and culture.</li> </ul>	<p>This bullet point embraces a relatively large ‘slice’ of the sustainability mix itself with a strategic mix of high-level economic (design and growth), social (design, people and culture) and environmental (design and natural resources) topics and potential indicators.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gateshead goes Global</b> Gateshead goes Global seeks to maximise the opportunities of globalisation for local benefit and local reward - ‘Think Global - Act Local’ and to recognise our role in the international community.</li> </ul>	<p>This is more of a socio-economic ‘package’ in the sustainability mix. This puts a different slant on the strap-line – ‘Think Global – Act Local’. This might actually be confusing for people since under Agenda 21 this ‘slogan’ was directed more at addressing global environmental issues (such as climate change, resource depletion and waste disposal) through local activity (such as recovery, reuse and recycling etc).</p> <p>In the context of how it is being used here the thrust appears to be more about how Gateshead is positioned internationally and the economic and social opportunities of globalisation. For some, the use of the expression in this way could create sustainability ‘tensions’ since economic globalisation can be seen as not particularly compatible with the sustainable use of resources.</p>	<p>Care will be needed in the future in articulating the thrust of this idea to ensure that it does not send out mixed messages and that the underlying objectives and targets are still compatible with the principles of sustainability.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Creative Gateshead</b> Local people that can access a breadth of creative experiences and opportunities. In all spheres of life, creativity can help make Gateshead look great, as well as promoting further entrepreneurship and a better quality of life for residents.</li> </ul>	<p>This tends to focus on the themes of unlocking the potential for creativity and the latent entrepreneurship that could be present within individuals and communities within Gateshead.</p>	<p>As a high-level concept this is compatible with the sustainability agenda and should be encouraged.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sustainable Gateshead</b> Sustainability can be applied to all aspects of life, work and communities. To ensure a sound future for Gateshead, economic prosperity, making the best use of resources and an attractive local environment are the fundamental building blocks for a Sustainable Gateshead.</li> </ul>	<p>These points are the most important ones within the Strategy, and we would argue that this ‘Big Idea’ should really be the prime goal of the whole strategy and rather than being featured as a sub-objective should be what all the other ‘Big Ideas’ are aiming to achieve. In a sense if a ‘Sustainable Gateshead’ is not achieved then all of the other ideas/objectives would struggle to succeed.</p>	<p>Further comments on this ‘Big Idea’ are given below.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Active and Healthy Gateshead</b> Health is fundamental to well being and long life. Health is determined by many factors. Within Gateshead we want to create the healthiest communities in the country providing opportunities and encouragement for all and positively influencing the factors affecting health.</li> </ul>	<p>Health is inextricably linked to the quality of the environment and would be embraced by a ‘Sustainable Gateshead’. A sustainable community is a healthy one. A ‘clean’ and ‘green’ environment is fundamental to well being and a long life as well.</p>	<p>As a high-level concept this is compatible with the sustainability agenda and should be encouraged.</p>

Vision 2030 – Strategic Vision and ‘Big’ Ideas	Sustainable Development Implications	Comments and Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Gateshead Volunteers</b>                      Gateshead Volunteers is about enabling everyone to make a recognised contribution to their community. Volunteering is something that can benefit both the individual and the wider community. Through Gateshead Volunteers, we want to maximise the potential of volunteering in Gateshead.                 </li> </ul>	<p>This ‘Big Idea’ encapsulates the ‘social responsibility’ agenda and is all about encouraging individuals to contribute to their community so that each person looks out for the other and emphasises that there can be great rewards from ‘giving’ for the benefit of the wider community.</p>	<p>As a high-level concept this is compatible with the sustainability agenda and should be encouraged.</p>
<p><b>City of Gateshead</b></p>	<p>This ‘Big Idea’ tends to concentrate on objectives that align with ‘great cities around the world’ and thus tends to focus on growth, international profile and economic activity.</p> <p>It avoids mention of some of the key sustainability themes particularly in what it wants to achieve and in the improvement targets, probably because it assumes that these will be covered by the parallel ‘Big Idea’ of ‘Sustainable Gateshead’.</p>	<p>If consideration is given to dropping ‘Sustainable Gateshead’ as a separate ‘Big Idea’ and ensuring that the whole thrust of the Sustainable Community Strategy is to deliver a ‘Sustainable Gateshead’ then it would be sensible to add into this ‘Big Idea’ some of the sustainability targets that relate to the environment and use of resources.</p> <p>At the moment this ‘Big Idea’ focuses entirely on social, socio-economic or economic targets.</p> <p>The ‘Pathway to achieving Vision 2030’ for City of Gateshead ‘Big Idea’ has an interesting mix of ‘achievements’ for each of the three decades. In 2020 three environmentally-related targets pop up and include – <i>‘an integrated transport system which manages demand and growth’</i> which would resonate well with reducing the carbon footprint and encouraging public transport and more sustainable forms of transport., - <i>‘Eco Innovation Gateshead – a tourist destination’</i>, which appears to be anticipating that there will be a tourism market that Gateshead could service based on eco-innovation, - <i>‘regionally significant carbon neutral city centre in Gateshead’</i> that assumes Gateshead can achieve carbon neutrality for the city centre by 2020.</p> <p>Carbon neutrality is a notoriously difficult issue at the moment and in our view it would be unwise to set too ambitious a target and to claim carbon neutrality on that scale since the concept is controversial and is highly dependant on the scope and boundaries set. It would be better to set a target of <i>‘Towards a zero carbon city’</i> or <i>‘Towards a low carbon economy’</i> or something still ambitious but more achievable in relative terms.</p>
<p><b>Gateshead goes Global</b></p>	<p>As mentioned above this ‘Big Idea’ has a ‘strap-line’ that could be very confusing since in reality it has little to do with addressing global environmental issues and more to do with global trading, global internet connections and international profile raising.</p>	<p>We would recommend that the sustainability implications of encouraging this ‘global connectivity’ should not be ignored and that outcomes and targets should reflect this and should build in sustainability dimensions to the objectives and targets.</p> <p>To a certain extent there are targets within the pathway to achieving this ‘Big Idea’ vision that do reflect the sustainability agenda for example – <i>‘Fairtrade city schools programme launched’</i> by 2020 and <i>‘All schools achieve Fairtrade status’</i> by 2030.</p> <p>A number of the activities within the ‘pathway’ could be qualified by indicating that they would go for some sort of ‘low carbon’ status (not necessarily carbon neutral) which would indicate the desire to adopt a ‘responsible approach’ to global connectivity.</p>

Vision 2030 – Strategic Vision and ‘Big’ Ideas	Sustainable Development Implications	Comments and Recommendations
<b>Creative Gateshead</b>	This ‘Big Idea’ does have some useful objectives and targets that seek to encourage innovation and creativity in local people which is clearly helpful for progress in the sustainable development agenda. Within this idea the importance and potential of the historic and cultural heritage is recognised together with the concept of ‘sense of place’.	<p>There is a lost opportunity of encouraging and tapping into local people’s creativity in connection with the natural environment. Opportunities should be taken to encourage the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local communities taking part in designing and managing their greenspaces;</li> <li>• the input of local people into biodiversity conservation (and activity within LBAPS);</li> <li>• more eco-schools and the involvement of young people in biodiversity conservation;</li> <li>• more public and private house building going for BREEAM status and innovation here (green roofs, micro renewables etc).</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainable Gateshead</b>	We believe that this is the single most important overarching goal and should be what the Strategy is ultimately aiming to achieve. It should run as a horizontal theme throughout the Strategy, since it embraces the whole sustainable development agenda.	<p>The ‘Where are we now?’ and ‘Outcomes’ sections have a mix of economic, social and environmental objectives that would better reflect the goals of the Sustainable Community Strategy as a whole.</p> <p>The improvement targets have a strange mix including an education/qualification target that overlaps with an almost identical target in the ‘City of Gateshead’ ‘Big Idea’. But there is also a target set for Gateshead to achieve a carbon neutral status by 2025. We would suggest that the concept of carbon neutrality (and the application of carbon offsetting) is a controversial one and it might be more realistic to set a target of becoming a ‘low carbon’ city.</p> <p>The pathway to achieving the goals of this ‘Big Idea’ again have a diverse mix of objectives that would be better set out within the Community Strategy as a whole. However these objectives would be better arranged within a themed and structured framework.</p> <p>Some of the objectives in this pathway are clearly aspirational (which is not necessarily a bad thing) but would need clarification as to the rationale underpinning them. For example it is indicated that by 2030 crops for biofuels are to be grown in Gateshead. The whole topic of biofuels is a controversial one and some life-cycle and ecological footprinting work would need to be done to substantiate the feasibility.</p>
<b>Active and Healthy Gateshead</b>	This ‘Big Idea’ would fit well into the concept of generating a ‘Sustainable Gateshead’ as a whole. Some links are made here to the natural environment but these could be stronger. The links between greenspace, proximity to the countryside and greenbelt and ensuring there is good access to the natural environment are all linked to creating healthy lifestyles and promoting a healthy and active population.	<p>There should be more references to greenspaces and the natural environment which will underpin the encouragement of healthy lifestyles. Within the improvement targets it would be good to see some that relate to increasing the amount of publicly accessible greenspace and encouraging more involvement in conserving biodiversity. The therapeutic effects of nature (fauna and flora) and the links to improved health that come from encouraging contact with the countryside are now well documented.</p> <p>The health advantages of sustainable forms of travel, in particular cycling and walking could also be brought out here.</p> <p>The pathway for delivering this ‘Big Idea’ does include references to topics like cycling and green travel plans but this is the first time they are mentioned. By 2030 there is an objective to have a cleaner, greener Gateshead that encourages people to be more active – but this could be an objective that starts straight away and remains ongoing throughout the next twenty years.</p>
<b>Gateshead Volunteers</b>	The aspirational values of volunteering fit well within a sustainable development framework and can be a key feature of the social responsibility agenda.	<p>The pathway to achieving this ‘Big Idea’ is more structured than some of the others with a focus on firstly developing a volunteering framework, followed by a volunteer programme and associated capacity building in volunteering and a social enterprise programme.</p> <p>It is not clear why the piloting of Gateshead’s Corporate Social Responsibility Policy is delayed</p>

Vision 2030 – Strategic Vision and ‘Big’ Ideas	Sustainable Development Implications	Comments and Recommendations
<p><b>Our Regeneration Strategy</b></p>	<p>With the help of a high-level strategic map this section provides a ‘spatial’ element to the Strategy and identifies ‘corridors’ and ‘hubs’ as specific potential development locations for employment land and housing.</p> <p>There will clearly be implications for nature conservation areas along the River Tyne corridor and also for the rural hinterland and greenbelt in the area.</p>	<p>until post 2010 leading to 2020. A corporate social responsibility policy is to all intents and purposes a sustainable development policy and should really underpin the Sustainable Community Strategy. It should provide the framework for all volunteering initiatives and any other socially responsible initiatives that are aimed at addressing some of the key social issues within Gateshead.</p> <p>In terms of the commitment made towards promoting development it is recommended that the wording be modified as shown in Box 6:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p><b>Box 6 Our Regeneration Strategy</b></p> <p><b>We will promote development activity that supports the regeneration of Gateshead’s urban centre and surrounding rural areas, where it:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports a more sustainable pattern of settlement</li> <li>• Attracts investors to central Gateshead</li> <li>• Creates a Borough made up of distinctive, attractive, inclusive places</li> <li>• Provides an integrated approach that relieves already congested areas</li> <li>• Conserves valued rural landscapes, whilst maximising their economic potential</li> <li>• <b>Does not impact negatively on the integrity of sites valued for their nature conservation interest at the local, national and international levels</b></li> <li>• <b>Conserves sites of historic and cultural interest</b></li> </ul> </div>
<p><b>Our Neighbourhoods</b></p>	<p>This section provides a useful background to sustainable neighbourhoods, with a mix of social, environmental and economic aspirations and targets.</p>	<p>The relevance of this section to the natural environment in Gateshead could be strengthened with some additional wording as follows:</p> <p><i>‘They need to be attractive, safe, accessible, interesting and aid movement between other spaces. High environmental standards will be adopted in the design and maintenance of the spaces and more natural areas will be created to encourage wildlife. <b>Public art</b> will continue to be important in all developments. The hubs of each community need to offer the right mix of educational, retail, faith, health and cultural amenities, brought together in a well designed manner, so they act as a real <b>focus for the community</b> they serve.</i></p> <p><i>The primary areas for <b>employment</b> need to be developed or redeveloped as appropriate, to meet the needs of an economy becoming more service led and catering for the increasing growth of indigenous businesses. <b>Developments around the River Tyne Corridor and the MetroCentre will need to take into account the nature conservation importance of the estuary and the balance to be struck between public access to the riverside and disturbance to sensitive bird species.</b></i></p>
<p><b>How we will deliver Vision 2030</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>History</b></li> <li>• <b>Structure</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Gateshead Strategic Partnership Peer Review</b></p>	<p>This section attempts to provide an overview of how the Strategy will be delivered and relates to improving service delivery and community engagement. It provides a detailed summary of the Peer Review of Gateshead Strategic Partnership (GSP) but this is given more as a review of the mechanics of how to deliver the strategy rather than a review of the sustainable development implications of the Strategy.</p>	<p>Although the general organisational flow chart for how the Partnership will work is helpful, there is no real feel as to how the Strategy will be delivered. We would question whether there was a need to summarise the Peer Review of the GSP at such length since it provides a generalised set of recommendations on partnership working rather than offering some clear indications of how the Strategy will be delivered. In Box 3 above we have presented Government guidance on what it expects to see in a Sustainable Community Strategy and with regards to delivery it is worth repeating that here. The two key points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>a shared commitment to implement the action plan and proposals for doing so;</i></li> </ul>

Vision 2030 – Strategic Vision and ‘Big’ Ideas	Sustainable Development Implications	Comments and Recommendations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the action plan, for periodically reviewing the community strategy, and for reporting progress to local communities.</i></li> </ul> <p>In this version of the Sustainable Community Strategy there is no indication of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who the key partners are;</li> <li>• which ones make up the Steering Group;</li> <li>• what they are committing to;</li> <li>• how they will work together;</li> <li>• whether there is a shared vision;</li> <li>• who will lead on, and how the 6 ‘Big Idea’ will be delivered;</li> <li>• what the timescales are for delivery of key objectives and targets (other than the vague pathways through the next two decades)</li> </ul> <p>It would have been useful to see these tabulated and even not in great detail at this stage at least some idea of the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘when’.</p> <p>Some challenging commitments have been made to creating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a performance framework with clear accountability;</li> <li>• updates of the improvement targets and pathway to delivery;</li> <li>• a team composed of the GSP and local people to whom progress will be reported and who will take on the responsibility of monitoring;</li> <li>• a Local Area Agreement as a delivery plan that will be monitored with progress reported on every 6 months.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adequacy in Referring to the Environmental ‘Pillar’ of Sustainability</b></p> <p>From this sustainability review of Vision 2030 it is considered that the environmental ‘pillar’ of sustainability has not been adequately highlighted within the Strategy, and there have been some missed opportunities to building some key elements and also to bring out the importance of some of the key environmental sustainability issues that should be influencing any current Sustainable Community Strategy both at the ‘local’ and at the ‘global’ level. Some of these key elements are briefly reviewed below:</p>		
<p><b>The Environment</b></p>	<p><b>Climate Change</b></p>	<p>The most important consequences for Gateshead of global warming and climate change are likely to be higher sea levels that will result in increased coastal flood risk, tidal surges, increasing water levels in the Tyne Estuary, estuarine erosion and coastal realignment. A number of measures that the Sustainable Community Strategy could flag up and help to put into place, helping to address the key problems would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• energy efficiency.</li> <li>• land use and resource efficiency.</li> <li>• planning for and adapting to the effects of climate change; and</li> <li>• sustainable transport.</li> </ul> <p>Since climate change is one of the greatest sustainability challenges facing the planet at the moment it will be vital that the Sustainable Community Strategy flags these issues up and addresses ways in which it can contribute both in terms of helping to reduce the carbon footprint of the Borough and also helping communities begin to plan and adapt to the consequences of climate change. Strategies and action plans that could help to reduce Gateshead’s contribution towards climate change will need to include measures that promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy efficiency in housing and developments.</li> <li>• Use of renewable energy alternatives.</li> <li>• The promotion of more sustainable transport modes.</li> <li>• Sustainable design and construction.</li> <li>• Promotion of re-use and recycling.</li> </ul> <p>Although some of these measures are touched on in Vision 2030 they are not related to the overriding importance of climate change and its consequences. There will also need to be initiatives and action plans that prepare the ground for adapting and planning for the effects of climate change e.g. flood risk.</p>

Vision 2030 – Strategic Vision and ‘Big’ Ideas	Sustainable Development Implications	Comments and Recommendations
<b>The Natural Environment</b>	<p>Although there seems to be evidence of the interests and importance that local people give to their natural environment this is barely mentioned in Vision 2030. The importance of biodiversity and the potential of the Sustainable Community Strategy to build in action plans that relate to enhancing local biodiversity are absent from the Strategy. There is no recognition of the health, therapeutic, educational and recreational benefits that would come from maintaining and enhancing wildlife within the Borough.</p>	<p>From a sustainability viewpoint there is a need to recognise the inextricable link between the maintenance and conservation of biodiversity and the health of the environment. Vision 2030 currently misses out on the opportunity of highlighting these important links and of galvanising community involvement in local biodiversity action planning.</p>
<b>Green Spaces</b>	<p>The provision of an adequate amount of green space together with ready access to these spaces, sufficient sporting and recreational opportunities and adequate amounts of more natural areas harbouring habitats rich in local biodiversity is considered to be a significant issue for Gateshead.</p> <p>From a sustainable development perspective it is essential to provide adequate green space within the Borough, since there are important links already established between green space and many other policy areas, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality of life (provide space, natural landscape, “green lungs”, areas for exercise, etc);</li> <li>• public health (direct health benefits from exercise, vegetation can help clean the air, noise attenuation, etc),</li> <li>• local biodiversity conservation (can provide rich habitats, oasis for birds and animals);</li> <li>• tourism (attractive for recreation/leisure);</li> <li>• successful regeneration (green up areas, replace unsightly dereliction);</li> <li>• economic development (more pleasant surroundings for businesses, the provision of lunchtime resources, exercise opportunities, etc).</li> </ul>	<p>It is recommended that more is made of the need for, and access to, high quality green space. This is only really developed in Vision 2030 in the concluding section on ‘Our neighbourhoods’ where it is clear from consultation with young people that this issue was an important one.</p> <p>The strong link to conserving and enhancing local biodiversity should be brought out and opportunities to motivate community groups into greenspace management (for the benefit of local biodiversity) should be encouraged.</p>
<b>The Historic and Built Environment</b>	<p>Local distinctiveness and the importance of the historic environment are regarded as attributes of some importance to sustainable development. Their importance relates to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the sense of place, pride and vibrancy that they give to communities;</li> <li>• the added quality that can be provided to the local environment and townscape;</li> <li>• the attraction for business location and development;</li> <li>• the economic value in terms of leisure, recreation and tourism.</li> </ul>	<p>It is important that the Sustainable Community Strategy establishes principles that will steer any new development into building on the strengths of Gateshead’s legacy, that safeguards features of conservation importance and encourages safe and inclusive design.</p> <p>At present the historic and cultural heritage do not feature prominently within the Strategy. Again there are missed opportunities to highlight and build on the assets within the Borough.</p>

Vision 2030 – Strategic Vision and ‘Big’ Ideas	Sustainable Development Implications	Comments and Recommendations
<p><b>Renewable Energy</b></p>	<p>There will be a need for Gateshead to contribute towards achieving defined regional and national greenhouse gas reduction targets and also renewable energy targets which have been set within higher policies and strategies (for example the RSS has targeted at at least 10% of the region’s consumption of electricity from renewable sources within the region by 2010 and an aspiration to further increase this to achieve 20% by 2020.</p>	<p>It is essential that the Sustainable Community Strategy highlights initiatives that encourage developments to either reduce the need for energy or make more efficient use of it. This should be a high priority. Useful tools and standards that can assist in achieving high energy efficiency and help to minimise consumption are for example the BREEAM and EcoHomes standards.</p> <p>There will also be a need to give a clear steer towards schemes that can potentially generate renewable energy on-site. In some situations the provision of on-site renewable energy and smaller scale micro-generation may be environmentally acceptable and a more sustainable option. Attractions here are related to efficiencies in that less energy is lost during transmission and environmental effects of supporting infrastructure such as power lines and transformer stations are less likely. In view of its location and the amount of land available Gateshead may not necessarily provide viable options for larger scale applications such as wind farms. It is likely that the Core Strategy that will underpin the Sustainable Community Strategy will set out a threshold size of development together with the percentage of energy that should come from renewable sources.</p>



## 2 CONCLUSIONS

Vision 2030 covers a broad range of topics and provides the reader with a useful overview of the range of key sustainability issues and some of the strategic options that will need to be considered in the sustainable development of Gateshead in the future.

This short sustainability “screening” should provide foundations for an update of the Strategy and should also give a steer for the preparation of the Core Strategy.

A number of recommendations and comments are made with regard to the sustainability issues that need to be considered in more depth and of some text changes to the document itself.

The key conclusions are:

- The Strategy has been prepared in a way that is colourful, simple to read and ‘accessible’.
- Its structure does nevertheless confuse in places and misses an opportunity to fully embed sustainable development principles across the whole document.
- One issue that was highlighted is the creation of one of the 6 ‘Big Ideas’ as ‘Sustainable Gateshead’. It is considered that this goal should really be the prime focus of the whole Strategy and that highlighting it as a separate ‘Idea’ is confusing and understates the importance of the whole strategy being a mechanism for delivering sustainable development in Gateshead. Some alternative suggestions are made as to how this issue could be dealt with.
- The Strategy fails to highlight the ‘environmental’ component of sustainability sufficiently.
- There is insufficient recognition of the importance of the natural environment and of conserving and enhancing biodiversity and its role in the sustainable future for Gateshead. Similarly there is little recognition of the historic and cultural environment.
- Some of the key global environmental and sustainability issues are not referenced adequately within the strategy. Climate change and its significance is not mentioned and sustainability issues such as ‘Living within Environmental Limits’, ‘One Planet Living’, ‘Sustainable Production and Consumption’ are not brought out.
- There could also be a sharper focus on the role of sustainable travel and how renewable energy can be exploited in a sustainable way.
- Recommendations are made as to how some of these issues could be better addressed and incorporated into the Strategy.

