

An aerial photograph of a city, showing a dense urban area with numerous buildings, streets, and green spaces. A semi-transparent grey rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the chapter title. The text is white and centered within the box. The background image shows a mix of low-rise and mid-rise buildings, with some larger, more prominent structures in the lower half of the frame. The overall scene is a high-angle view of a city's layout.

**Chapter 5 - Development of  
Options for the Study Area**

# Development of Options for the Study Area

## Developing the Vision and the Objectives

The project team have considered at length how best to present the choices open to the Council in such a way as to facilitate decision making, provide a sound basis for funding and delivery, including a visionary approach, without creating alarm, backlash or blight. The conclusion was that this could be approached as a series of options.

The options were based on the analysis done in the preparation stage of the project. The Sustainability Index highlighted the areas of older housing that were under the most stress and those which were more sustainable. The Index took into account the location of voids, turnover rates of dwellings, changes in house price, the location of homeowners and private landlords, dwelling quality and the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The options reflect the findings of the Sustainability Index but are not governed by it. The options take into account the findings of site based analysis based on a CABE urban design criteria.

The constraints, connections and opportunities available beyond the boundary of the study area were also considered. We identified where improvements to the urban fabric could be made including permeability, legibility, access and transport, provision of amenity space and making the best use of existing facilities. This resulted in the formation of an urban design framework and vision. In line with the brief for the project this urban design framework was overlain with the site analysis to formulate the options for the site.

The range of options is intended to reflect the aspirations of the Council, residents and other stakeholders. Consultation with residents during the early stage of the project highlighted areas of concern and where intervention would be appropriate.

The options are broken down into the six neighbourhood study areas. This gives flexibility to the options and the appraisal process. It will also enables us to show how the proposals can be adapted over time to respond to changes in the economy and the housing market.

## Context

Options were developed to test important principles for the delivery of a successful vision for the older housing study area. In broad terms the options present a scale of intervention ranging from a minimum approach as detailed in Option 1 to radical supply and demand restructuring described in Option 6.

Specifically the team needed to consider how each option addressed the following key issues:

- The need to address the over supply of housing in the area;
- The current and preferred form and function of the area;
- The limited range of housing currently provided;
- The need for transformational change in some parts of the study area;
- The need for stakeholder and resident support;
- The need for wider environmental improvements;
- The capacity to attract sufficient funding.

This section set out our assessment of how each of the options fulfils the overall vision objectives (detailed in the evaluation criteria), together with the implications for each of the areas within each option.

## The assumptions in developing the options:

Assumptions were made that the options::

- Were to be different and distinct and reflect a range of housing market scenarios;
- Should reflect the emerging issues and concerns at neighbourhood level;
- Are flexible and broken down into the six neighbourhood areas in order to determine the preferred approach;
- Address the priority areas highlighted by residents;
- Are to be overlain by the Middlesbrough Urban design framework;
- Are not time specific at this stage. Early wins and phasing will be considered once the preferred option has been agreed.

# Option Evaluation Methodology

## Development of Criteria and Justification of Weightings

The evaluation of the options incorporates a number of components including assessment criteria, weightings and the evaluation.

The options have been assessed against a set of criteria which were developed through:

- Key stakeholder and resident consultation;
- The key findings from the team's baseline analysis;
- The strategic priorities for Middlesbrough Council;
- Sub-regional, regional and National criteria for the development of sustainable communities;
- CABE urban design principles.

The criteria were weighted to reflect their relative importance. The rationale for each of the criteria and weightings are developed in more detail below.

The second stage was to assess what the impact of continuing with the existing programmes would be and whether existing programmes would sufficiently address the form and function requirements for each of the 6 areas. This then provided a base to test the impact of the strategic option.

## Explanation of Criteria and Weightings

In evaluating the options the team developed a number of key objectives that the preferred solution should support. These are:

- Creating a Sustainable Housing Market
- Community Support and Neighbourhood Sustainability
- Creates a Quality Environment

- Improves Social and Economic Conditions
- Ensures Project Delivery

Under each of these objectives a number of descriptors are used and these are developed in more detail below.

## Creating a Sustainable Housing Market

Sustainable housing markets are a product of balancing product choice, tenure, and supply and demand. Moreover if public sector investment is to provide value for money then conditions need to be created that support private sector investment into the housing. Within this study baseline research has shown a housing market which whilst it has seen a growth in prices in line with national trends, has historically, served the bottom end of the market and still has the lowest prices relatively. The housing market within the study area has seen an increase in investor activity, leading to fears that the recent price growth experienced is a product of cyclical rather than structural change in the market. In seeking to address these issues a more sustainable market must be created and in creating a sustainable housing market the following issues are key:

- Balancing supply and demand
- Increasing the types and price ranges of housing available;
- Improving tenure ratios;
- Stabilising prices in line with the sub-regional average;
- Stabilising the population;
- Attracting new people to the area;
- Locating housing where people wish to live; and
- Providing brownfield development opportunities.

With these issues in mind the following criteria have been developed, against which the 6 options will be tested.

## Increasing Housing Choice

This criterion assesses whether an option will provide a variation in the current house type mix. The aim is to assess whether the house types provided meet the aspirations and financial capacity of the local community, reflecting the demand for different housing types and providing housing that would help to attract new households to the area. The recent Housing Market Assessment undertaken for Tees Valley Living has been used to gauge local aspirations, along with the recently completed ONE Regional Aspirations Study.

## Balancing Housing Tenure

This criterion assesses whether the option provides a change in the tenure ratio to reflect the regional average, with an increase in owner occupied housing and a corresponding decrease in rented housing providing greater stability in the housing market. The aim is to move away from housing markets with too high a dominance of private/social rented stock, as this leads to a more transient community, and as such can contribute towards a housing market being less sustainable.

## Balancing Supply and Demand

Research into low demand and housing market failure has shown that housing market restructuring is the most effective supply side mechanism to respond to low demand and its associated problems. Housing market restructuring provides the framework within which a sustainable community can be created by providing the right quantities, tenure and style of housing to balance supply and demand. Housing market restructuring is therefore vital to the success of the project and is therefore weighted highest out of the four housing specific criteria.

A high score indicates that supply and demand would be balanced by removing obsolete unpopular housing, replacing this with modern housing in numbers to meet the actual demand based on household / population projections and forecasts. It also indicates that the incidence of voids would be significantly reduced with the vacancy rate reflecting the national average.

## Optimise investment in retained properties

This criterion relates to the need for investment within retained properties. This investment may come from a variety of sources: privately through owners who recognise that their property has a secure future within the neighbourhood, from RSLs who have an existing stake within the area or who may wish to acquire further existing properties, or through potential grants or regeneration funding.

Investment will however, only be likely to be forthcoming in a housing market which is stable and is viewed as having a sustainable future. Options will therefore be assessed bearing this factor in mind. An option with a high score would be required to create the circumstances where investment in existing properties was attractive to those with a long-term investment interest in the area.

## Community Support and Neighbourhood Sustainability

Our baseline analysis identified that one of the key drivers was the need to attract in-migration and to tackle the significant areas of unsustainable house types. Accordingly, we have therefore weighted these criteria highly.

We also recognise however that community support is a key component of deliverability. Indeed some communities already have a strong level of community involvement and support for regeneration plans.

A key driver for the Older Housing Vision is the need to create sustainable settlement patterns, therefore the criteria 'Builds strong and cohesive communities' is weighted as the most important of this category.

The importance of community support is also considered as a factor under 'Ensures Project Delivery' below.

