



**Sunderland Council**

**Low Carbon Developers Guidance Note**

**July 2023**

# Low Carbon Developer Guidance Note

## Background

This guidance note has been created to highlight policies within the adopted planning policy framework, which will assist the Council in achieving its carbon neutrality targets set out within the Sunderland Low Carbon Framework and the Council's adopted Low Carbon Action Plan.

In December 2020, Sunderland City Council and its partners adopted the Sunderland Low Carbon Framework, which establishes an overall aspiration to become a carbon neutral city by 2040. Aligned to the Framework and to demonstrate the Council's commitment and leadership towards becoming carbon neutral, in January 2021 the Council published its initial Low Carbon Action Plan which set an overall ambition to become carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030. This Plan was updated and refreshed in July 2022.

The Framework and Action Plan are based around seven strategic priorities which require coordinated activity to ensure that the commitments can be met.

In recognition of the role that planning policy can play in ensuring that that new development is delivered in a sustainable way which is compatible with the Council's low carbon commitments, it is recognised through the Action Plan that we need to highlight and promote the policies which we already have within our adopted Local Plan, but also work with partners to ensure that the policies contained within future iterations of the Local Plan embed sustainability as much as possible. The purpose of this note is to highlight the policies that already exist to ensure that developers and decision makers take these into consideration when preparing and determining planning applications.

## Core Strategy and Development Plan

The Core Strategy and Development Plan (CSDP) was adopted in December 2020, and the plan period runs from 2015 to 2033. Sustainable development and energy efficiency is a key theme in the Plan and is recognised through the overarching Spatial Vision. In particular, the following references to low carbon and energy efficiency are identified within the spatial vision:

By 2033, Sunderland will be a place that:

- Is more socially, economically and **environmentally sustainable**.
- Is entrepreneurial, a University City at the heart of a **low carbon regional economy**
- **Is resilient to climate change**, has maximised the opportunities for **renewable energy**, embraced **sustainable design principles** and has reduced the impacts of flooding on homes and businesses.

The CSDP recognises that climate change is one of the most significant threats facing the 21st Century and as such there are unprecedented challenges to the environment, economy and the future security of energy. In order to support the Low Carbon Action Plan (previously the Climate Change Action Plan), which sets out how the city is going to reduce its energy consumption,

emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gases, the policies within the CSDP seek to assist in reducing the impacts of climate change.

Implementing renewable and low carbon energy is an important part of the response to the challenges of both climate change and security of energy supply. Renewable and low carbon energy sources are low or zero emission alternatives to fossil fuels as a source of energy. Renewable and low carbon decentralised energy is an important component of meeting carbon reduction targets. Through reference to this in the CSDP, the aim is to encourage the provision of renewable and low carbon energy through the planning system.

To assist in delivering the Spatial Vision of the CSDP, a number of strategic priorities are set out, including Strategic Priority 9 which relates to climate change and sets out the need:

“To adapt to and minimise the impact of climate change by reducing carbon emissions, maximising the use of low carbon energy solutions and seeking to reduce the risk/impact of flooding.”

This particular strategic priority, is linked to the following Plan policies:

- BH1 – Design quality;
- BH2 – Sustainable design and construction;
- NE1 – Green and blue infrastructure;
- WWE1 – Decentralised, renewable and low carbon energy;
- WWE2 – Flood risk and coastal management;
- WWE3 - Water management;
- WWE4 – Water quality;
- WWE5 – disposal of foul water
- WWE10 – Energy from waste

## Core Strategy and Development Plan Policies

The information below highlights key elements from relevant CSDP policies where there are specific references to, or requirements regarding, sustainable or low carbon development. This is to help signpost developers and other interested parties towards key information contained within each policy, particularly relating to low carbon or sustainability requirements.

In order to keep the information concise and relevant, the policies are not referenced in their entirety, and it is recommended that in order to understand the full requirements of the policies, that the Core Strategy document<sup>1</sup> is consulted.

- BH1: Design Quality
  - Under point 9 of this policy, developments are expected to maximise the opportunities for buildings and spaces to gain benefit from sunlight and passive solar energy. This will improve the energy efficiency of developments.

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<sup>1</sup> Core Strategy and Development Plan: [Core Strategy and Development Plan - Sunderland City Council](#)

- BH2: Sustainable Design and Construction
  - Sustainable design and construction is considered integral to development. Where possible, major development should:
    - Maximise energy efficiency and integrate the use of renewable and low carbon energy;
    - Reduce waste and promote recycling during the construction and in operation;
    - Conserve water resources and minimise vulnerability to flooding;
    - Provide details of the type of materials to be used at the appropriate stage of development;
    - Provide flexibility and adaptability, where appropriate, allowing future modification of use or layout, facilitating future refurbishment and retrofitting;
    - Include opportunities to incorporate measures which enhance the biodiversity value of development, such as green roofs;
    - Include a sustainability statement setting out how the development incorporates sustainable resource management and high environmental standards
  
- NE1: Green and Blue Infrastructure
  - To maintain and improve the Green Infrastructure Network through enhancing, creating and managing multifunctional greenspaces and bluespaces that are well connected to each other and the wider countryside, development should:
    - incorporate existing and/or new green infrastructure features within their design and to improve accessibility to the surrounding area;
    - address corridor gaps and areas of corridor weakness where feasible;
    - support the management of existing wildlife corridors, including reconnecting vulnerable and priority habitats;
    - apply climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, including flood risk and watercourse management;
    - link walking and cycling routes to and through the corridors, where appropriate;
    - include and/or enhance formal and natural greenspace and bluespace provision;
    - protect and enhance landscape character;
    - have regard to the requirements of the Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan and make contributions proportionate to their scale towards the establishment, enhancement and on-going management; and protect, enhance and restore watercourses, ponds, lakes and water dependent habitats
  
- NE3: Woodlands/hedgerows and trees
  - To conserve significant trees, woodlands and hedgerows, development should:
    - Follow the principles below to guide the design of development where effects to ancient woodland, veteran/aged trees and their immediate surroundings have been identified:
      - i. avoid harm;
      - ii. provide unequivocal evidence of need and benefits of proposed development;

- iii. provide biodiversity net gain;
- iv. establish likelihood and type of any impacts;
- v. implement appropriate and adequate mitigation and compensation;
- vi. provide adequate buffers; and
- vii. provide adequate evidence to support proposals;

- retain, protect and improve woodland, trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), trees within conservation areas, and 'important' hedgerows as defined by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997;
- give consideration to trees and hedgerows both on individual merit as well as their contribution to amenity and interaction as part of a group within the broader landscape setting; and
- ensure that where trees, woodlands and hedgerows are impacted negatively by proposed development, justification, mitigation, compensation and maintenance measures are provided in a detailed management plan.

- NE4: Greenspace

- The council will protect, conserve and enhance the quality, community value, function and accessibility of greenspace and wider green infrastructure, especially in areas of deficiency identified in the council's Greenspace Audit and Report by:
  - designating greenspaces in the A&D Plan;
  - requiring development to contribute towards the provision of new and/or enhanced greenspace where there is an evidenced requirement;
  - requiring all major residential development to provide: i. a minimum of 0.9ha per 1000 bedspaces of useable greenspace on site; unless ii. a financial contribution for the maintenance/upgrading to neighbouring existing greenspace is considered to be more appropriate;
  - refusing development on greenspaces which would have an adverse effect on its amenity, recreational or nature conservation value unless it can be demonstrated that:
    - i. the proposal is accompanied by an assessment that clearly demonstrates that the provision is surplus to requirements; or
    - ii. a replacement facility which is at least equivalent in terms of usefulness, attractiveness, quality and accessibility, and where of an appropriate quantity, to existing and future users is provided by the developer on another site agreed with the council prior to development commencing; or
    - iii. replacement on another site is neither practicable or possible an agreed contribution is made by the developer to the council for new provision or the improvement of existing greenspace or outdoor sport

and recreation facilities and its maintenance within an appropriate distance from the site or within the site.

- WWE1: Decentralised, renewable and low carbon energy
  - The development of decentralised, renewable and low carbon energy will be supported subject to satisfactory resolution of all site specific constraints as follows:
    - Decentralised, renewable and low-carbon energy development should be located and designed to avoid unacceptable significant adverse impacts on landscape, wildlife, heritage assets and amenity;
    - appropriate steps should be taken to mitigate any unacceptable significant adverse impacts, such as noise nuisance, flood risk, shadow flicker, interference with telecommunications, air traffic operations, radar and air navigational installations through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures; and
    - any adverse cumulative impacts of proposals.

Development that can provide combined heat and power must demonstrate that due consideration has been given to the provision of any heat produced as an energy source to any suitable adjacent potential heat customers.

- WWE2: Flood risk and coastal management
  - Developments are expected to reduce flood risk and ensure appropriate coastal management.
- WWE3: Water management
  - Development must consider the effect on flood risk, on-site and off-site, commensurate with the scale and impact.
- WWE4: Water quality
  - The quantity and quality of surface and groundwater bodies and quality of bathing water shall be protected and where possible enhanced in accordance with the Northumbria River Basin Management Plan.
- WWE5: Disposal of foul water
  - Development is expected to follow the drainage hierarchy.
- WWE10: Energy from waste
  - Energy from Waste development will be required to provide combined heat and power unless it can be demonstrated that this would prevent the development of waste management facilities that have the potential to deliver important waste infrastructure.
- SP10: Connectivity and Transport Network
  - To improve connectivity and enhance the city's transport network, the council, working with its partners and utilising developer contributions will seek to:
    - Improve a range of named transport routes and bus corridors to encourage walking and cycling;

- Improve operating conditions for buses in particular through securing improvements to the major bus corridors and exploring park and ride opportunities;
- Support improvements to the Metro and rail network including new stations and routes where deliverable;
- Safeguard two named disused railway alignments for future use; and
- Improve and extend the cycle network.
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- ST1: Urban Core accessibility and movement
  - Accessibility to and movement through the Urban Core will be enhanced by:
    - Discouraging the use of streets by through-vehicular traffic;
    - Increasing priority for pedestrians and cyclists in the Primary Shopping Area;
    - Improving the cycle network;
    - Improving the 'legibility' and signage for pedestrians;
    - Improving the attractiveness of Park Lane interchange; and
    - Working with rail industry partners to improve the connectivity of Sunderland to other major centres and supporting redevelopment and improvement of Sunderland Station.
- ST3: Development and transport
  - Development should:
    - incorporate pedestrian and cycle routes within and through the site, linking to the wider development.
    - Provide an appropriate level of electric vehicle parking and charging infrastructure for commercial and non-residential development to suit site specific requirements, and make provision for the installation of home charging apparatus on major residential schemes; and
    - Safeguard existing network of Definitive Public Rights of Way.

## Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

Sunderland also has a suite of adopted SPDs which provide additional guidance on specific topic areas and are to be read alongside the CSDP policies. SPDs are a material consideration within the planning process when determining applications. The information set out below gives a brief overview of the relevant SPDs signposting what guidance should be considered when looking to submit a pre-application enquiry or a planning application.

### Development Management SPD (Adopted June 2021)

This City-wide SPD acknowledges that implementing renewable and low carbon energy is an important part of the response to the challenges of both climate change and security of energy supply. Page **53** of this document provides useful information regarding what type of renewable energies could be utilised, alongside advice on how these can be integrated within development.

The SPD also contains specific parking standards, with a lower requirement adopted for the most sustainable locations to encourage active travel and public transport use. The installation of an

appropriate level of electric vehicle charging infrastructure as part of new development is also referenced.

#### South Sunderland Growth Area (SSGA) (Adopted June 2020)

This area specific SPD highlights that the creation of a sustainable low carbon community is a priority within the SSGA. Page 69 in particular highlights that:

- All developments should seek to achieve or exceed central governments targets towards sustainable construction.
- Thought should be given to the layout and positioning of developments to optimise renewable energy technologies and solar gain.
- Wherever feasible green roofs should be incorporated.

#### Riverside Sunderland SPD (Adopted December 2020)

Riverside Sunderland SPD sets out the aspirations for the regeneration of the Riverside site and aims to provide guidance for development over what is expected to be around a 20 year period.

Sustainable development is a key aspect of the aspirations for Riverside, point 1.4 of the SPD seeks to guide development on Riverside Sunderland to achieve carbon neutrality and climate change resilience by:

- creating energy-efficient offices and public buildings;
- delivering energy-efficient homes built using modern methods of construction;
- encouraging active travel and use of public transport;
- reducing car dependency;
- providing charging points for electric vehicles;
- promoting renewable energy and energy storage;
- introducing green roofs and green walls wherever practicable; and
- implementing sustainable urban drainage solutions

#### Further information

The above information contained within this guidance note is a summary of the policies and SPD documents relating to low carbon and sustainable development. These policies and information can be viewed in full at the below links. If you require any additional information, the contact email addresses for the Planning Policy and Development Management teams are set out below:

- Planning Policy: [planningpolicy@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@sunderland.gov.uk)
- Development Management: [dc@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:dc@sunderland.gov.uk)



## Links to relevant documents

Core Strategy and Development Plan:

[Core Strategy and Development Plan](#)

Sunderland Low Carbon Framework:

[Sunderland Low Carbon Framework](#)

Sunderland City Council Low Carbon Action Plan:

[Sunderland City Council Low Carbon Action Plan](#)

Development Management SPD:

[Development Management SPD](#)

South Sunderland Growth Area SPD:

[South Sunderland Growth Area SPD](#)

Riverside Sunderland SPD:

[Riverside Sunderland SPD](#)