

# ***One Core Strategy***

## **Formal Objection from the Green Parties of Newcastle & Gateshead**

1. Summary Statement
2. Supporting Evidence Statement

---

Submitted on behalf of the two organisations by:

Dave Byrne,

Chairperson, Gateshead Green Party

[\(dbne11871@blueyonder.co.uk\)](mailto:dbne11871@blueyonder.co.uk)

Sandy Irvine,

Chairperson, Newcastle Green Party

[\(sandyirvine@blueyonder.co.uk\)](mailto:sandyirvine@blueyonder.co.uk)

---

Contact address:

45, Woodbine Road, Gosforth, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE3 1DE

---

# Summary

The Green Party branches of Newcastle and Gateshead submit the following joint objection to the *One Core Strategy* put forward for consultation by Newcastle and Gateshead councils. We believe that the *Strategy* is not sound since it is based on a series of false assumptions and also sets unsustainable goals. It is not effective since it fails to address the real issues of today and tomorrow. It also breaks in significant ways with a number of critical intergovernmental and national government guidelines. Indeed it is not in accord with certain policies agreed by local councils in the area. Therefore we have no alternative but to call for a fundamental rethink of the whole *Strategy*.<sup>i</sup>

We recognise that it makes sense to formulate joint approaches between Newcastle and Gateshead. Moreover, there is a good argument for much greater co-ordination with other councils on Tyneside and the wider Tyne and Wear functional city region. The current situation is, however, one in which several local councils are now, in reality, fighting each other for new council tax payers and new businesses. Overall, however, there are too many flawed assumptions behind the *Strategy*, too many non-sequiturs and a quite unsound grasp of the forces that will shape tomorrow's world. Our detailed objections are made in a supporting document. Here we outline our basic objections. The *Strategy* fundamentally fails to address the issues facing the people of Gateshead and Newcastle now and for the foreseeable future. Its core failings can be summarised thus:

1. The *Strategy's* 'evidence base' is flawed. Some might feel that it is a veritable 'dodgy dossier'. It is largely based on out-dated figures. These are used in turn for what are little more than 'wishful thinking projections'. The *Strategy* does not project real existing trends, even trends based on the old data they draw upon. Instead, it makes the unwarranted assumption that population and housing development will both increase at rates far higher than happened during a period of economic growth and a booming housing market. This is more a fantasy rather than an effective plan with a proper evidence base. In actuality, the more likely prospect is one of long-term economic stagnation.<sup>ii</sup> All elements in the housing market, other than the very limited highly affluent sector, are already in 2011 in free fall. The retail sector is struggling. The investments that the *Strategy* assumes are simply not happening.
2. The *Strategy* wrongly envisages a future of 'growth' based on an increasing population, a booming housing market, and a thriving retail sector. Its authors present this at a time the region faces the worst economic recession since the 1930s. Given the collapse of manufacturing industry in the North East and the on-going cutbacks in public sector jobs, we may well be facing an even worse situation than prevailed then. In the 1930s the bulk of our industrial base was mothballed. Today it has been largely destroyed.
3. Despite a scattering of words such as 'sustainable' and 'green infrastructure' throughout the document, the *Strategy's* proposals would, if implemented, inflict direct environmental damage on the immediate area and engenders a range of unsustainable developments beyond. In particular, they would increase CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – at a time when related global warming poses the greatest single threat to the future of humanity.<sup>iii</sup> It fails to address several other ecological threats such as dwindling biodiversity, lost farmland, flooding risks and water pollution.
4. It is socially unsustainable too. It would increase inequality and social exclusion, producing far more polarised neighbourhoods. The prospects of those in poor housing would not be substantially improved, though some expensive 'executive' houses might be built on the urban fringe. The majority of the unemployed would gain little. At the same time, the prospects of ordinary people still in employment would not be made more secure. The *Strategy* would make the local economy even more unsustainably dependent on high-risk corporate-led 'flagship' retail developments<sup>iv</sup> and on speculative housing construction.
5. It neglects the very areas like Scotswood and Walker where there is widespread public support for 'regeneration' developments. A lot of noise has been made by councillors and planners about prioritising 'brownfield' sites. In reality, the *Strategy* is more likely to lead to development on greenfield sites, something the public overwhelmingly does not want.
6. The beneficiaries of the *Strategy* would be a handful of large-scale development companies and contractors.<sup>v</sup> Even if they chose not to build on the "preferred sites" they own, once restrictions on the development of that land were removed, such assets would inflate in value. In turn, such inflation would permit greater borrowings from banks. Once again, the few would profit at the expense of the many.

<p>Newcastle and Gateshead need a radical alternative. The <i>One Core Strategy</i> does not deliver this. Any attempt to implement it would inflict unsustainable damage, contrary to its rhetoric about sustainability, local needs, community well-being, and quality of life.</p>
---

## Costs of the One Core Strategy

The available evidence suggests two things. First, many of the proposals contained in the *Strategy* will come to nothing, given what is known about emerging economic and ecological constraints. To that extent, the *Strategy* is not just a waste of time, money and brain power. It is also a diversion from the real issues. Further, it unnecessarily casts a shadow over many neighbourhoods. Secondly, however, some of the proposed developments may actually take place. These are particularly the ones targeted at greenfield sites.<sup>vi</sup> Sadly, by the time this predictably speculative bubble bursts, it will have already inflicted irreversible environmental and social damage.<sup>vii</sup>

Newcastle and Gateshead could well be left with more empty retail premises, more empty office space, and more empty housing property. Meanwhile, the ranks of the unemployed will almost certainly continue to swell, with no really sustainable opportunities created for them.<sup>viii</sup> Inequality would actually be widened yet further. Newcastle and Gateshead could find themselves sinking towards the forlorn situation in a number of American urban areas: the so-called ‘doughnut city’. In other words, there will be, on the one hand, well-heeled enclaves on the outskirts and, on the other, increasingly desperate ghettos towards the centre.<sup>ix</sup>

Overall, rolling implementation of the *Strategy* would lead to the loss of more valuable farmland and vital wildlife habitat. It would exacerbate the dangers of flooding. Meanwhile it would increase the net ‘carbon footprint’ of Newcastle and Gateshead as well as other forms of pollution such as sewage contamination along the Ouseburn. It would also aggravate traffic congestion on key approach roads and intensify pressure on schools and other facilities in certain neighbourhoods.

## Wrong priorities

It is unacceptable that so little priority was given in the first draft of the *Strategy* to brownfield reclamation as well as the refurbishment and reuse of existing properties, including the ‘rescue’ of empty dwellings. Possible initiatives in inner city housing have not been properly pursued. Manufacturing is woefully ignored in favour of widely discredited ‘clone town’ retail development. The whole *Strategy* also remains unsustainably biased toward the private motor car. The few constructive ideas it does suggest, particularly about public transport, are simply wish lists. No serious intention of implementation or sources of likely funding are evident... unlike the destructive measures which it actively seeks to promote.

Overall the *Strategy* is still mired in what, in the supporting evidence, the Green Party calls ‘growthism’. It is a mindset stuck in doomed dreams to bring back the ‘old economy’ of physical expansion and debt-laden consumerism. Instead we need to face reality. Society is moving into an ‘age of contraction’. But it can also be an age of opportunities...if we embrace the right priorities, those of the ‘steady-state’, not growthism. A small but growing number of local communities have already moved in that direction.<sup>x</sup> As we show in the Supporting Evidence Statement (section 17), there is actually a whole range of alternatives for the here and now.

The supporters of the *Strategy* argue, of course, that their hands are tied. They blame the forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), a ‘let-rip’ developers’ charter.<sup>xi</sup> They claim that, if the *Strategy* is not accepted by councillors, the government will impose a far worse free-for-all. Given that the *Strategy* is so poorly evidenced and so ineffective, it may bring about the very thing its supporters claim it is designed to avoid. In other words, such failings could lead to rejection at a planning inspection and so to the imposition of the central government alternative. Even if that eventuality could be avoided, many of the proposals in the *Strategy* are so bad that there is not much difference between those two outcomes.

That said, there is evidence of a longer term desire amongst various councillors and officers to pursue policies like those of the *Strategy*, a wish that pre-dates the NPPF. Thus a former senior planner was quoted as describing the Green Belt as a “noose” around the city of Newcastle, arguing that there was lots of green land between Newcastle and Edinburgh. Thus the threatened assault on the Green Belt have roots that go back before the NPPF, was ever conceived. Much of the *Strategy*, especially demolition of housing, instead of renovation, in Bensham, is based on the old and now discredited ‘Pathfinder’ programme and the local *Going for Growth* strategy. Indeed the fetish of ‘modernisation’ that runs through *Strategy* would not have looked out of place in the days of T. Dan Smith and his schemes for a new ‘Brasilia of the North’.

The preparation of the *Strategy* has also been flawed, with poor evidence and, as we try to show later, an inadequate consultation process. Despite protestations to the contrary, the two councils have not really been listening and now seek to foist a faulty plan on Newcastle and Gateshead against widespread public opposition. Councillors and planners seem convinced that there is no alternative.<sup>xii</sup> However, as the Green Party hopes to demonstrate in its Supporting Evidence Statement, the assumptions beneath the *Strategy* are not only unsound but, in fact, there is another and more much effective way forward.

Newcastle and Gateshead Green Parties call for the abandonment of the whole *One Core Strategy* and demand a thorough rethink of first principles, not just specific policies.

# Green Party Alternative Vision

We believe that no strategy can be worthwhile unless it is based on a sound analysis and articulates an appropriate way forward, both in terms of a long-term vision and steps towards it. In Section 17 of the Supporting Evidence Statement, we cite good examples of work by others that provide that necessary broad view. Some also give an idea of funding mechanisms.<sup>xiii</sup>

It might be worth spotlighting here, however, a good example of how this can be done is:

<http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/community/environment/energyconservation/warmzone/warmzonemenu.shtml>

An example of a relevant draft council budget is:

[http://www.brightonhovegreens.org/localsites/bh/assets/files/localparties/brighton/publications/draft\\_green\\_budget\\_lores.pdf](http://www.brightonhovegreens.org/localsites/bh/assets/files/localparties/brighton/publications/draft_green_budget_lores.pdf)

Here we summarise some of the policies that should be at the heart of any sustainable programme for the here and now.

- ✿ *Invest in renewable energy generation projects, including district heating and co-generation schemes;*
- ✿ *Direct funding to best standard home insulation and 'solar roofs';*
- ✿ *Encourage 'green collar' jobs in fields 'eco-industries', alongside full blooded recycling programmes;*
- ✿ *Take the 'green scissors' to extravagant retail, hotel & other unsustainable development projects;*
- ✿ *Curb excessive executive salaries and perks, helping the low paid instead;*
- ✿ *Favour buses, rail and other public transport, with the aim of a big reduction in private car use;*
- ✿ *Provide a much better deal for cyclists and pedestrians;*
- ✿ *Develop 'streets for people' and play streets through 20 mph zones & much more extensive pedestrianisation;*
- ✿ *More support for local shops and for local farmer's market, sourcing, as much as possible, foodstuffs from the region;*
- ✿ *Oppose more giant supermarkets and 'retail parks';*
- ✿ *Create more allotments & 'rooftop gardening' schemes;*
- ✿ *Manage parks and public gardens organically;*
- ✿ *Encourage more wildlife protection schemes as well as protect local trees, plus far more tree planting programmes;*
- ✿ *Make decision-making more local through the use of neighbourhood budgets;*
- ✿ *Create more transparency in local council decision-making;*
- ✿ *Use council procurement programmes to encourage the above objectives.*

**The Greens are the true realists, advocating policies  
that really will meet the challenges of tomorrow**

# Supporting Evidence Statement

The following sections provide supporting evidence & reasoning for the Green Party objection to the *One Core Strategy*

1. Evidence-based policy and the *One Core Strategy*
2. The Critical Context
3. Spatial Strategy
4. Population
5. Habitats & Biodiversity
6. Hydrology, flooding & water pollution
7. Farmland & Food Supply
8. Quality of Life
9. Local Economy & Job Creation
10. Housing
11. New Build
12. Access & Mobility
13. Education, Health & Social Care
14. 'Re-creation': Leisure, Sport & the Arts
15. Role of the Council & Officers
16. A Sustainable City
17. Exemplar alternatives
18. Nimbyism?

# I. 'Evidence'

The *Core Strategy*, it is claimed, is based on hard evidence. We strongly dispute that claim. Most of the data used comes from the years before 2008. Yet the so-called 'credit crunch' of that year and ensuing economic downturn render many of the assumptions made within the *Core Strategy* untenable. At the time of writing, there is deep instability within the Euro zone. It seems fair to conclude that economic volatility will be endemic for the foreseeable future. Such economic constraints throw into doubt the projections made in the *Core Strategy* about housing, employment, retail, leisure, travel, and much more.

## The Deeper Recession

At the same time, there is accumulating evidence of a deeper – and rapidly deepening - crisis 'outside' society, in other words, what might be called the 'eco-crunch'. Global over-warming is only one of many emerging constraints. Mention might be made of a few other symptoms of an unsustainable imbalance between people and planet: widespread soil erosion, aquifer depletion, salinisation, deforestation, a growing incidence of floods, conflagrations, avalanches and mudslides, direct pollution of air, land and water, accelerating destruction of biodiversity, 'peak oil' and indeed coming peaks in a whole range of key non-renewable minerals... This lethal combination has been rightly called a "perfect storm".<sup>xiv</sup>

Many of these 'ills' are interrelated, one worsening the other. All interact, directly or indirectly, with the purely human economy. Ecological constraints multiply economic ones. Yet only passing reference is made to these absolutely critical challenges. Even then it is largely a matter of just carbon emissions. At best, there is abstract rhetoric but not hard policy. Yet so-called 'peak oil', whose implications are basically ignored, will, all by itself, derail most objectives proclaimed by the *Core Strategy*, whether or not adverse climate change develops as widely predicted.

To be fair, much useful information has been gathered by the *Core Strategy* team. It is certainly better to be guided by reality than by wild guesses. For the time being, let us note though that when there actually is incontrovertible hard evidence, the *Core Strategy* manages to ignore it. Thus wildlife ecology reveals that the fauna of Gosforth Nature Reserve absolutely depends on foraging land outside the protected land. Without it, their numbers will dwindle away. Yet, at the Gosforth Civic Hall meeting (15/11/11), Harvey Emms, speaking on behalf of the team, kept denying any danger to wildlife on the grounds that no-one was going to build on the Reserve itself, only on the land around it!

'Joined-up' thinking is sometimes lacking too. For example, the *Strategy* and *One Plan* seem to support the (excellent) idea of reviving rail links northwards to Ashington as well as use by the Metro of the existing railways line in Washington to the South East. It would seem sound to deduce that such developments will lessen the need for new-build in Newcastle in particular since a fair number of people would most likely opt for cheaper property outside the city boundary.

Often policy-making has to employ straight common sense. It tells us, for example, that new housing is likely to generate new traffic. However, certain road sites like the Haddricks Mill roundabout and roads into the west side of the city are already severely congested at many times during the day. Similarly, Lobley Hill Bank in Gateshead is often overloaded. No amount of likely spending and new road works will enable it to cope with the extra load they will have to carry if nearby proposed developments go ahead. The only way ahead is to try and discourage current levels of road usage, especially by private cars.

At several public meetings, representatives of the *Core Strategy* team such as Councillor Murison and officers such as Harvey Emms and Nicola Woodward have talked at length of "listening", "working closely with...", "responding as new information comes to light" and so forth.<sup>xv</sup> Indeed at the Falcons Club meeting (25/11/11), Mr. Murison gave the impression to all those present in the audience that certain sites in Lemington had been removed from the *Strategy* list of possible development locations, due to possible problems with drainage in that area which rather suggests inadequate investigation in the first place.

The Green Party welcomes objectivity, openness and responsiveness. However the stronger impression is that the evidence base of that whole strategy is not robust and that policy is being made 'on the hoof', rather than on the basis of scientific analysis. Thus, with regard to transport, it is stated that "we are currently undertaking modelling work to inform the interventions required to mitigate the growth in trips." This demonstrates that not only is the *Strategy* authors putting forward potential development sites without having first done the necessary modelling of the transport impact, but, again, they are simply hoping that the interventions required will somehow be funded. This is neither hard evidence nor robust logic.

## Evidence, Policy... and Values

Actually there are real limits to evidence-based policy-making. Here we outline further problems with the evidence-based approach that the *Strategy* team claims to have used. To be sure, hard evidence and reason are extremely valuable tools. Science has dispelled much dangerous superstition., for example. Clearly decision-

making will be aided by solid information, logical deduction and careful checking. But it is still important to recognise the limits to recognise certain limits to such methodology.

Isolated facts seldom 'speak' for themselves. Their value depends not only the quality of the original research. Evidence is also shaped by the questions asked and the assumption or ambitions behind them. Even when hard evidence is acquired, there remains the problem of robust interpretation with correct ranking regarding inherent importance, the weighting it should be given or even the degree of relevance it is accorded. Many qualities like 'happiness', 'privacy' and 'open space' are hard to quantify and therefore may be pushed aside by things that lend themselves to easy quantification.

It seems clear, however that those formulating the Core Strategy have an underpinning 'agenda', one rooted in a growth-oriented worldview that, as we argue below, we Greens feel is not appropriate in what economist Herman Daly has called a "full world". Furthermore, a crude utilitarianism pervades the *Strategy*, something that, for example, led to the disastrous selection of buffer land around Gosforth Nature Reserve as a possible house building site.

Furthermore, evidence-based policies tend to favour the status quo, its core values, its dominant institutions, existing public policies and existing lifestyle preferences. They do not deal with unprecedented ecological developments (e.g. a sudden adverse climate flip) nor sudden economic changes (a rapid inflation of food prices in the world market: past 'evidence' suggested that the UK could simply import food it no longer grows). Yet in a period of rapid change, such 'conservatism' becomes a barrier stopping society from taking the radically road needed (huge cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, oil consumption, and so forth as well as massive boosts to industries and lifestyles based on the '6 Rs' of renewability, reuse, repair, recycling, regionalisation and redistribution).

The fundamental problem is not one of data shortages or better data-processing.  
Contemporary society – often called the 'Information Society' – is awash with facts.  
The problem is one of analysis, vision and appropriate policy.  
Here the Core Strategy looks the wrong way.

## 2. The Critical Contexts

Given the centralisation of major decision-making in public policy in the UK, forward land use planning constitutes one of the few areas left when local councils can make a major difference to what happens in their locality. It will, of course, be shaped by national factors such as central government funding and the priorities set by national planning policy guidance.

Changes to the latter framework have been condemned by a remarkably wide variety of critics.<sup>xvi</sup> The new National Planning Policy Framework is basically a developers' charter. It will destroy large parts of the countryside as well as aggravate problems such as traffic pollution. It will also intensify already excess pressure on local facilities like schools and on utilities such as water supply and sewage disposal. The Green Party is therefore opposed to this drastic dilution of controls over development.

We understand that councils are considerably constrained by it. Furthermore there are legitimate fears of the consequences of having no plan in place. Certainly the present government seems to be threatening to let rip what we think would be a devastating 'free-for-all' in such an eventuality. That said, many councillors and officers seem to exaggerate the threat. It is true, for example, that central government requires the identification of possible house construction sites. Yet it is wrong to target the Green Belt when sufficient sites, ones that meet the required targets, could be identified in Scotswood, Walker and uncompleted parts of the Great Park. Would-be developers ought to be offered such sites only and the Green Belt kept free from encroachment. We would also note, at this point, a general failure to consult early on appropriate bodies, especially professionals working for wildlife charities such as the Natural History Society.

**Bad national frameworks do not justify bad local plans.**

The *Strategy* repeats some of the mistakes of the *Pathfinder* and *Going for Growth* programmes, widely indicted as failures.<sup>xvii</sup> Indeed it tends to look back to the days of the 60s when economic expansionism held sway. But, as Professor Tim Jackson, author of the widely acclaimed *Prosperity Without Growth*, stressed at a lecture at Newcastle University (November 2011), we should not attempt to bring back what he called the "old economy". Indeed the Green Party believes that we need a shift towards a new "steady-state" economics.<sup>xviii</sup>

More specifically, in an age of uncertainty, the precautionary principle is even more urgent. 'Future-proofing' will involve, amongst many other initiatives, a plethora of small-scale housing improvement programmes, varied initiatives in the field of renewable energy supply, diverse job creation projects, and so forth. Certainly we should avoid giving support to any institution that is "too-big-to-fail", a lesson painfully taught by on-going financial disorders.

The *Strategy* is too mired in a mindset inherited from a period when the world was abundant in resources. So it is not surprising that it has little to offer by way of preparing for tomorrow. Yet any forward thinking would show that we are entering a different world. There is abundant hard evidence that tomorrow's world is going to be more and more constrained than that of today. It will be a time to think 'shrink', not chase the will o' the wisp of expansion.<sup>xix</sup>

### Low Carbon Limits

Insofar as the *Strategy* directly addresses ecological issues, it is the challenge from carbon emissions stands out (**Policy CS 18 Climate Change**). Correspondingly, as is most evident to the connected *One PLAN* Economic Strategy, the way forward is perceived largely in terms of a "low carbon economy". The importance of global warming cannot be overstated:

"If tough controls are not put in place immediately, the world is likely to build so many fossil-fuelled power stations, energy-guzzling factories and inefficient buildings over the next five years, that it will become impossible to hold global warming to safe levels, and the last chance of combating dangerous climate change will be lost for ever" according to the (conservative) International Energy Agency. According to Fatih Birol, its chief economist, 'the door is closing. I am very worried – if we don't change direction now on how we use energy, we will end up beyond what scientists tell us is the minimum for safety. The door will be closed forever.'<sup>xx</sup>

Indeed, if current trends continue, and if we go on building a high-carbon energy infrastructure, by 2015 at least 90% of the available carbon budget needed to prevent the temperature from rising above 2°C will be swallowed up. By 2017, there will be no more room for manoeuvre, since the whole carbon budget will be spoken for, according to IEA calculations. Yet there is no attempt at a serious audit of the carbon costs of the *Strategy*.

Given that it admits that its plans will encourage more (fossil-fuelled) journeys and that it prioritises new build over refurbishment and reuse (both of which generate far less CO<sub>2</sub> than new construction), it is reasonable to conclude that the *Strategy* will deepen the carbon footprint of Newcastle-Gateshead.

That said, there is a danger in the whole ‘carbon discourse’. Global warming is not just about CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It is about other greenhouses gas sources as well the loss of balancing environmental ‘sinks’ and a changed planetary albedo (reflectivity of Earth’s surface, in which de-vegetation plays a significant part). This one-dimensional focus on carbon naturally leads to the idea of ‘low carbon economy’. To some extent this idea has roots in an older misperception that the problem is primarily one of pollution. A ‘low carbon economy’ would not, by itself, address many ecological threats and, in certain forms, may even make some worse.<sup>xxi</sup>

## **An age of constraints, not expansion**

We face a ‘triple crunch’. It is a combination of the ever-growing threat of climate change (and other ecological threats) *and* the explosion of energy prices linked to peak oil *and* the on-going financial crisis. Of course specific factors like the deregulation of financial markets and the creation of seemingly limitless credit played their malign part. The inflation of financial assets in relation to real wealth produced a bubble that inevitably burst. However, the deeper cause of the 2008 downturn was the rise in energy prices, their effect on jobs and wages in certain core industries and then the knock-on consequences in terms of the housing market and mortgage repayments.

Put the three constraints together and it can be seen just how unrealistic the ambitions of the *Strategy* actually are. Yet there are alternatives that do address the above threats. Some are listed in the Supporting Evidence Statement. The evidence cited there does propose many things way beyond the power and resources of individual councils. Yet they do outline a vision and councils could play a real part in bringing it into being.

Policies like energy and material conservation and recycling can also create more jobs per pound spent, jobs that offer something real to the unemployed and soon-to-be unemployed, not just an élite ‘technorati’. They foster real neighbourhoods and community values. They directly address social sores like fuel poverty. They save on land, water, energy and raw materials. They cut pollution. In that sense, the coming age of constraints is also an age of great opportunities too.

## **Growth treadmill**

The fundamental issue at stake is that of growth. The *Strategy* team seems locked in the mindset of what might be called ‘growthism’.<sup>xxii</sup> Every problem is largely defined as an absence of growth; every solution is largely conceived in terms of physical expansion. So the *Strategy* not only tries to accommodate growth but positively seeks to encourage it.

Furthermore the pursuit of development is a self-feeding process. Just as new roads generate new traffic, thereby bringing back the very problem of congestion they were allegedly built to solve, the proposed Green Belt developments will trigger more demands for more facilities and, in turn, more demands, in the future, for new housing to bring in new council tax payers to pay for the costs of building those facilities and... Such is the dynamic of positive feedback inherent in growth-based plans like the *Strategy*.

To that extent, it does not matter whether 25%, 15% or 5% of the proposed 36,000 new houses are constructed on the ‘greenfield’ sites. In a growing economy, that lower figure of 5% would not be the end of the process. Calls would come, sooner or later, for further encroachment. The *Strategy* never asks, let alone answers, that fundamental question: what next? The answer is, of course, not permanent boom but ‘bust’, since there is only so much land and so many resources.

At some time, a halt must be called... and that time is now. It is the overriding imperative, one which new evidence about the growing threat from climate change and other ecological perils reinforces almost daily.<sup>xxiii</sup> The Green Party proposes that it is high time to pursue the ‘steady-state’ alternative to growthmania.

The critical challenge is to make a better use of the existing built-up area, not extend it
---

Instead the *Strategy* endorses what we see as the illusion of ‘sustainable growth’. The Green Party, by contrast, endorses the view of Professor Herman Daly, former Senior Economist in the Environment Department of the World Bank, who has called sustainable growth “an oxymoron”. Clearly on a finite planet, it is impossible to have infinite growth. Though the *Core Strategy* is peppered with words like ‘sustainable’, no worthwhile definition is given or any serious made describe what might be the main characteristics of a ‘sustainable city’ (see later). Critical concepts like carrying capacity and urban footprint are conspicuous for the absence.<sup>xxiv</sup> We would direct to the *Strategy* team the following questions posed by Professor Daly:

The next time some economist or politician tells you we must do everything we can to grow (in order to fight poverty...), remind him that when something grows it gets bigger! Ask him how big he thinks the economy is now, relative to the ecosphere, and how big he thinks it should be. And what makes him think that growth is still causing wealth to

increase faster than illth? How does he know that we have not already entered the era of uneconomic growth? And if we have, then is not the solution to poverty to be found in sharing now, rather than in the empty promise of growth in the future?

Other words and phrases like ‘improving the urban core’ are virtually meaningless if not grounded in a proper sustainable framework.

## **Microcosm and Macrocosms**

Threats like diminished biodiversity and lost agricultural potential do not stem from the loss of this or that bit of land. The problem is the cumulative process: all those little take-overs added together. This is why so much of once rural England has been lost since 1945.<sup>xxv</sup> Thus small changes, even the best intentioned ones, can have big and malign consequences. For that reason, we reject the argument put forward on behalf of the *Strategy* that it proposes to take ‘only’ a small amount of the Newcastle-Gateshead Green Belt. Similarly excess carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions are nothing but the sum total of a myriad of activities, from fossil fuel burning to nitrogen fertiliser application and indeed belching cows.

Furthermore, the ecological footprint from the expanded urban area envisaged in the *Strategy* would be an even more unsustainable one.<sup>xxvi</sup> The argument that urban land use only takes up a small percentage of the country’s total land surface ignores that critical issue (as well as the limited carrying capacity of many non-urban areas such as the uplands). The concept of ‘eco-footprinting’ does not seem to have been taken seriously by the *Strategy* team, however.

Frequently the *Strategy* uses terms that sound as if ecological concerns are being taken on board. However on closer inspection, they mean little. Thus it talks of ‘quality green spaces’ and ‘green infrastructure’. But that might mean biologically sterile lawns of the kind now found in many new housing estates, parks, road embankments, and on golf courses. They are very different from, say, meadows and roadsides managed with wildlife and a supporting a food chain in mind. There are similarly deep differences between a chemically saturated acre of intensively farmed land and one organically cultivated. Single species, even-aged conifer plantations and old deciduous woodland are both ‘green spaces’ with trees in a shallow sense but they too radically differ ecologically.

It is easy to be misled by seemingly small figures. Defenders of Green Belt take-over, locally and nationally, often argue that the built-up area of the UK is actually quite small, some 6%. Thus, they claim, there is plenty of spare land so we have our ‘countryside cake’ and eat some rural land for housing and other buildings. The argument is quite fallacious. For a start, comparatively sparsely populated areas like the Scottish Highland lower the national average. In reality, in areas like the South East, South Wales, Bristol, the central Midlands, west Yorkshire and southern Lancashire, there is continuous sprawl. Open space is now quite scarce compared to just 50 years ago. A train journey from, say, Newcastle to London, passes through mile after mile of built upon land with only shorts stretches of really rural environments remaining. Even smallish towns like Hexham in rural Northumberland have sprouted suburban fringes.

Overall, the slide towards ecological ruin is largely the cumulative product of lots and lots of tiny acts of destruction: a little bit of land buried beneath a extra few homes, a small amount of road widening to ‘ease’ congestion, a few ponds drained for more farmland, a patch of woodland and hedgerow cleared for bigger fields, a slice hillside forest cleared for ski runs, a marshland dredged for a marina... Often this road is paved with good intentions but the malign consequences are the same.

### 3. Spatial Strategy

Whatever its quality or its purpose, new buildings have, of course, to go somewhere. We omit comment on the related *Regional Spatial Strategy* since some of our objections to the projections behind the *One Core Strategy* apply to the *RSS*. In any case, the latter plan is now defunct. Our root objection to the spatial dimensions of the *Strategy* concern its proposals to expand the built-up area. It is really is now a stark choice between that expansion or a better use of already developed land. Otherwise there will always be a pressure to cover one just one more little bit of land with concrete, brick and tarmac.

However policy options are clouded by some of the language used. The Green Party recognises that some Green Belt sites are actually far from 'green'. It also recognises some so-called 'brownfield sites' are actually valuable habitat land, especially given the way most agricultural land and many gardens have now become so inhospitable for many species. Obviously farmland also varies greatly in quality. Broad brush land use designations can lack sensitivity to such variables.

Proper planning is further prevented by the absence of – or lack of easy access to – information about who owns what, including monies paid for development rights. It is not immediately obvious, for example, that businesses such as builders and supermarkets own or have options on big areas of land, especially on the urban fringe. They are just biding their time before launching development bids. In effect a whole series of land use 'timebombs' have been sown around the country. Ideally we would want a whole new land use control system, one modelled around ecological 'imperatives'.<sup>xxvii</sup> Such an alternative would include a whole series of wedges, corridors and nodes where wildlife would come first, plus generous 'low intensity' buffer zones around them, rather than somewhat arbitrary circular belts.

However, in current circumstances, the Green Belt, regardless of certain drawbacks noted above, remains the first line of defence against urban sprawl and general unsustainable development.

The Green Party calls for the abandonment of any plans to build on the Green Belt.
--

With due care regarding brownfield sites that have become wildlife havens, we also call for a strategy that focuses exclusively on the existing built-up area, including extensive rehabilitation and adaptation of existing buildings and paved areas.

#### Gains or real losses

Of course, it is commonplace for particular developments to be defended on the grounds of some 'planning gain'. It is also argued that developers will set aside some monies to ameliorate whatever damage (they reluctantly concede) will be done. However some losses can never be offset in that way.

It is hard, for example, to recover the former productivity of soil that has been interred under buildings for decades if it should prove urgent to increase domestic food production. Extinct species are ... extinct. It is hard to see how the richness and diversity of wildlife of not just north Gosforth but the whole city could somehow be restored if Gosforth Nature Reserve were to lose its surrounding foraging land and wildlife corridor. There is simply no compensation for such a loss.

We have also noted that in many ways the *Strategy* would encourage developments that would add to the total contribution from the locality to global warming. Adverse climate change is the one thing that it is hardest to stop once it reaches a 'runaway' stage and we seem perilously close to that tipping point. No amount of 'payback' from developers could compensate for the calamitous consequences of such a change.

It might be added that planning gain is not usually a 'win-win' situation at all. Let us assume a half-way house compromise over a particular proposal of, say, 300 houses on an undeveloped site as opposed to 600. The developers, who previously had nothing, get 50% of what they wanted, while their opponents, who previously had everything they wanted, lose 50%. 'Win-lose' is a more accurate description of what happens when the presumption is set in favour of would-be developers.

#### Land availability, green land and brownfields

Local councils are, of course, obliged to identify sites on which future needs, in particular housing, can be met. There is a certain contradiction at the heart of *Strategy* about the land that might be targeted for development. In public presentations, it has been claimed by councillors such as Mr. Murison that they would dearly love to build everything on brownfield sites.

But then there comes the 'but'. It is variously argued that there are either:

- not enough sites of that nature and/or
- they would be costly to make usable (past pollution etc.) and/or

- it needs the monies that could be made from green field development to fund the clearing up of contaminated brownfield sites, and/or
- they do not provide sites where family accommodation can be suitably provided.

So it is concluded that greenfield sites, not least ones inside the Green Belt, will simply have to be used, though sometimes it is added, perhaps as a sop, that ‘only’ a part of any identified plot there would actually be used.

The Green Party regards such arguments as fallacious (we address the issue of real ‘need’ later). For a start, the main interest of Newcastle Council in particular would appear to be revenue. Evidence can be found in the way it is prepared to sell its own land along Salters Lane to developers. This is the very place where it should be following a policy in accordance with its own declarations about biodiversity and protecting, indeed expanding, the critical Cramlington-Jesmond Dene wildlife corridor.

A number of sites on the preferred sites list seem eccentric from any point of view, however. Apparently there are drainage issues on some sites in the Lemington-Newburn area, though the absence of any proper research makes it hard to be sure. It is more certainly the case that subsidence problems exist around Dinnington and possibly elsewhere due to past mining. Hydrological factors alone should rule out developments like site 4667 (north of Heathery Lane)<sup>xxviii</sup>.

We believe that there are several brownfield sites, especially nearer the Tyne. Some were home to heavy industry and could not instantly be turned into building sites. Yet, given the timescale of the *Core Strategy*, there is no dramatic urgency. The real issue is not physical, logistical nor economic but the lack of political will. In the meantime, there are other sites already available. There is a strong case for using land around Follingsby for landscape rehabilitation, recreational use and wildlife habitat given the bleak character of the area today, sitting as it does midst a sea of urban sprawl.

Examples include the old Sanderson Hospital site, at the time of writing standing empty, itself testimony to the real state of the housing market. Due to its prior usage, this large site is unlikely to have suffered much, if any, contamination, and so could be seen as ripe for relatively easy redevelopment. Instead of pursuing speculative retail and office development in central Newcastle, the council should target areas such as the Stephenson Quarter and East Pilgrim Street/SE Quadrant for visionary inner city housing development. Though we Greens opposed the construction of the Great Park, it is now a fact of life and it would be better to complete that development, albeit only if and when hydrological evidence in particular demonstrates that it is safe to do so.

We discuss later other alternatives: use of empty property, refurbishment and conversion of use, and better use of ‘ungreen’ spaces such as large-scale car parks.

## Green Belt

Most criticism of the *Strategy* will focus on the loss of Green Belt land. We have noted already that, in some ways, the Green Belt designation has flaws, both regarding the sometimes poor ecological & aesthetic quality of land thus protected. We recognise as well the effects such protection can have on other areas, not least regarding land prices.

Such matters notwithstanding, the current Green Belt provides the best protection against urban sprawl until some better land use framework can be created. For that reason alone, it should be defended against encroachment. In the meantime, the emphasis should be on a ‘greening of otherwise sub-standard Green Belt land, with maximum provision for wildlife habitat as part of the battle to reverse the decline in biodiversity’.<sup>xxix</sup>

The *Strategy* states that “a wide band of protected land” would remain. However the evidence from the maps of sites listed for possible development suggests that a rolling programme of building would reduce the Green Belt to very narrow stretches, especially on the NW side of Newcastle. Currently discrete villages on the north side of the city would effectively be merged into one. Other physically separate localities like Throckley to the west would also be engulfed in a sea of new-build.

This is not acceptable. At the very least it contradicts other stated aims of the *Strategy*, namely the desire to enhance the quality of life in the city. It is clear that many citizens enjoy life in many parts of Newcastle and Gateshead just because of their close proximity of green open spaces. The proposed developments would compromise that quality.

The *One Core Strategy* is a charter for urban sprawl.<sup>xxx</sup>

## Growth Areas

Given the above perspectives, the Green Party objects to the specific proposals regarding three “growth areas” (Policy CS2). Generally, we believe that the only sustainable way forward is a better use of the **existing** built-up area. This will only happen if greenfield sites are protected, with would-be developers then forced to focus on empty property, building conversions and brownfield sites in general.

However, the other two selected areas, Callerton Park and MetroGreen would be simply lumps of urban sprawl and should be rejected. Already there is evidence of a generally falling housing market, even if there is still some movement regarding 'top end' property. Similarly, several sites even on recently opened 'business parks' stand empty such as the Balliol and Quorum development north of Longbenton or the Newburn Riverside estate. Both would be largely car-dependent when it is recognised by national governments that society must reduce car usage. So they too are unsound and ineffective. Development in the Callerton areas contradict the remarks made by minister Eric Pickles, cited above, that the Green Belt will be protected.

Similar arguments apply to the envisaged "new neighbourhoods" (Policy CS3). Neighbourhoods can, of course, lose their 'neighbourliness' if they grow too big. This negative dynamic seems not to have been considered properly. Worse, the listed areas are all on the urban fringe and thus will create more car-based urban sprawl. One 'Salters' Lane', is not even a neighbourhood in any sense and the plan provides no evidence that the area will become one.

The *Strategy* is on much stronger ground when it turns to "regeneration areas". This sounds like something more sustainable. However, the planned new housing is largely away from areas like Walker, Benwell, and Elswick, even though their names are listed. In one case, Bensham, large-scale demolition is proposed, a policy that has had disastrous social and environmental impacts in the recent decades. It is not possible to save neighbourhoods simply by flattening them. New flagship superstores will drain such places of thriving local shops and other businesses. In terms of the given sequence of development, such localities seem to be left behind in terms of priority. Only a hard-and-fast policy of 'brownfield sites first' can translate proper regeneration into actual practice. Even then, the *Strategy* contains little evidence of what a sustainable neighbourhood would actually look like is needed or else the ambition is mere rhetoric.

There is a case too for sympathetic small-scale developments around long-standing villages like Chopwell and Sunnyside, to the South of the river, and perhaps parts of Brunswick and Hazlerigg, to the North. There is too little evidence of whether this would be the case. Some village proposals such as Sunnyside in Gateshead are simply too large scale. Nor is there sufficient evidence that existing or actually planned provision regarding buses, local schools and other facilities could cope with any expansion. Otherwise Policy CS4 would just be a recipe for soulless dormitories, based on car usage for work and school runs.

## **The Missing Dimension: Suburbia**

Rightly or wrongly the Core Strategy looks at the Urban Core, certain neighbourhoods, certain outlying villages and certain 'growth areas', again on the urban fringe. What is conspicuously absent is any real vision for the biggest zone of Newcastle and Gateshead, the very areas where most people live and a good few work: suburbia.

Arguably it is here that many of the impacts that, above, have been characterised as drivers in ecological degeneration (climate change, rapid resource depletion etc.) actually have their roots. Most production, retail and commercial activity, most travel movements are ultimately driven by suburbia and the lifestyles therein. Any effective plan concerned about sustainability would surely contain some proposals about this matter. The *Strategy* contains very little. This is all the more disappointing since there is a growing literature about ways of making suburbia more environmentally sustainable and more neighbourly.<sup>xxxi</sup>

## 4. Population

**Strategic Objective 4** calls for population growth. A target figure of 500,000 seems to have been pulled out of thin air and then used to justify new-build and other policies. This objective is set regardless of its context in an already overcrowded world where, according to the latest United Nations projections, population growth is speeding ahead faster than was thought likely before. In Britain too, population growth continues apace.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Such growth puts more pressure on finite living space, finite sources of energy, water, food and raw materials, finite pollution 'sinks' and finite space for other species. It exacerbates housing and many other shortages as well as placing more pressure on an already congested and overstretched infrastructure. Any stabilisation or falls in the total human population should be welcomed as a chance to reduce such excessive pressures.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

To be sure, most of that British growth noted above is, of course, happening in the southern half of England. That increase is certainly exacerbating many environmental and social problems there. But the local picture is somewhat different, not least because of the loss of people from the urban core both to the surrounding rural areas and to other parts of the country (e.g. talented young people to London, something not adequately addressed in the *One Core Strategy* and related documents).

The *Strategy* team project a local population growth of 30,000 in Newcastle and 10,000 in Gateshead over the period covered by their 'vision' for 2030. But it is far from clear that the evidence justifies the assumptions being made about population growth (and therefore housing requirements etc) in this locality. In 2001 the total population of Newcastle and Gateshead was some 457,300. In 2010 it was 483,900. The difference can be largely put down to students and migrants, neither of whom can be said to constitute a permanent base for significant population growth in the locality.

There are a number of discrete dimensions:

1. The birth rate does seem to have increased, though it is not evident how long this trend will last. Historically, in times of economic difficulty, not least during the 1930s Depression, birth rates fell back down. Britain seems headed for at least an economically troubled future. The birth rate may decline again.
2. People are also living longer. But a troubled economy may mean cuts in the health sector which, in turn, may halt the trend. There might even be new disease patterns due to adverse climate change. In any case, the housing policy elements of the *Strategy* do not cater in any adequate way for the more senior citizens, many of whom would prefer to live close to facilities and in the more central parts of the city, not on the edges.
3. There are also more single households. Yet 'singletons' too are not a focus of the *Strategy*. Indeed they too would tend to avoid the comparatively 'lifeless' dormitory housing developments, of which the *Strategy* wants more, favouring instead the 'loft living' conversions and other such new-build in areas closer to the city centre (providing, of course, they are affordable!).
4. Local population figures are also inflated by the influx of British and foreign students to the two universities. This is, however, a temporary phenomenon by its very nature and one that may well decline following the introduction of tuition fees and the expansion of Distance Learning delivery. It is also likely the students from the Far East and elsewhere will begin to decline in number as new universities there begin to attract locals and as the cost of long-distance travel increases. In any case there is currently a local expansion of special student accommodation which the Green Party welcomes (see section on housing, later) since it frees up traditional properties for the wider public.
5. There is further inflation from both economic migrants and refugees. In the former case, the outward movement of Polish migrants in particular back to Poland and Germany suggests that economic migration might be waning. Refugees are a much more volatile phenomenon. All sorts of factors are at work, not least the incidence of war, violent oppression and environmental degradation abroad. It would be foolish to make projections of future population growth on either group. In the latter case, however, it must be said that they are offered nothing by the new housing proposed by the *Strategy*.

It may be that data from the latest Census confirms that population decline in the area, as happened in the 1980s and 1990s, has been reversed. That does not change the fundamental objection the Green Party is making, namely that in future, human needs will have to be met from a better use of the existing built-up area. Certainly, if there is a housing shortfall according to the Annual Strategic Housing Availability Assessment, developments based on retail and commercial development should be dropped, with identified land given over to priority housing needs.

The call for large-scale house building to accommodate dubious projection of an enlarged population is simply not tenable. This false assumption is aggravated by the way building programmes being pursued by other nearby councils are ignored. In effect, the same households are being counted twice to create a false justification for extra accommodation. It is made worse by a failure to take proper account of the state of the current and likely future housing market into the equation, a point we pursue further below. For now, we note that the only beneficiaries of this totally exaggerated view of what will have to be built will be the big property developers.

# 5. Habitats & biodiversity

Sustainable planning is not just for people but also for other species of life. Through national and international agreements, the UK and local governments have a duty to provide 'homes' for non-human species. There is now a solid body of evidence from around the world that people want to live in places that are connected to nature, as such places help contribute significantly to health and well-being.

Examples of central government policy include the recent *Environment White Paper* <sup>xxxiv</sup>. It is also an imperative that has been reflected in various local government initiatives (e.g. Newcastle City Council, Blyth Valley Council and North Tyneside Council, 1999: Gosforth Park - Cramlington Wildlife Corridor Biodiversity Action Plan). National Planning Policy PPG 2 urges rejection of developments that will exacerbate urban sprawl, encroach on the Countryside or cause settlements to merge (all things to which the *Strategy* will inevitably lead)

Paragraph 168 of the proposed National Planning Policy Framework makes a similar argument, especially bullet point 3: "promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets; and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan". The following section states "if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, **then planning permission should be refused**" (our emphasis).

Yet this framework is used by the *Strategy* team to justify proposals that would devastate one of the area's "priority habitats". The Green Party believes that the *Strategy* is not tenable because it fundamentally breaks with such national and local commitments. Given the amount of Green Belt land being targeted especially West and North of Newcastle, it is worth noting that on the BBC radio programme, the *World at One* (21/11/2011), the relevant government minister Eric Pickles stated that "we will not be building on the greenbelt - the greenbelt remains protected". He went on to add that "we want to be able to hand on things to future generations that they will be proud of". Greater urban sprawl and destroyed habitat would scarcely instil such pride.

The once rich diversity of flora and fauna, species characteristic of this area's geology, soil, waters and climate, has, of course, been greatly degraded, especially since World War 2. Sometimes the cause has been a direct one; over-hunting, monocultural farming, plantation forestry, the introduction of invasive alien species, pesticides and general pollution; but the more significant factor has been habitat destruction and fragmentation due to human encroachment.

Specific success stories such as the reintroduction of red kites or the return of otters to local rivers cannot disguise the severe loss in overall biodiversity. For all the rhetoric about 'green infrastructure', the *Core Strategy* contains no serious plans to reverse this trend and the developments it proposes will, on balance, trigger further decline in biodiversity. This is most evident in the proposed developments around Gosforth Nature Reserve, sites 4667 and 4926) where some 600 new houses are planned for neighbouring fields.<sup>xxxv</sup> The case against inclusion of these sites is overwhelming and led some local 420 residents to turn up to a meeting at Gosforth Civic Hall on November 15<sup>th</sup> 2011. The website of the Natural History Society provides compelling evidence against these two proposals so we will not pursue the argument here.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

We would add, however, that wildlife in other parts of the city also depends on that site and not just its direct 'residents'. Furthermore, other wildlife 'nodes' and corridors are threatened by the *Strategy*, for instance in the Woosington area. Other critical foraging areas are ignored in the plan. For instance, fauna forage at Dunston Hill which adjoins Watergate Nature Park, on which millions has been spent in the last 20 years on what was then a burning coal mine but there is little evidence that such areas will be properly protected.

Here it is important to stress that, in the past, reassurances about the preservation of a corridor proved to be worthless given the tiny size of the land set aside (for example, the big 'Ministry' expansion at Longbenton) or led to other open space being taken away (Jesmond Dene/High Heaton). Similarly, the Dunston Hill proposals would reduce the green link between urban Dunston/Lobley Hill and Watergate Nature Park, to a narrow corridor along the Wagonway behind Emmanuel College. Indeed, wildlife conservation experts now treat reassurances about preserved wildlife corridors as little more than a joke such has been their lack of value.

It should also be noted that great damage is being done to wildlife (as well as exacerbating water run-off problems) by the paving of gardens for car ports and patios. The fact that there has been so little enforcement of such policies that do exist to restrict such changes reflects badly the councils' commitment to biodiversity.

The Green Party believes that any promises made by developers about setting aside land for wildlife made by developers are likely to be of little value and should be discounted in environmental impact assessments. Basically they should be treated as a ruse to get damaging developments through the planning system.

## Extraction and Waste Disposal

The human economy depends upon a flow of energy and raw materials from the underpinning ecosystem. But it inevitably generates gaseous, solid and liquid wastes that return to that ecosystem. There are unavoidable constraints on those 'sources' and 'sinks'. There are only so many sites where mining quarrying and other forms of

extraction can take place. Those processes themselves generate wastes as well as do direct damage, often leaving long-term problems of subsidence, a feature of several preferred development sites in the *Strategy*.

Their subsequent use may also cause unsustainable impacts. The Green Party is therefore concerned about Policy CS22 which deals with extraction before development. This could be used to justify more coal mining (most likely open-cast). Yet the policies regarding climate change suggest that too much coal is already being burned. The only sustainable policy now is to leave all coal in the ground (all proposed 'technofixes' seem unviable or create more problems than they solve).<sup>xxxvii</sup>

At the other end of the 'eco-nomic' cycle are the finite assimilation capacities of local environments. Already landfill sites around the world are overflowing, for example. Many water systems are contaminated by leaching from such sites as well as direct pollution. It is not just the volume of waste but also its quality that cannot be contained. Several wastes have toxic and radioactive qualities that ecological systems cannot safely break down, at least not over any meaningful period.

All the new build and construction work envisaged by the *Strategy* would create additional wastes. Little attention is given to this or indeed to the existing waste stream of the Newcastle-Gateshead economy. Yet every effort should be made to encourage, wherever possible, to encourage, wherever possible, source reduction, reuse, repair recycling... and a localisation of economic activity. Energy cannot of course be 'recycled', as matter can, but systems like co-generation do offer benefits similar to recycling. It is a major omission that the *Strategy* and *One Plan* contain so little on such vital matters.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

## 6. Hydrology & water pollution

Water is the 'blood' of environmental systems. Potable water is vital to life. Indeed it is an essential ingredient in much manufacturing, which need big inputs of clear water, not just energy and raw materials. Water systems are further used to carry away waste human society generates.

Already there is much evidence of unsustainable inference with the area's hydrology. It includes flooding problems, most recently evident in north Gosforth and related to building on lands to the north of Gosforth. Furthermore several sewers seem close to capacity which will lead to exacerbated water pollution. Large-scale development on the West and North side of the city will make matters much worse, especially in the basin of the Ouseburn. Nothing is said in the *One Core Strategy* about a further problem: the general loss of porous surface, a problem that is now severe, not least because new-build, including the construction of vast superstore car parks, and the paving of gardens for car ports and other usage.

There are also good grounds to prevent further development along the River Derwent on both hydrological and biodiversity grounds. The risk of flooding in that area does not seem to have been fully considered. It is a problem likely to become more serious given the likely increased incidence of severe downpours as climate change unfolds. Large-scale development in the Callerton area would aggravate hydrological problems along the Ouseburn.

Generally the Green Party believes the <i>Strategy</i> is not in accordance with Flood and Waste Management Act 2009
---

An alternative strategy is needed which makes rivers and streams like the Ouseburn the starting point and thread of a sustainable land use plan. As things stand, the developments backed by the *Strategy* would intensify the kind of problems that have already emerged in the Red House Farm area as a result of the Great Park construction. It is hard to see how problems with sewage overload and resultant pollution of waters like the Ouseburn would be avoided. There seem to be drainage-related problems in the Lemington area while subsidence issues in the Woolsington Ward would appear not to have been taken into account fully. Even the small Dunston Hospital housing development, which is close to the Dunston Hill site, required new sewage work toward central Dunston.

Of course there is talk of remedial action, possibly funded, it is vaguely suggested by '106' monies or some such sources. The fact that areas like Brunton Park are still waiting for measures to be put into place to address hydrological problems they are experiencing suggests that such hopes are just wishful thinking or false reassurances for local residents.

Again, it seems that the preparatory work behind the *Strategy* has not been rigorous and comprehensive. A sustainable watercourse protection and water conservation strategy is desperately needed. Instead, the *Strategy* is full of holes.<sup>xxxix</sup>

## 7. Farmland & food supply

Water may be the most vital of all resources but next come soil and food supply. It is rather shocking that so little attention is given to this fundamental issue in the *Core Strategy*. At the time of its publication, world food prices were already rising fast. There are clearly several factors, not least commodity speculation and competition from other land uses like biofuel production. However the fundamental cause is simply excess pressure on environmental systems which suggests that prices are likely to remain high and that Britain will not, in the future, be able to rely on large-scale imports of foodstuffs. 'Peak oil' and its impacts on both agricultural fuels and fertilisers as well as transportation systems will reinforce the likelihood of a growing global food crisis.<sup>xl</sup>

Once farmland is gone, it is gone forever, at least in terms of any relevant time frame. There are clear biophysical limits, as well as food health risks, to the intensification of farming so we cannot hope to keep squeezing more food from less land. Little sustained relief seems likely from technologies such as genetic modification (GM), other arguments against their deployment aside.

Much has been made already of critical concepts like carrying capacity and the urban footprint. The *Core Strategy* might have usefully looked at a related idea, that of 'foodsheds' (drawn from watersheds) A typical (healthy) daily diet for an average human might consist of 50 grams of protein, 300 grams of carbohydrate and 60 grams of fat, i.e. just over 400g of food. (Many Newcastle-Gateshead residents eat considerably more.) This means that, at an absolute theoretical minimum, a city of 1 million people would require over 400 tonnes of food per day.

However, this weight does not include fibre, the water content of food or the large amount of waste generated during preparation and left after eating.<sup>xli</sup> Neither does it include packaging. Thus, a city of 1 million inhabitants consumes many thousands of tonnes of food items per day. This food is grown in vast agricultural areas outside of what is usually regarded as the 'city'. But if a city cannot survive without its foodshed, farming in all its forms (from fish ponds and allotments to grain prairies) cannot be considered as separate from a city.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that such a production and distribution depends absolutely on cheap and abundant supplies of oil. Detailed studies in the USA show that 1 calorie of prepared food on the table requires, commercially, the equivalent of 7.4 calories to put it there (the global average is 5). Most of this is energy is from fossil fuels. That era is coming to a close. For both ecological and moral reasons, the intensive factory farming of animals has no future. Indeed the EU has been promising action to curb such methods. The unsustainable health costs of the modern diet are also evident (obesity, diabetes, cancer etc.).

So there needs to be a really radical shift in food and nutrition policies. For example, society must minimise the distance between food producers and food consumers, both to reduce the energy required to transport food and to allow nutrients to be recycled back to food growing land.

Therefore it would seem wise to conserve now all existing farmland in the area and to make every effort to develop so-called 'urban agriculture', encouraging wherever possible policies of 'localisation'. However the *Strategy* wrongly encourages further building-over of farmland whilst saying nothing about food needs and how they might be sustainably met in future decades. In terms of genuinely strategic thinking, even a reference would have been useful. Fortunately there is a considerable literature about and experience of 'urban agriculture'. This would include full protection and expansion of allotments as well as a whole range of other initiatives, from urban orchards to rooftop gardens and aquaponics.

The Green Party calls for urban food production to be fully integrated into a new <i>Strategy</i> .
---

## 8. Quality of Life

We have criticised terms like ‘sustainable growth’. ‘Quality of life’ (**Strategic Objective 5**) is another phrase that crops up recurrently in the *One Core Strategy*. Like other such warm-sounding words (e.g. ‘personal development’, ‘prosperity’, ‘choice’, ‘leisure’, plus rhetoric like “where living works”, a phrase used to promote Newcastle Great Park), it evokes something that most people presumably would want. Furthermore, it is indeed useful to separate various social ‘goods’ from the ‘bads’, real wealth from ‘illth’ (William Beveridge’s five “giant evils”, for example). Yet all these things do not exist in a vacuum. They depend on physical things, be it buildings, equipment or other material goods, all of which come with ecological price tags. So, again, constraints and trade-offs apply. Such goals cannot be posed without some attempt to explore those limits to their expansion.

Leisure activities, for example, are inflicting unsustainable environmental damage and disrupting local communities in many areas. Their impact ranges from water pollution to footpath erosion. It includes the loss of housing for locals, due to the spread of second homes bought by wealthier visitors. Furthermore, a great deal of leisure is now car-based, with all its well-documented negative impacts. Thus, calls for more ‘active’ lives, a better ‘standard of living’ and so forth are meaningless unless there is some proper accounting for all their attendant impacts.

### Health and recreation

There are certainly a number of instances where the *Strategy* would worsen ‘quality of life’, no matter how defined or quantified. The most obvious are the loss of recreational land around Gosforth Nature Reserve and Dunston Hill. In other areas too, big housing developments will make open space, plus the pleasures and health benefits it brings, more distant. The *Strategy* seems to ignore the growing evidence that, to maintain their physical and mental health, people need to be within 10 minutes walking distance of green open space. It also pays insufficient attention to the frustrations of commuting, something that most people would see as a blight on their quality of life, will probably be increased by increased traffic and intensified congestion at a number of key spots.

It might be noted here that most of the world’s successful cities, where there are flourishing communities and vibrant social life, are quite densely populated ones, with many people living in or near the city centre.<sup>xlii</sup> They stand in startling contrast to bleak dormitory settlements. Indeed Newcastle and Gateshead have drawn many incomers precisely because of its attractively human scale. The urban sprawl being encouraged by the *Strategy* threatens that valuable – and irreplaceable – quality, regardless of any other merits or drawbacks.

A great many people take direct pleasure from wildlife watching, walking, cycling, and other such activities. Related sites are also vital for educational visits for local school children. The mental health benefits of such experiences for all people are now well documented but no attempt is made to assess the mental and physical health costs of the much greater urban sprawl that the *Strategy* would create. Overlooked is the evidence that many people move to Newcastle and Gateshead because of the comparatively easy access to green sites in many parts of them, something that the *Strategy* would diminish.

Indeed the *Strategy* sets quite inadequate goals in this respect, having insufficient regard for the protection of existing and creation of new wildlife habitats and corridors, especially in North Newcastle and along the banks of the Ouseburn. There is little vision regarding biodiversity-friendly changes in the management of parks and gardens while the potential of ‘green’ roofs and walls is not properly explored. Generally, the importance of ‘green wedges’ seems not fully appreciated, beyond mere rhetorical level. Otherwise the Heathery Lane/Salters Lane developments would never have even been considered, for example.

Many people would also cite safe and friendly neighbourhoods as part of a high quality of life. The *Strategy* authors seem to have picked up on this feeling since they make much use of the word ‘neighbourhood’. However, this usage has the feel of cosmetic gloss. At times, non-existent neighbourhoods seem to have been conjured up out of the blue, most notably one called ‘Salters Lane’ in north Newcastle.

More generally, it is hard to see what are largely commuting, car-based developments like the Great Park and other proposed edge-of-town ones somehow developing into real vibrant neighbourhoods within any useful time frame. At the same time, some urban areas that do possess a strong sense of community but are likely to lose that quality if huge building programmes take place on their doorstep. It is even harder to see what good it does a neighbourhood like Bensham if its heart is torn out by a big demolition programme. This is a bit like the way the American armed forces in the Vietnam War saved villages by destroying them.

### Equity

The one non-material thing that does seem to improve the quality of most peoples’ lives and enrich communities is greater equality. Much evidence on that point was gathered in that landmark study, *The Spirit Level*, by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. However, on balance, the *Strategy* would aggravate inequality.

The houses that are most likely to be constructed will be top price ‘executive’ houses. Thus Walker, a poorer area, is given an allocation of “up to 500” while the Green Belt is set to be saddled with some 13,100

houses. We Greens feel that far more effort ought to be devoted to housing stock rehabilitation and general revitalisation in such areas. Worse, across in Bensham, some 4,000 houses of ordinary working class people, buildings that could be renovated, are set to be demolished. The 'knowledge industries' that the *One Plan*, in particular) seeks to encourage is not likely to be filled by those now unemployed or trapped in low paid and insecure jobs.

The plight of young people is particularly shocking. Economic strategies like the *One Plan* offer little to young people caught in the above trap. However, apart from its social costs (lost human potential etc) and inherent ethical shortcomings, inequity is unsustainable in another way. The Green Party and others see the limits-to-growth/steady-state perspective as the only basis for a sustainable society. If there has to be a 'limited cake' it will only be palatable if it is shared out fairly. The *Core Strategy*, however, advocates what might be called a Thatcherite approach, namely that there will be trickle-down to the poorer sections of society if growth is pursued by expansion elsewhere. Yet all the evidence from conventional development strategies around the world since 1945 shows that any new wealth tends to stick to the fingers of the already rich.

The *Core Strategy* fails the sustainability test on equity grounds alone.

## Contentment

It is hard to quantify feelings like 'success', 'happiness' and 'fulfilment' not least since definitions can vary greatly even from person to person. A Gateshead document, *Report to Cabinet*, 20/09/11, lists all sorts of desirables: "prosperity", "health and well-being", "thriving neighbourhoods", "quality of place". In each case, there is a corresponding assertion "how growth will help deliver this". Yet there is solid evidence that growth-oriented policies consistently fail to deliver a contented society. Indeed, in many ways, they sow division, dissatisfaction, and resentment, alongside reduced ecological sustainability.

Yet there is little evidence to justify this fetish of more growth. Thus results of a survey by the Property Council of Australia, for instance, found that Adelaide's citizens (population 1.3 million) were happier with the "liveability" of their city than any of their bigger-city cousins in the rest of Australia.<sup>xliii</sup> There is a wealth of similar evidence from across that land of growth, the USA. A very detailed study there found, for example:

- ◆ Faster-growing areas did *not* have lower unemployment rates;
- ◆ Faster-growing areas tended to have **lower** per capita income than slower-growing areas. Per capita income in 2009 tended to decline almost \$2500 for each 1% increase in growth rate;
- ◆ Residents of faster-growing areas had greater income **declines** during the recession;
- ◆ Faster-growing areas tended to have higher **poverty** rates.

This study, surely a critical piece of evidence, found that the 25 slowest-growing metropolitan areas outperformed the 25 fastest-growing in every category and averaged \$8,455 more in per capita personal income in 2009. They also had lower unemployment and poverty rates. Stable metropolitan areas (those with little or no growth) did relatively well. Statistically-speaking, residents of an area with no growth over the 9-year period tended to have 43% more income gain than an area growing at 3% a year.<sup>xliv</sup>

The evidence suggests that stable, sustainable communities can be perfectly viable & reasonably prosperous even within our current economic system.  
Thus the *Strategy* is not based on sound evidence when it claims that its 'growthist' policies will deliver a better quality of life.

## 9. Local economy & job creation

We have argued above that a durable economy can only be built on a sustainable relationship with environmental systems. ‘Economics’ and ‘ecology’ are not equivalences: the former, human economic activity, totally depends on the latter, the ‘health’ and productivity of underpinning ecosystems, both the means of and conditions for all production and consumption. In the ecological model that underpins the Green Party’s critique of the *Core Strategy*, many elements of the tertiary sector such as office work, tourism and several recreational activities are dependent on wealth generation beneath that layer of the economic cake (ecosystem health and productivity then primary and secondary sector activity).

It is also the case that the economy cannot flourish without a healthy, well educated local population and with a vigorous sense of community and scope for social participation. We reject the ‘neo-Liberal’ model that one-dimensionally treats all public sector work (teaching, nursing, caring, cleaning, repairing, etc.) as somehow parasitic upon a private sector that is the sole generator of wealth (in reality the latter is often heavily subsidised out of the public purse and generates what, below, we call “illth” (environmental and social ‘bads’ as well as useful goods and services). Our response here deal with the *Core Strategy* approach to the economic matters in more narrow sense.

The *Core Strategy* is based on a model of increased competitiveness. It is true that an on-going net leakage of jobs, capital and talent from any given economy to other regions cannot but reduce its very viability. Yet, in a competitive system, alongside winners there are also losers. Given the tightening environmental and economic constraints around the world, which we have documented above, economic models based on the attraction of inward investment and the capture of new external markets are redundant, whatever their (dubious) past merits. For the same reasons, hopes that inward investment can be attracted on a big scale seem unrealistic.

### Gross Product

Also running through the *Strategy* and *One Plan* are indicators of economic ‘success’ that are in fact, at best, of dubious value. There is now a weighty literature documenting just how misleading and indeed worthless are statistics like Gross National Product, counting, as it does, ‘illth’ as well as real ‘wealth’. They provide few clues about ecological sustainability, community strength nor individual happiness. The same limitations apply to indicators like ‘added value’. They can indicate activities with (fossil-fuelled) machines are replacing human labour. Output per worker and a firm’s private profit might increase but that gain might well be offset by other costs not least the economic and social costs of workforce redundancies.

The North East has the highest unemployment rate in the UK at over 10%. The region lost 50,000 jobs in the last year – 4% of total jobs – and the trend continues. The *Strategy* underestimates the extent of joblessness, under-employment and job insecurity. Insufficient distinctions made between full-time work on the one hand, and, on the other, temporary contracts and part-time working. The picture is sadly worse than is recognised.<sup>xiv</sup> This reality has two consequences with regard to the *Strategy*. Firstly, it casts doubt on its ambitions regarding retail- and housing-led growth. Demand is likely to be weak. Secondly, economic programmes based on ‘creative hubs’ and suchlike will of themselves be utterly insufficient, whatever their other merits.

We would note, too that ‘enterprise’ is a ‘weasel word’. Activities ranging from burglary to tax evasion could all be described as ‘enterprising’ but that does not make them desirable. Similarly what is good for one business is far from necessarily for the rest of the economy or social and environmental systems as a whole (‘externalities’ etc.).<sup>xvi</sup>

At times, there seems to be some confusion. In some places in the *Strategy* a desire is expressed to reduce the number of commuters coming into Newcastle and Gateshead from the wider travel-to-work area. That of course makes sense in terms of reducing the malign impacts of high traffic flows. Yet surely some indication ought to be given of how alternative employment for such commuters is to be created or evidence given that they would willingly move to houses in the Newcastle and Gateshead area.

The same backward-looking tendency evident throughout the *Strategy* is particularly harmful when it comes of office development. According to a response by the Services Response Officer (03/11/11), unoccupied office space is currently (November 2011) running at 15.89 % of the total availability, most of it perfectly adequate (Commercial Union House, Norham House etc.) if their sheer ugliness can be ignored. Such evidence suggests that it would be far more effective not to build more but concentrate resources on more urgent needs.

### Digital economy?

There is indeed a strong case for more research and development facilities, not least in strong universities. But that begs the question of what scientific and technological studies should be publicly underwritten. Simply proclaiming a place to be “Science City” is meaningless. We have to make choices, not least between different energy paths. We cannot research and develop everything. But the *Strategy* seems to view technology as one undifferentiated whole, not distinguishing what is ecologically and socially appropriate from what is not.

At the same time, the *Strategy* embraces what we feel is wishful thinking about an emergent 'new economy', one which attracts a great deal of hyperbole in certain sections of the media: "knowledge economy", "creative hubs", "wikinomics", even a "weightless economy". Locally we have heard much rhetoric about 'science city' and calls for 'cutting edge technology' to be developed. The *One Plan* in particular is awash with such thoughts. These wonder-technologies are defined quite promiscuously: some, such as carbon capture, coal gasification, and the electric car, of little or no long-term value, others such as stem cell research not likely to have significant impact on joblessness.

'Creative hubs' are likely to be little bubbles which, at worst, go the way of the many now dead 'dot.com' companies. At best, they employ only handfuls of people. Bigger employers like universities are not likely to expand. Indeed, under the impact of tuition fees, a certain degree of contraction is more likely. It is unlikely that this shortfall will be made up by more foreign students, not least since source countries are fast finishing new HE infrastructure of their own.<sup>xlvii</sup>

The *Strategy* assumes that problems with the tertiary sector stem from a lack of appropriate office retail and other commercial space. Yet there is considerable empty property. There are also many organisations that would use lower grade property (as shown by the spread of charity and artists venues) if it were more available. The problem is basically the contraction of a previous consumer bubble. It is compounded by discouraging business rates for small firms.

Yet more space is being allocated to yet more development in this sector (Stephenson Quarter etc.). The Green Party opposes such plans. Such land should be used as an alternative to green belt encroachment. So we support programmes that have brought some housing back in the city centre (Quayside, Leazes Park, Stowell Street areas). But we also want more support for basic manufacturing activities.

## Retail Therapy

In the virtuous circle assumed by the *Strategy*, more jobs and more new housing are joined by more shopping. Again the assumptions do not stand up to scrutiny. There is abundant evidence that, first of all, the general retail bubble has burst and that, in any case, its ecological costs were unsustainable and that 'shop-until-you-drop' lifestyles not only created personal indebtedness but also that there was no correlation between increased consumer spending and personal happiness (some critics use the term 'affluenza' to describe the discontents of consumerism. But **Policy CS10** merely advocates more shopping and more retail outlets.

The Green Party basically reject **Strategic Objective 3** and its call to strengthen retail activity. We would also note that the *Strategy* says nothing about the dead-hand of conventional development around one or two 'flagship stores'. This has destroyed many small businesses which provide more employment per pound spent. This strategy creates economic dependency on a few giant chains and undermines urban diversity, the 'clone town' phenomenon<sup>xlviii</sup>.

Obviously people need to go the shops and it is self-evidently better that they do not go by car. The Green Party thus welcomes any policy that supports a strong urban core coupled to a plethora of easily accessed local centres. But the history of the area has been different with land given to big edge-of-town centres like the MetroCentre and Kingston Park 'Retail World' and other malls like the Fosse Shopping Park in east Newcastle. Indeed it reflects the tendency of the *Strategy* to take refuge in wish lists that it envisage what it calls "convenience retail growth" on the West Road where a huge new Tesco is opening.

The Green Party supports efforts like those in Whitley Bay to favour small and local shops and other facilities. Seemingly prestigious city centre developments should be eschewed. Instead, following the principle of the '20 minute city', we favour concentration on efforts to revitalise a web of local retail centres to which ordinary people would have easy access. Certainly there should be no more edge-of-town retail development.

The need to reduce dependence on the big chain stores is all the more urgent in today's climate. "The recession is revealing how the clone retailers can be fair-weather friends. As soon as an area no longer meets tightly defined corporate criteria they will wave goodbye."<sup>xlix</sup> More generally large-scale retail-based development has proved a dead end as can be seen in the USA. A warning about what happens when too much retail space is developed comes from America where dead and dying malls litter the country.<sup>1</sup>

## **A Green alternative – not bigger but better**

However, the Green Party feels that a whole new economic strategy is necessary. Our alternative is that of 'localisation'. It would have to be supported by the so-called 'green new deal' as well as the application of what has called a 'green scissors' programme (the cutting of subsidies to polluting, wasteful and general socially harmful activities).

The alternative to the *One Core Strategy/One Plan* perspective is a concentrated focus on supporting the local economy, with as far as possible, development at neighbourhood level. This increase diversity and resilience., providing, of course, it is based on a sustainable use of ambient physical resources (local waters, soils, crops, sun and wind) and human skills to rebuild a future-proofed and sustainable industrial base.

Evidence is available that this approach is not only more sustainable in the long run but also creates the kind of jobs suitable for large numbers of people without 'high-tech' and other 'top end' skills. Thus, even today, a thousand people are employed on and around Shields Road in East Newcastle.<sup>li</sup> A similar story illustrating the benefits of this localisation approach is to be found down on the coast at Whitley Bay.<sup>lii</sup> Street markets have similarly beneficial effects, especially compared to edge-of-town superstores. This can be seen in Newcastle's Grainger Market but there is plenty of evidence from elsewhere (as many visitors to the continent will have seen on the continent).<sup>liii</sup>

Clearly the 'local multiplier' effect of such investment works. But administrative, legal and business support is needed for small traders and other local businesses, so that they can join together to tender for larger contracts. Wherever possible, large contracts should be split up to drive such economic regeneration.<sup>liv</sup> Certainly regeneration monies should be used to provide quality apprenticeships to local youngsters instead of just filling the pockets of distant developers' pockets.

Priority would be given to developments that subdivide large units into smaller units, to prevent 'land squatting' by larger enterprises (Tesco, Nobles etc). At the same time, large superstores would be required to show that they will not increase neighbourhood blight before being awarded planning permission. An example is the curbing of restrictive covenants by large pub chains. Examples can be found in the "land of free enterprise", the USA.<sup>lv</sup>

We suggest that initiatives like 'Alive after 5' in Newcastle be abandoned since they scarcely help smaller and more local businesses. If anything, it would be better to have 'neighbourhood days', perhaps one day per week, when town centre shops close at 5pm with neighbourhood businesses encouraged to stay open later. But more important would be the abandonment of the 'anchor' store approach which merely reinforces the 'Clone Town' effect.

The so-called 'plugging the leaks' approach (which identifies where money is leaving the local economy, encouraging action that keeps it circulating and employing locally) will reinforce such an alternative strategy.<sup>lvi</sup> In the longer term there is a need to develop local currencies initially with Council support (e.g. acceptance in part payment of business rates and council tax).

Such ideas are partly embodied in the **Sustainable Communities Act** (and **Localism Bill**). Thus there is already scope to help truly local development. The powers therein have been used to prevent restrictive covenants by large pub chains, for example. Newcastle City Council has signed up the SCA. It rightly used it to request the prohibition of restrictive covenants by pub chains, under which they seek to prevent competition and re-use of their former premises as future pubs. According to the Local Government Association briefing note, this request was made because [these covenants] "are contributing to the decline of communities across the country."

## **Green Industry**

The *Strategy* and the *One Plan* accept de-industrialisation as a fact of life. Their focus is thus largely upon the tertiary sector, with comparatively little said about manufacturing per se. The Green Party believes that this is most unsound. The evidence about longer term trends in the world economy, not least the impact of 'Peak Oil', will make it imperative that the country makes more of the things it uses. We advocate a 'Green New Deal', an essential part of which will be a green renaissance in manufacturing.<sup>lvii</sup>

The whole North-East, not just Newcastle-Gateshead, is especially well placed to take advantage of a developing 'green collar' sector. There is a strong local skills base in engineering and manufacturing. Ambient natural resources and river/coastal transport links are also significant in this respect. Generally "there are huge potential opportunities for UK companies in the global markets for low-carbon and high-efficiency technology and services".<sup>lviii</sup>

It is right and proper that government monies should support appropriate re-industrialisation. In 1984, the then Conservative Chancellor provided Nissan with support worth £118m to build a new car factory in the NE. If we conceded that such an intervention was correct on principle (we would have supported alternative investment in practice), then it is right to support the true 'sunrise' industries of tomorrow.

So, thanks in part to support from the feed-in tariff scheme, the solar industry has flourished, employing 39,000 people according to latest government figures (though now under threat due to changed government

policy with big employers like Carillion laying off staff). Yet solar costs have fallen rapidly. Indeed most serious analysts believe that the solar industry can be weaned off subsidy over the next five to 10 years.

The development of new renewable energy sources will be central, though general conservation and efficiency improvements deserve the greatest priority. It will clearly be a lot quicker, safer and cheaper to save a watt than to generate a new one. The job creation potential is much more significant than most of the activities spotlighted in the glossy pages of the *One Plan*. One of the best examples remains the energy conservation programme of Kirklees Council in West Yorkshire.<sup>lix</sup> The installation of new solar equipment on existing properties is particularly productive.<sup>lx</sup> Instead roofs could be said to be one of the country's greatest underused resources (see Section 17, below, for some examples of other possibilities such as water harvesting, wildlife schemes and urban gardening)

<p>The Green Party calls on local councils to support the 'One Million Climate Jobs' campaign<sup>lxi</sup> and work towards an economy where far more products are manufactured sustainably and locally</p>
--

# 10. Housing

At the heart of new build advocated by the *One Core Strategy* is large-scale housing construction. We have already disputed both the likelihood and desirability of the trends in population levels, the number of new households, and effective housing demand on which this plan rests. We would note here some other flaws with the housing elements of the *Strategy*. First of all, appropriate lessons are not being learned from the 2008 ‘credit crunch’ and the way a property-based bubble simply – and predictably – bursts. It was a crisis resulting from overgrowth of financial assets (mortgaged property) relative to real wealth (energy, minerals, waters, soil, foodstuffs, timber, manufactured goods, etc.). Countries like Eire and Spain provide a vivid illustration today of the costs of property-led speculative development.

In 2001 the total number of residential properties in Newcastle and Gateshead was 209,900. In 2010 it was 215,000; an average of 566 new-build properties per year. The evidence is that the housing market is in the doldrums and likely to remain there. Since 2006 house prices in Tyne and Wear have declined by 10%. This downwards trend is true for all house types except expensive detached property. The well-off are still doing well. Private sector housing starts, i.e. new dwellings started, are running at less than half of their early 2000s peak.

Instead the *Strategy* advocates the construction of what in effect will be castles built on sand (an added risk in the NE where dependence on public sector jobs in a period of cutbacks adds its own insecurities). So it is somewhat fantastic that the *Strategy* calls for 36,000 homes over the planning period (**Policy CS 12**). This would require some 1,800 new starts annually, twice the rate of completions over the boom years! The policy of a planned net increase of some 14% over the current housing stock is simply unsound, given any likely future scenario.

The *Strategy* makes several other errors regarding housing. It confuses the housing market (buying and selling of property) with housing need (a matter of who urgently needs what kind of accommodation and how much can they pay for it). At the same times it exaggerates the buoyancy of the property market. In general the overall trend now seems likely to see a fall in house prices, some counter-examples notwithstanding.

There is a further contradiction between the *Strategy*'s ‘evidence base’ (the rise in the percentage of households containing so-called ‘singletons’ or older couples living by themselves) and its call for a higher percentage of 3- and 4- bedroom houses in future provision. A well planned strategy would incorporate an increasing proportion of “homes for life” – those so constructed that residents could remain in them even after such time as they might become infirm, rather than having to move again, this time into sheltered housing.

In any case, just because there is demand for this or that kind of property in a given area does not mean that, ipso facto, it has to be provided. For example, the trend to ever smaller household sizes is not healthy or sustainable and does not have to be catered for. More generally all demands should be assessed on the basis of real social need and, most important of all, ecological sustainability. Without that last element, even the best intended scheme is doomed.

## **Sprawl machine... for the benefit of the few**

However, leaving faulty projections aside, we have more specific objections. The *Strategy*, as it stands, would not only exacerbate urban sprawl, contradicting the rhetoric about ‘sustainable development’. It will further polarise housing in the area to an extent that is socially unsustainable. There is a very marked bias towards new ‘executive housing’.

The emphasis is on executive (‘mid and high market’) housing, explicitly including more detached housing units, and with a very low social housing target (15%, which would be reduced or removed in certain circumstances). It is likely that developers will want to focus on the upper end of the market. This favours a comparatively small and already comfortable section of society. At the same time, however, the *Strategy*'s ambitions fail to address adequately the needs of poorer people, older citizens looking to downsize, or those needing sheltered accommodation.

There is in the area a shortage of affordable high quality public housing, especially certain types of housing. However, if only private housing is to be built, it exacerbates urban blight within older housing estates, which must get the investment they need. As just noted, some provision does seem to be made for social housing such as site 4926. The location of such sites may well compound social problems since they are a significant distance from facilities like shops and schools. The thought that poorer people are simply being dumped in what will be perceived as the ‘middle of nowhere’ is hard to resist in such cases.

The actual new housing envisaged in the *Strategy* seems to be modelled on the quasi-gated cul-de-sac developments replete with detached properties, biologically impoverished lawns, and twin car ports. The Green Party proposes, instead, that every effort should be made to emulate really sustainable architecture, a good basis for which, in this part of the world, is a reworking of the ‘old-fashioned’ terrace. (See Section 11 below)

The problem of what has sometimes been called the ‘student ghetto’ (Headingley in Leeds, Fallowfield in Manchester, Broomhill in Sheffield) is neither mentioned nor addressed. At the same time an unrealistically high

level of continued student participation in Higher Education away from home is seems to be taken for granted with little due reference to the impact of tuition fees. Yet in Jesmond, Heaton and Fenham, the many negative features of an overconcentration of student bedsits are clearly visible. The phenomenon is partly driven by rich parents buying property for their offspring and then subsequently renting it to the next set of students.

Apart from issues of adequate property maintenance, litter and noise, the consequence has been the loss of much property that once housed families and could again, reducing any need for greenfield development. An unknown number of established residents seem to have been effectively pushed out of some streets due the aforementioned problems. Presumably this has created some of the influx onto the Great Park, Whitebridge Park and similar development in the outer city, seemingly 'justifying' their construction.

The Green Party advocates strong controls to restrict student ghettos. We welcome redevelopments like the 'Stephenson Building' conversion in Shieldfield. More projects like that are the way to 'free up' terraced housing in particular which could be rehabilitated and used for comparatively inexpensive family accommodation.

Generally the preferred development sites seem to have been identified on the basis of the old concentric model of urban growth, with new rings being added at the edges. This *might* have worked well in the past in some situations, not least where there were first class public transport systems. It is certainly inappropriate for the future.

## Going for Demolition?

The *Core Strategy* for Gateshead differs in a very serious way from that for Newcastle. Just like council policy across Britain in the 60s (e.g. bulldozing of many terraces in Newcastle's 'West End'), for the south of the Tyne the CS advocates the demolition of what are basically sound houses (some 4500 in West Gateshead). The lesson could and should have been learned that such action does more social damage and creates more environmental cost than retrofitting and rehabilitation.

The policy merely repeats the discredited *Pathfinder* programme and Newcastle's own *Going for Growth*. Anna Minton's now classic study *Ground Control* documented the folly of such strategies. More recently, the National Audit Office reported that the Pathfinder programme had put an enormous amount of money into the pockets of speculators for little or no public gain:

"More than £2 billion of taxpayers' money has been wasted demolishing thousands of homes without any discernible benefit that a rising housing market could not have achieved by itself". This cannot be called 'regeneration'.<sup>lxiii</sup>

The ecological costs of the demolition are simply not sustainable. The average carbon cost of a new build house in the UK is 56 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>. Refurbishment achieves considerable savings on this. A report commissioned by the Empty Homes Agency shows that demolishing tens of thousands of Victorian and Edwardian homes and building new ones is adding unnecessarily to climate change. If the 288,000 long-term empty homes in England were used and upgraded to higher efficiency standards, instead of many of them being demolished under Government "Pathfinder" regeneration schemes, it would save the equivalent of three million cars being taken off the roads for a year.

Researchers commissioned by the Government-funded Empty Homes Agency compared the amount of carbon dioxide given off in building new homes and in refurbishing old ones. They found that building a new home emits four and-a-half times as much carbon dioxide as refurbishing an existing dwelling. They also found that the carbon dioxide emitted as a result of the sourcing of materials for the construction of a new building - from quarrying, brick making and so on - accounted for nearly three times more of a building's lifetime emissions than had been supposed. Previously the amount of energy involved in the construction of a home had been assumed to represent 10 per cent of the energy used over the lifetime of a building. In fact, energy involved in construction added up to nearly 30 per cent of the emissions over the lifetime of the building.<sup>lxiii</sup>

## Empty Property

In stark contrast to its focus on filling open spaces what new buildings, the *Strategy* contains remarkably little about the huge and growing number of empty properties, housing and commercial, that dot the area. Nationally there are nearly one million empty homes. 350,000 of them have been empty for more than six months.<sup>lxiv</sup>. According to the 'Empty Homes' statistics for 2010, there were 5506 vacant dwellings in Gateshead and 3899 in Newcastle (October 2010).<sup>lxv</sup> According to a response by the Services Response Officer (03/11/11), unoccupied percentages in Newcastle are as follow

a) Dwellings	8.96 %
b) Office Space	15.89 %
c) Retail	9.42%
d) Industrial	12.33%

No wonder a *Channel 4* documentary (05/12/11), called the situation “the Great British Property Scandal”. Turning such buildings into liveable homes would obviously make a huge difference. Councils are empowered to force landlords to bring empty dwellings back into use but comparatively little use has been made. In any case, a significant number of the empty homes are publicly owned.

The Green Party supports the principle of giving people the right to buy or rent. They might be given loans or reduced rent in return for doing up the property. An independent tribunal might oversee that things are done properly. Of course the zero VAT rating on new house construction is a deterrent to refurbishment which only national government can change.

Coupled to empty properties are empty rooms. The British ‘family home’ is increasingly not owned by families. One solution is to free up family housing by offering elderly people tax breaks to move into smaller homes as argued by the Intergenerational Foundation charity. These are complex questions but the *Core Strategy* surely ought to have made more provision for would-be ‘down-sizers’ so larger property could come onto the market for families. Far more could be done regarding property above shops.<sup>lxvi</sup>

The Green Party calls for refurbishment, not demolition, of housing in areas like Bensham.
---

# 11. New Build

The quantity of new houses and other new-build is one matter. Its quality is another (**Policy CS 17**). We should learn from the sad story of many of the developments thrown up in the 60s and 70s, be they housing tower blocks, offices (the now demolished Westgate House); shopping centres (the soon-to-be-demolished Newgate Centre in Newcastle etc.); multi-storey car parks (Gateshead centre); the currently being demolished ‘Dunston Rocker’; or once shiny new libraries (the demolished Newcastle library). This history tells us that far stricter and better guidance must be given about the standard of future constructions at all levels: from construction materials to site layout, building orientation, and internal design.<sup>lxvii</sup> This includes a positive blend with neighbouring buildings, especially in valued townscapes, and the specificities of the actual physical site.

The Green Party agrees with Kevin McCloud, presenter of TV’s *Grand Designs* and founder of Hab (<http://www.habhousing.co.uk/>) when he described most new houses in the UK as “unimaginative, overpriced, undersized and resistant to ... technical improvement”.<sup>lxviii</sup> Indeed, traditional Tyneside street layouts have much to be said for them in both ecological and social terms than the more recent cul-de-sac developments.

Certainly the latter housing estates, with their clover-leaf pattern of roadways and bare lawns, are much more heavily car-dependent. They also make waste recycling collections and public transport provision harder compared to the more traditional terrace. Anna Minton’s *Ground Control* also documents that they actually increase the fear of crime, making crime itself easier in fact, due to the comparative absence of ‘soft’ policing in layouts where few people circulate.

Yet the *Strategy* says little about such matters. The standards of new-build certainly cannot be left to the ‘market’ (i.e. the big private developers and mainstream architectural practices). It has failed consistently to deliver high quality buildings, that really do conserve energy and water, encourage biodiversity (e.g. ‘eco-roofs’ plus ‘green’ walls and fences), soak up excess rainwater (e.g. porous surfaces), ameliorate local micro-climates, create a human scale to surroundings, engender a sense of place, and harmonise with historic townscapes.

Some of the literature circulating along with the *Strategy*, (notably *IPLAN*), does carry pictures of currently exemplary developments like Vauban in SW Germany. Yet no recent building on Tyneside has remotely matched such standards. The *Strategy* does not ask why that has been the case. No lessons are offered. New-build envisaged by the *Strategy* would not equal standards what is now being achieved on the continent and in North America. A serious strategy would at least suggest a vision of what is needed and point to a range of examples worthy of emulation. (see later)

## 12. Access & Mobility

The transport-related sections of the *Core Strategy* seek to “support growth and provide sustainable access” (Strategic Objective 10). The Green Party welcomes use of the concept of access if it is taken to mean nearby facilities which thereby reduce the need for long and frequent journeys, especially by car. Yet it is in the very nature of growth that it will create more demand for transportation. Distant suburban development will further intensify the unsustainable levels of current car usage. At the same time a focus on ‘flagship’ store development and support for large supermarkets (e.g. Tesco on the General Hospital site and Asda in Byker) can but further cripple local shops and thereby deprive the notion of ‘access’ of any real meaning. The closure of local adult care centres and the concentration of certain hospital facilities have similar effects.

Though many parts of Newcastle and Gateshead are comparatively blessed with good public transport, at least during the day, there are still areas that are poorly served, whilst general evening bus services are usually poor. The provision of large-scale car parking and, in Newcastle, reduced evening charges at council car parks also serve to encourage car usage (contrary to claims about a ‘war on motorists’, it is still comparatively cheap compared to many journeys by public transport).

The village expansion proposals in the Derwent Valley cannot go ahead without considerable public transport improvements. Those villages away from the A694, Blackhall Mill, Chopwell, Hookergate and High Spen are particularly poorly served. The Valley also suffers from poor public and retail facilities. Such problems are not addressed.

The overall problem with transportation in the area is further encouraged by the lack of a fully integrated system, with different tickets and different prices for the same journey. Last but not least, the *Strategy* appears to be underpinned by the long-discredited bias towards road widening and road building<sup>lxix</sup>. Yet there is overwhelming evidence that such a strategy is not just costly but self-defeating since it only serves to encourage more car journeys and thereby bring back congestion.

Though the *Strategy* is right to note that the area has had “high levels of accessibility by public transport” (though not in all neighbourhoods), it takes no account of the imminent severe cuts to bus services that will be implemented in April 2012, following the 20% reduction by central government of the BSOG (Bus Service Operators Grant), the fuel tax rebate for buses.

This reduction in bus services will drive more people to greater car usage in areas not served by the Metro, which will immediately mean that the statement that traffic congestion is limited to a small number of key locations will no longer be true. There will be increased congestion, particularly on the main approaches to the Urban Core, which the *Core Strategy* acknowledges already “suffers significantly in the peak period”.

The objectives outlined for the transport policies must be compared with the **Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan 3, Strategy 2011-21**, which Gateshead and Newcastle councils jointly adopted with the other Tyne and Wear authorities (North Tyneside, South Tyneside, and Sunderland) in March 2011. While the *Strategy* objectives are in line with goals of the LTP3 Strategy, they only relate to two of the five goals. What they do not refer to are the remaining three goals:

1. “To contribute to healthier and safer communities in Tyne & Wear, with higher levels of physical activity and personal security.
2. To create a fairer Tyne & Wear, providing everyone with the opportunity to achieve their full potential and access a wide range of employment, training, facilities and services
3. To protect, preserve and enhance our natural and built environments, improving quality of life and creating high quality public places.”

This omission means that, although the above issues are touched upon in the *Strategy*, they are clearly not given the same weight and therefore the objective in the third bullet point “to facilitate economic growth” is given disproportionate weight.

The statement that “the development of our sustainable transport networks will alleviate pressure from planned additional housing and economic growth” contradicts the reality that there is little likelihood of significant funding for any such development. Furthermore, a key measure in the LTP3 Strategic Framework was to **reduce** the demand for travel. The LTP3 states:

“By close integration between transport and land use planning strategies, we will seek to ensure that development is focused on the most accessible locations that minimise demand for travel and make it easier to use sustainable modes. This will be supplemented by the use of Travel Planning and Smarter Choices resources, whilst Car Clubs provide an additional option that caters for essential car journeys whilst minimising overall car use.”

and that as a main policy:

“We will help people to reach key services, such as healthcare, employment and education, easily and safely by ensuring that access issues are given due consideration for service and land use planning.”

It is clear that the *Strategy* ignores this completely. In fact it does the opposite, by acknowledging that it will increase demand for travel and simply hoping that somehow there will be a way for our sustainable travel networks to be “developed”.

It is further stated that “through economies of scale, it is likely that higher population density will lead to more thorough public transport networks, as new demand is created for these services. This will particularly be the case if development is focused around easily accessible locations”. But such a scenario would only be true if the *Strategy* were going to lead to higher population density. In reality, it is aiming to spread population out further to the edge of the Urban Core.

The reference to “targeted infrastructure improvements which will be required to support our development proposals” demonstrates the fundamental flaw of the whole *Strategy*. To offset the big increases in traffic flows the envisaged developments would inevitably encourage, there would have to be massive spending on roads and public transport. The councils simply hope that there will be money to spend on road widening, junction improvements and slip road controls. They would “seek to ensure” that schemes are brought forward at the earliest opportunity. Indeed there are a number of instances of such dreaming: expansion of air travel, sea routes, mainline and local rail networks and the Metro, plus a new high speed rail link to the North East.

## **Trains and planes**

Within that ‘wish list’, we would spotlight one glaring contradiction, that between airport expansion and another ambition of the *Strategy* and especially the *One Plan*, namely the ‘low carbon economy’. Air travel is actually the world’s fastest growing source of carbon dioxide (also of sources of NO<sub>x</sub> and water vapour, two other warming agents). Globally the world’s jet air fleet generates more than 600 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. Indeed aviation generates nearly as much CO<sub>2</sub> annually as that from all human activities in Africa. Aviation already accounts for some 13% of the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions.

Growth of air travel, if allowed to continue unchecked, would mean the UK would find it almost impossible to meet its 2050 target for reducing emissions by 80%. More generally, expanded airport capacity and more flights will mean more pollution, more noise and increasingly crowded airspace. Suggested alternative fuels would aggravate many other problems and, in any case, are unlikely to make much impact on oil dependence. It is also a highly subsidised industry, not least via tax-free fuel.<sup>lxx</sup>

It might be noted as well that the benefits of high speed trains are much exaggerated, even in terms of what the Green Party thinks is the 1Plan’s one-sided stress on lowered carbon emissions. HS2 Ltd, for example conclude that “(high-speed train links) would not be a major factor in managing carbon in the transport sector”, affecting UK transport emissions by between -0.3% to +0.3% over 60 years. HS2 Ltd’s figures do not take into account the impact of construction of the line (embedded carbon), which would add significantly to the UK’s carbon emissions.

High speed rail construction would, of course, cost land, by ploughing through farmland and destroying (or, equally destructively, further fragmenting) wildlife habitat. Estimated noise level for 350kph trains is 95 decibels at 25 metres so many houses would be blighted, unless shielded by costly soundproofing. The proposed Chilterns line, for example, would destroy at least 400 properties between London and Birmingham, including 220 social housing flats at Euston and student accommodation for Birmingham City University at Curzon Gate. Presumably similar schemes in the NE would have similar effect.

Evidence from France suggests the majority of rail users, those using suburban trains, actually suffer since the investment needed to improve their experience goes inside onto ‘glamorous’ projects that benefit a minority of travellers. But such is the lack of real evidence at the heart of the council’s plans that no mention is made of such downsides in the breezy rhetoric.<sup>lxxi</sup>

The Green Party is cautious about so-called TODs (transport-oriented development). Certainly there might be a case, for example, that the proximity of the Regent Centre office complex to the nearby Metro station reduces car usage. But there is also a danger that TODs can simply cause more urban sprawl as ribbons of housing and other development creep along roadways and railway lines. The explosive growth of what Sir John Betjeman called ‘Metro-land’ in outer London demonstrates the danger.

## **Curb the Car**

Nationally, 57% of car trips are less than 5 miles, according to government figures.<sup>lxxii</sup> The ecological and social costs of mass motoring are well documented while its future is certainly in doubt in the post-‘Peak Oil’ era. No amount of biofuel development is likely to sustain it, even if the other unsustainable costs of that alternative were to be discounted.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

But that evidence of relatively short journeys does point to a much better way forward than car usage or developments that depend upon it. It is the concept of the “20 minute city”, with encouragement of local

facilities and transport investment directed instead towards Metro, bus users, cyclists and, of course, pedestrians, making such options easier, quicker and safer. Some cities are already moving in this direction.<sup>lxxiv</sup> There is overwhelming evidence of the environmental, economic, social and physical health benefits of such alternatives. Indeed it is likely to create much more convivial neighbourhoods than any schemes based on large-scale transport infrastructure, not the least of whose costs is to carve up localities, something painfully evident in central Gateshead and the East side of Newcastle centre.

Alternatives have already been mapped out.<sup>lxxv</sup> Some boroughs are beginning to move in this direction e.g. Sutton in London.<sup>lxxvi</sup> The job creation potential of related schemes should be noted too.<sup>lxxvii</sup> We would spotlight good ideas that are emerging locally from the Newcastle cycling campaign.<sup>lxxviii</sup> More might be done to encourage car- and bicycle-pooling/ sharing, building on successful schemes in the USA and the Netherlands (where public websites are used to reduce 'stranger-danger' fears).<sup>lxxix</sup>

There should be a certain scepticism about the value of the park-and-ride schemes favoured by the *Strategy*. Sometimes they are the best short-term alternative. But they still pave over large areas of land for car parks and indeed do not challenge the sheer excess scale and frequency of motoring. Indeed, the *Strategy* itself does not take them particularly seriously since there is little indication of how they would be integrated into a system of bus lanes, without which there is far less incentive to use any new facilities.

Finally it must be noted that part of the transport problem is not this or that investment. It is the simple enforcement and extension of existing rules. Thus cyclists could get a better deal if more efforts were made to stop car parking in bike lanes as well as provide safe storage and changing facilities wherever possible. Pedestrians could be helped with more frequent and longer-timed road crossing lights. Perhaps the critical task is actually managerial: far better integration of public transport in the here and now with easier ticketing and much more harmonised timetables. Certainly we need more regulation and, in current circumstances, the 'quality contracts' system offers one way it might be done.

The Green Party is of course painfully aware of the existence of a strong 'road lobby'.<sup>lxxx</sup> The fact remains that collectively we are heading towards the exit of the age of mass motoring and that any serious strategy would do what it could to move towards the alternative of local access coupled to a reasonably cheap, comfortable, and reliable public transport system, the one area where (appropriately powered) electric motors could and should play a very dominant role.<sup>lxxxi</sup>

# 13. Education, health & social care

The impact of the developments encouraged by the *Core Strategy* on buses and train services, school places, hospital beds, and other such facilities does not seem to have been considered seriously. Apparently, it is being assumed that they will somehow materialise. The *Strategy* does not integrate effectively the housing it proposes and the capacity of facilities like local schools to absorb any future new residents in their catchment. This seems to threaten major problems in the Kingston Park area in particular. Certainly it would be wrong to create new 'ghettoes' like St Peter's Basin which can cater for families with school children only if they are prepared to drive on a long 'school run'.

We would note here a largely undesirable tendency to concentrate health and social care facilities onto fewer sites. That access issue is made more difficult for most people is obvious. Thus travelling to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital by public transport is a long journey from Crawcrook, Ryton or the Derwent Valley. It is true that in some respect large hospitals can offer beneficial specialist services, although sometimes their very size can bring health, let alone managerial, problems of their own (e.g. MRSA). Going into hospital is, apparently, far riskier than flying according to the World Health Organisation!

But it is the social and environmental costs of such centralisation, especially the associated long journey-times for patients, clients and their visitors, that is the concern we wish to note here. Thus users of the now closed Chirton House adult care centre in Byker were left faced with journeys to the other side of the city. While we welcome the calls in the *Strategy* for strong neighbourhoods, it is a pity that at least some mention was not made of the need to keep such facilities as localised as is logistically and economically possible.

# 14. Leisure, Sport & the Arts

Policy CS9 and Policy CS 20 address a mix of leisure, culture and tourism issues and proposals. The Green Party prefers terms such as ‘re-creation’, a recharging of physical health and mental well-being as well as straightforward pleasures, including personal self-expression. It cannot include those activities that are individually harmful, socially disruptive or environmentally degrading. The *Core Strategy* fails to make necessary distinction in its blanket approach. Worse, it ignores evidence of the unsustainability of the tourist sector as a whole and of certain specific leisure, sporting and cultural activities. Instead it merely advocates ‘business-as-usual’.

The *Strategy* should base itself much further on the evidence of serious unsustainability in mass spectator sports such as football.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> The environmental costs of leisure activities such as golfing, motor racing and those based around all-terrain vehicles are also well documented. Many are becoming very expensive in terms of subscriptions and tickets, thus narrowing access. This inequity has been widened by the privatisation of once public facilities for sport and fitness. Many are also become just another expression of consumerism, replete with ‘designer’ gear and short-life gadgets. Little needs to be said about the unsustainable nature of tourism based on long-distance car journeys or aviation... except to note that The *Core Strategy* says far too little. It could be said that businesses like restaurants primarily depend on local customers, not visiting tourists.

It might be noted too that ‘new media’, on which some leisure facilities now depend (libraries with computers, instead of books etc), are actually quite resource-intensive, consuming large quantities of electricity, for example. In practice they have not saved trees but have pushed up paper consumption to even greater and more unsustainable levels. The dependence of, say, *Wikipedia* on banks of fossil-fuelled servers is not properly taken into account in the visions of a new ‘electronic’ society.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

## Cultural endeavours

‘Culture’ covers a very disparate range of activities making it hard to make general statements. Certainly it is right to note the contribution of libraries, museums, galleries, sculpture parks, music venues and so forth to the quality of life. That said, it is also important to note the contraction in much provision, not least the effect of cutbacks in the library service and reductions in support for music education. It also seems quite likely that the opening of prestigious centres like the Sage might have deleterious effects in that smaller and more local centres of provision may find it harder to survive. Certainly cutbacks in funding from the Arts Council are likely to lead to a more impoverished cultural scene than The *Strategy* recognises. Some suggestions of possible ways of responding to this contraction would have been appropriate.

Consumerism has also afflicted culture. It is not just a matter of the endless merchandising. It goes deeper. To use a term popularised by the critic Robert Hewison, much culture has become a part of a phoney ‘heritage industry’. What is being sold is false, a nostalgia reworking of what life was really, a sentimental pastiche designed to persuade visitors to buy knick-knacks (we leave aside ideological purposes such as Disneyesque distortions might serve). It demeans serious (and deeply pleasurable) engagement with real history. [Fortunately there are some good examples of how that might be done, not least the Woodhorn Colliery museum in Northumberland]

## Sustainable Culture

In recent years there has been much talk of ‘regeneration through culture’. Along the Quayside, the Sage, Baltic, Live Theatre, a hotel, and a host of restaurants and pubs have replaced the flour mills and other factories where things were actually made. It is assumed that the region can survive on the basis of mass imports from sweatshop factories, plantations and mines on the other side of the world whence those products are now often sourced.

The *Strategy* largely echoes the thinking behind such projects. In reality, however, the recreation, sport and arts sector is not, ecologically speaking, a wealth-creator but a consumer of monies generated by what, above, we have argued is an unsustainable economy. In *that* sense, this sector cannot be a source of “green business”. Of course, many localities are trying to get a ‘slice’ of this economic activity. However, in the emergent world of constraints, there is going to be less tourism and other such business to go around. Again the evidence is ignored.

If there is a serious aim of integrating art and sport – in a sustainable way – into the community fabric, a quite different vision is needed, one that would be more localised whilst offering a wide range of reasonably priced activities. Of course there is nothing more affordable sport and fitness than going for a (free) walk in the fresh air in a pleasing environment. But as we have noted above, this is going to be curtailed by the urban sprawl the *Strategy* advocates for areas like North Gosforth, Callerton and Dunston. Such activities, especially for children, are even more curtailed once playing fields are built upon.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

It is a sign of the poverty of vision beneath council thinking that it simply accepts the dominant structures of sport and other recreational activities. Of course there are severe limits on what councils can do but at least some recognition of the need for alternatives would be something. Thus there is a world of difference offered by, say, the models of FC Barcelona and ‘Sports Direct’ United.

Instead of grandiose ambition, more basic things might be more useful and attainable. Allotments, for example, might not be as glamorous as, say, the Sage. But they are extremely valuable. Leaving aside issues of food

production, they provide healthy pleasure for many people. Yet they receive few mentions in the *Strategy*, surely a serious omission. Their protection and indeed expansion is vital.

Part of popular culture has long been the local pub. But this is an institution now heavily threatened by supermarket cheap alcohol promotions and by the rapacity of the food and drink conglomerates that now control many tenancies. Councils should use whatever powers they have, not least licensing, to protect long-established local pubs. That said, sometimes one person's 'fun' can be the misery of many more people. Alcohol-fuelled street disorders are the most obvious sign. One effect has been a new kind of inequity where city centres in the evening largely target those (largely in late teens and 20s) who like 'vertical drinking' and similar venues. The large majority of other people are effectively excluded when there are so few pubs where it is possible to go for a 'quiet pint' and a pleasant chat with friends.

Fortunately there are some inspiring examples of how a range of cultural activities can be stimulated without too much expenditure. One example is the Raploch estate music scheme in Scotland, modelled on Venezuela.<sup>lxxxv</sup> The BBC has been showcasing some excellent initiatives featuring Gareth Malone and local choirs. Film houses such as Newcastle's 'Tyneside Cinema' and the 'Star and Shadow' provide better models than out-of-town complexes.

We would specifically propose that every effort is made to restore the historic old Odeon Cinema as a multi-venue site for small-scale music and other artistic endeavours. Apparently, it is currently assigned for yet more retail development yet, given that retail vacancy levels in the North range from 13%- 16%, such an alternative popular use is surely better. Elsewhere we have opposed demolition but every rule has its exceptions. Few people on Tyneside would miss the brutalist (and now largely empty) Commercial Union House that sticks out like a very sore thumb next door.

# 15. Role of the Council

Comment has made earlier in the summary statement of the inadequacies of the process through which the *One Core Strategy* emerged. Part of the problem, however, is that it is hard to know what exactly transpired. Currently, in Newcastle, the Liberal Democrats councillors are distancing themselves from the whole *Strategy*. Yet such a lengthy document must have gone through a lengthy gestation period stretching back to when they controlled the council. It is not just a question of what in particular they decided nor what guidance was given to council officers. It is equally unclear how they can now oppose the *Strategy* whilst supporting the very government seeking to introduce the draft National Planning Policy Framework, one which, it is widely agreed, will lead to wholesale greenfield development.

In Newcastle, it did not serve democratic principles well when, at the various public meetings on the *Strategy*, no minutes were taken. It is hard to see how that decision enabled public feelings to be recorded nor how councillors and planners could be held to account for what they said. One consequence was widespread confusion as to whether one or more Lemington sites had been removed from the list of possible development sites, contrary to statements that no neighbourhood was to be given special treatment.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

We must note a widespread feeling that amongst members of the public at the relevant consultation meetings that councillor Murison in particular had tried to slip the *Strategy* through ‘under the radar screen’, leaving little time for consultation. Certainly officers of local conservation bodies seem to have been taken by surprise when news of the *Strategy*’s very existence became widely known. Meanwhile, Gateshead, which has a recent history of very authoritarian attitudes in relation to planning and in particular to the disastrous ‘Pathfinder’ programme, seems simply to have generally followed the Newcastle lead.

## Our Friends in the North

We have also noted above that much of the *Strategy* is a mix of old policies, simply repackaged. There is indeed a long history of failed housing schemes: area-wide demolitions and the tower blocks of the T. Dan Smith era, not least St Cuthbert’s village and the ‘Rocket’ in Dunston. Then there are those failed mall developments such the Newgate Shopping Centre. There are also all those big new roads, road-widening schemes, flyovers and multi-storey car parks, schemes that were claimed at the time to be the answer to traffic congestion but then just attracted more traffic. Indeed Gateshead centre suffered from all these ‘innovations’ more or less at once. It is surely now high time for something different (see Section 17 of the Supporting Evidence Statement)

Actually Newcastle Council has already tried recently a ‘mini’ *One Core Strategy*. It took the form of the Great Park ‘Sustainable Urban Extension’ built on previously Green Belt land to the north of the city. It too was claimed to be an exemplar of so-called ‘sustainable development’. However reality turned out to be different, as critics of the scheme had predicted. The new-build is largely executive-type housing, property way beyond the means of those most in need. It is, in practice, car-based. It has led to flooding problems. Contrary to claims by *Strategy* supporters that there is huge ‘demand’ for housing, the construction programme has in fact been slow. There are few flourishing new businesses. In reality, it is more like the same old urban sprawl. But the lesson does not seem to have been learned since, in essence, the *Strategy* is promoting more of the same.

In Gateshead there has been a long history of attempts at mass demolition of fit housing in the Saltwell and Bensham areas. Inner Gateshead has never experienced the social disorganisation of parts of West Newcastle so communities remain strong. Furthermore, there has never been a failing housing market in central Gateshead. In the past, local people in Gateshead have been able to resist efforts to drive a major road through the area which would have led to the loss of thousands of fit dwellings. Demolition of fit houses is, of course, usually an environmental and social disaster. Indeed, the present leader of Gateshead council, Mick Henry, broke into local politics as one of the leaders of the ‘save the avenues’ campaign back in the 1970s.

It is, therefore, ironic that Councillor Henry then became the strongest supporter of the ‘Pathfinder’ programme, against sustained local opposition. Fortunately, Gateshead’s sustained failure to prepare environmental impact statements was the basis on which local residents won court orders that held up ‘Pathfinder’ demolitions. Now the *One Core Strategy* threatens the return of more bulldozers which the Labour leaders appear to welcome.<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

More generally, there is a history of misplaced ambition.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> There is nothing wrong with high aspirations per se, but the mere announcement of large-scale plans can blight whole neighbourhoods. The distress those older schemes caused local people may be seen by many as unforgivable.

A better way forward is a mass of small-scale projects Than an extravagant plan based on a few large-scale developments.
---

There is also a worrying lack of ‘joined-up thinking’ within the council leadership. Thus it repeatedly talks of expansion (see, for example, the recently published *Newcastle - a working city plan*). Yet council leader

Nick Forbes himself has been quoted as saying at the joint meeting with the Voluntary Sector in early December 2011 that he believed that Newcastle Council's budget would be only **half** of what it was last year by 2015. This is likely to lead to severe contraction in job opportunities, housing demand and consumer spending. Such cutbacks alone contradict the hope that business-as-usual – economic expansionism – can be resumed.

There are similar inconsistencies elsewhere. The March 2010 *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment* did identify the controversial Site 4667, next to Gosforth Nature Reserve as a possible housing site. However that site was then omitted because it was in the Green Belt and “development (there) would result in urban sprawl”. The same is true of Site 4667, NE of the race course. Such chopping and changing suggest a certain lack of coherence.

## Money Matters

Implicit throughout the *One Core Strategy* is the desire to raise council revenues. It is the drift of higher income residents into the ‘countryside’ that, at least in the case of Newcastle and Gateshead, seems to fuel the ambition to build executive-style housing within the city boundaries. This appears to explain the otherwise unsound choice of areas like Heathery Lane and Dunston Hill, as a possible choices for building sites.

The Green Party believes that this is a false solution. We recognise that there is immense pressure upon councils like Newcastle and Gateshead, not least because of central government policy. However the construction of new housing developments aimed at better off citizens is one being pursued by several councils in competition. They cannot all win.

Furthermore, even if successful, the extra monies in increased council tax payments may make only marginal differences to the whole budget problem. We think that, in the short term, there are better options. But, most important of all, the negative consequences will cancel out any benefits. The fundamental solution lies beyond the scope of any plan like the *Strategy*. It is a reconstruction of the whole fiscal system, including the introduction of site value taxation, and a change in the power relationship between central and local government. It might be better if the two councils spend more time and effort lobbying for such changes.

However what is most remarkable about the whole *Strategy* business is the support it has received from Labour councillors. If they are really committed to a fairer society, they should not support plans that can only aggravate inequality. The Green Party hopes that some of them will agree that it will be big corporate interests who will gain most if the *Strategy* goes ahead (which, of course, is why developers and builders are some of the biggest donors to the Conservative Party and have been lobbying for the new NPPF).<sup>lxxxix</sup>

## Best Laid Plans

The Green Party would also to suggest greater wariness about the ‘Big Plan’ syndrome or what the American Hal Draper called ‘Plannism’.<sup>xc</sup> The danger is that individuals, communities, and ecological features become nothing more than things on some drawing board, deemed to be in need of ‘development’ and to be reshaped according to the Plan. Newcastle and Gateshead certainly suffered from such tendencies in the 60s. Perhaps they are less pronounced today than before but it remains a danger.<sup>xci</sup>

There is one last comment to make. It concerns the rather extravagant ambitions that pervade documents like the *Strategy* and *One Plan*. A sustainable society will most likely be a smaller, slower and quieter one, albeit one that is a somewhat convivial one than today’s ‘hot house’ (some critics diagnose a social affliction in contemporary society that they call “influenza” while in Japan, they talk of “hurry sickness”<sup>xcii</sup>).

Contrary to the ‘big plans’ favoured by some councillors, planners and developers, ordinary people are rightly hostile to large-scale developments that they feel have been simply ‘dumped’ on their doorsteps. Now it seems that the processes that led the production of plans like the *One Core Strategy* are being challenged by more and more local communities.<sup>xciii</sup>

Ironically the area does boast one development where there were real attempts to involve local people: regeneration in Byker including the building of the Byker City Wall. The Green Party calls for a shift towards more genuinely ‘popular planning’.<sup>xciv</sup>

# 16. The Sustainable City

The *One Core Strategy* and the *1Plan* makes much use of words like 'sustainable' (as in 'sustainable urbanism') but never define what they actually mean. But it is possible to tease out a definition of sustainable city and illustrate what it might mean. A city fit for tomorrow's world would, the Green Party suggests, be one that:

1. understands that humans are only one of many life forms which share a sustainable region.
2. has a stable, healthy population, well within the region's ecological carrying capacity.
3. has a physical size such that housing, jobs, and daily needs are within walking distance of one another, with other activities as possible should be located within easy walking distance of bus, tram and rail stops.
4. has a central zone that combines commercial, civic, cultural and recreational use.
5. contains an ample supply of specialised open space in the form of squares, greens and parks whose frequent use is encouraged through placement and design.
6. has a well-defined edge, such as agricultural greenbelts or wildlife corridors, permanently protected from development.
7. has a population where this is a strong sense of place and of both local and global responsibility.
8. is empowered to guide an ecologically regulated economy based on the sustainable harvest and conservation of local natural resources.
9. makes the most efficient use of water through the use of natural drainage, drought tolerant landscaping and grey water recycling.
10. makes the most efficient use of energy via street orientation, the placement of buildings and the use of shading as well as via the design and operation of individual buildings
11. uses materials and methods of construction specific to the region, exhibiting continuity of history and culture and compatibility with the climate which in turn encourage the development of local character and community identity
12. encourages pedestrian and bicycle use by a focus on local provision and by discouraging high speed traffic
13. shares both its surplus production and culture with other communities and regions.
14. has a collective ethic of conserving its culture and natural resources for future generations.
15. does not export pollution to other regions.
16. does not base its affluence on the draining of other regions.
17. reduces to a minimum income leakages which leave the community.
18. gains fullest possible value from harvest and manufacturing of natural resources through use of locally controlled and adapted appropriate technologies.
19. is committed to the goal of providing equal opportunity for a high quality of life for all residents of the community.
20. has institutions that are responsive to local needs and resilient in the face of ecological change.

American architect Tom Bender rightly links greener city redevelopment to core issues of values and priorities:

"All these connections lead back to our base cultural values of greed (and) growth. Until we let loose of our insane belief that geometric expansion of our numbers and our appetites can continue in a finite world, *any* "eco-building" is only a band-aid. True "eco-building" involves *whether* we build as well as *how*, and the values from which we work. It *is*, however, possible to let go of the values of greed (and) growth."

## A Visionary Plan

Some of the innovative ideas were brought together in sadly unfulfilled plans for a new town, Bamberton, around the site of a derelict cement works on Vancouver Island in Canada. The proposal envisaged that eventually it would have been turned into a 'human-scale, environmentally-friendly, traditional community where people could live, work, and enjoy a vibrant community without having to commute away to work and where they could feel a sense of personal belonging', with a final population of some 12,000 people.

It is instructive to look at some of its objectives, comparing them with developments thrown up around Tyneside over recent years. The project's guidelines included:

- houses built within a 5 minute walking distance of village centres with village greens, shops and businesses;
- architectural standards emphasising traditional designs, sloping gabled roofs, vertical windows etc;
- bans on materials including urea-formaldehyde products, CFC & HCFC blown foams, petroleum-based paints and floor finishes, vinyl siding, asphalt;
- recycling and composting areas to be incorporated into all building design;
- 10% of all units allocated to a Community Land Trust, removing land from the market;

- a non-profit development company working to deliver 'affordability' initiatives;
- wildlife corridors and full protection for watercourses, including no-build strips around them and minimum distances from water storage for hazardous materials;
- 50% of the site to be green space, predominantly with native species; 40% of each single family lot to be soft landscaped (no gravel, concrete etc);
- covenants on land to restrict use of chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers as well as protect tree cover;
- a pre-entry source control programme for liquid wastes, a tertiary biological sewage treatment and a community composting plant;
- large-scale recycling programmes;
- community resource sharing co-op to reduce purchasing (cars, tools etc);
- building permits conditional on construction wastes recycling plan;
- water rates set to encourage conservation with high water efficiency standards for all homes and appliances;
- energy-saving incentives in energy tariffs as well as runs programme for purchase of solar systems and energy-efficient equipment; community-owned utilities;
- village and street design to encourage pedestrian travel;
- electric golf-cart vehicles for non-pedestrian internal trips;
- a community transportation administrator to develop carpooling, flexiwork, worksharing etc.

The economic plan focused upon initiatives such as: construction industry focused upon resource conserving building technologies; added-value wood products industry—doors, cabinets etc; a 70 acre park for leading edge environmental, telecommunications and instrumentation industries; a business network providing mutual support, information and resource sharing; electronic conferencing & bulletin board. A rich programme of arts and cultural development had featured in the plans. Sadly funding problems blighted this visionary plan.

However, Appendix 17 does document a good number of greener initiatives in various fields that give the lie to the argument that "there is no alternative".

# 17. Alternatives

## 17a. Broad alternative programmes:

It is easy to be negative and there is, of course, a very real limit to what councils can do. But they can have a broad vision and correspondingly appropriate ambitions. We offer a selection of broad alternatives, all of which recognise the urgent need for radical action, instead of slightly reformed business-as-usual. They are deliberately chosen from organisations other than the Green Party. Many also outline funding possibilities.

We start with one by an organisation chaired by Richard Rogers whose report shows up the limited vision of the *One Core Strategy*:

[http://www.urbantaskforce.org/UTF\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.urbantaskforce.org/UTF_final_report.pdf)

See also:

The Institute for Public Policy Research.

e.g. [http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/05/2050\\_vision\\_web\\_summary\\_1607.pdf](http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/05/2050_vision_web_summary_1607.pdf)

Green New Deal Group.

e.g. [http://www.neweconomics.org/sites/neweconomics.org/files/A\\_Green\\_New\\_Deal\\_1.pdf](http://www.neweconomics.org/sites/neweconomics.org/files/A_Green_New_Deal_1.pdf)

New Economics Foundation

e.g. <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/growth-isnt-possible>

The Lean Economy Connection

e.g. <http://www.leanlogic.net/>

Green Scissors.

e.g. <http://greenscissors.com/news/green-scissors-2011/>

Forum for the Future.

e.g. <http://www.forumforthefuture.org/our-work/hub/sustainable-business>

Transition Town.

e.g. <http://transitionculture.org/wp-content/uploads/msc-dissertation-publishable-copy.pdf>

Public Interest Research Centre and the Centre for Alternative Technology.

e.g. <http://www.zerocarbonbritain.com/>

Rocky Mountain Institute

e.g. <http://www.rmi.org/ReinventingFire>

as well as a host of individual researchers and writers e.g.

Ernest Callenbach: <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/968>

Guy Dauncey: <http://www.earthfuture.com/theclimatechallenge/aboutbook.html>

Richard Heinberg: <http://richardheinberg.com/the-end-of-growth>

For a visual guide to some of this thinking, watch:

<http://www.theeconomicsofhappiness.org/>

## **I7b. Exemplars of greener development**

There are many actual developments/redevelopments that do show that there is an alternative. For example:

### **Housing and community development**

Bennington (BedZed), outer London (<http://www.peabody.org.uk/pages/GetPage.aspx?id=179>)

Princedale, London: greener social housing' project (<http://www.greenoctavia.org.uk/project/>)

Hockerton, Nottinghamshire (<http://www.hockertonhousingproject.org.uk/>)

'Triangle', Swindon: greener housing association project (<http://www.haboakus.co.uk/triangle/>)

Findhorn, Scotland: community development and eco-housing (<http://www.ecovillagefindhorn.com/>)

Theresienhöf, Munich, Germany: greener neighbourhood and 'open planning'

([http://www.eukn.org/Germany/de\\_en/E\\_library/Social\\_Inclusion\\_Integration/Community\\_development/Open\\_planning\\_process\\_during\\_the\\_neighbourhood\\_development\\_in\\_München\\_Theresienhöf](http://www.eukn.org/Germany/de_en/E_library/Social_Inclusion_Integration/Community_development/Open_planning_process_during_the_neighbourhood_development_in_München_Theresienhöf))

Vauban, SW Germany: green new suburb (<http://www.vauban.de/info/abstract.html>)

'Eco-city', Tübingen, Germany: mixed use redevelopment <http://brozed.wordpress.com/project-examples/ecocity-tubingen/>

Coho, Oregon, USA: eco-village (<http://cohoecovillage.org/>)

Ithaca, New York state: eco-village (<http://ecovillageithaca.org/evi/>)

New York: greener residential tower ([http://www.metropolismag.com/html/content\\_1001/ent/index.html](http://www.metropolismag.com/html/content_1001/ent/index.html))

Adelaide, Australia: suburban greening (<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/lumen/issues/8861/news8883.html>)

#### **Car-free housing**

Slateford, Edinburgh ([http://www.edinburgharchitecture.co.uk/slateford\\_green\\_housing.htm](http://www.edinburgharchitecture.co.uk/slateford_green_housing.htm))

'Bike City', Vienna, Austria (<http://www.greensuccesses.eu/austria/car-free-housing/>)

#### **Landlord-related schemes**

Vancouver, Canada: 'greener landlords' (<http://www.bcsea.org/greenlandlords>)

More examples can be found here: <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/tv/worlds-greenest-homes/>

Building regulations are being used to push for greater sustainability. For example, Barcelona requires solar panels to be fitted to all large buildings. The objective is for the buildings to heat 60% of their own hot water. Individual buildings can also be greened.

### **'Building recycling'**

'Urban Splash': various (<http://www.urbansplash.co.uk/gallery>)

Garston, Lancashire: greener offices (<http://projects.bre.co.uk/envbuild/index.html>)

New York: greener building refurbishment

([http://arch.ced.berkeley.edu/vitalsigns/bld/Casestudies/Abstracts/cornell\\_audubon\\_ab.html](http://arch.ced.berkeley.edu/vitalsigns/bld/Casestudies/Abstracts/cornell_audubon_ab.html))

Raleigh, USA: Body Shop office greener refurbishment

([http://ergo.human.cornell.edu/ecotecture/Case%20Studies/Body%20Shop/BodyShop\\_design.html](http://ergo.human.cornell.edu/ecotecture/Case%20Studies/Body%20Shop/BodyShop_design.html))

San Diego: green office development

(<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/greenbuilding/casestudies/Commercial/Ridgehaven.htm>)

### **Education sector**

De Montfort University Queen's Building Leicester

(<http://www.environmentcity.org.uk/article.asp?ParentID=105&ArticleID=123>)

Drammen, Norway: Marienlyst School development (<http://sustainablecities.dk/en/city-projects/cases/drammen-marienlyst-school-and-the-local-heating-network>)

Oberlin, Ohio, USA: greener education building (<http://oberlin.edu/ajlc/>)

### **Student accommodation**

The residential buildings project at Linacre College in Oxford, for example, was the first multi-occupancy building design to be awarded an excellent rating under the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method in the UK.<sup>xv</sup>

### **Open space 'greening', education and recreational development**

Alsagar, Cheshire: park restoration (<http://www.northwest.groundwork.org.uk/cheshire/what-we-do/case-studies/2010/milton-park.aspx>)

Bill Quay Community Farm, Gateshead

(<http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Leisure%20and%20Culture/countryside/BillQuayFarm.aspx>)

Ouseburn Farm, Newcastle (<http://www.bykerbridge.org.uk/farm/>)

Wilmslow, Cheshire <http://www.northwest.groundwork.org.uk/cheshire/what-we-do/case-studies/2011/colshaw-recreation-area.aspx>

Chicago: greener urban open spaces

([http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp\\_info/cityspace\\_plan.html](http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/cityspace_plan.html))

Manhattan, NY: 'High Line' park (<http://www.thehighline.org/>)

Vancouver, Canada: <http://vancouver.ca/engsvcs/streets/greenstreets/>

## Area redevelopment

Dunkirk, France: greener redevelopment (<http://recycledarchitecture.blogspot.com/2011/10/grand-large-district-dunkirk-france.html>)

Albertslund, Denmark: green city initiatives (<http://www.albertslund.dk/Service/English.aspx>)

Malmö, Sweden 'Bo01' greener development (<http://www.malmo.se/English/Sustainable-City-Development/Bo01---Western-Harbour.html>)

Augustenborg, Malmö, Sweden: green roofs and urban waterways

[http://www.ekostaden.com/information/ekostaden\\_tmpl\\_01.aspx?pageID=104&parentID=146&sectionID=4&introID=146](http://www.ekostaden.com/information/ekostaden_tmpl_01.aspx?pageID=104&parentID=146&sectionID=4&introID=146)

Växjö, Sweden (<http://vaxjo.se/Kommun--politik/Om-Vaxjo-/Internationellt/Other-languages/Engelska--English1/Sustainable-development/Fossil-Fuel-Free-Vaxjo/>)

Porvoo, Finland (<http://www.skaftekarr.fi/en>)

Detroit, USA: greener urban regeneration (<http://www.greeningdetroit.com/>)

Cleveland, USA: <http://www.ecocitycleveland.org/ecologicaldesign/ecodesignpage.html>

## Land reclamation

Greenwich Millennium Village, London (<http://www.gmv.gb.com/history.htm>)

Emscher, Ruhr, Germany: industrial wasteland reclamation: <http://www.fedenatur.org/docs/docs/238.pdf>

Staten Island, USA: Freshkills landfill site reclamation:

[http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub\\_your\\_park/fresh\\_kills\\_park/html/fresh\\_kills\\_park.html](http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_your_park/fresh_kills_park/html/fresh_kills_park.html)

## Re-vegetation, tree planting & water 'harvesting'

Minnesota, USA: de-paving / re-vegetation (<http://www.restoringthelandscape.com/>)

Stuttgart: urban tree planting (<http://www.grabs-eu.org/membersArea/files/stuttgart.pdf>)

Berlin: 'rainwater harvesting' (<http://www.bbldar.com/harvesthold.htm>)

## Waste and recycling

Various good initiatives can be found here: <http://www.banwaste.org.uk/>

## Waste Water treatment

Rhinebeck, USA: greener waste water treatment

(<http://www.theoptimisticfuturist.org/index.php/environment/problem-polluted-or-scarce-water/eco-machine-water-treatment-process.html>)

## Wildlife restoration

[http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/wt-](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/wt-main.live.drupal.precedenthost.co.uk/files/A%20Living%20Landscape%20report%202009%20update.pdf)

[main.live.drupal.precedenthost.co.uk/files/A%20Living%20Landscape%20report%202009%20update.pdf](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/wt-main.live.drupal.precedenthost.co.uk/files/A%20Living%20Landscape%20report%202009%20update.pdf)

## Industrial development

Kalundborg, Denmark: (<http://www.symbiosis.dk/en>)

## Urban food production & roof gardens

Various: urban roof gardens (<http://www.urbanroofgardens.com/menu/portfolio.htm>)

Copenhagen:

(<http://translate.google.co.uk/translate?hl=en&sl=da&tl=en&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.urbanhaver.dk%2F>)

Todmorden: (<http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>)

Sheffield: <http://www.growsheffield.com/pages/groShefabout.html>

London: (<http://www.capitalgrowth.org/> and <http://foodfromthesky.org.uk/what-lives-on-the-roof/>)

New York: (<http://archpaper.com/news/articles.asp?id=4532> and <http://rooftopfarms.org/about/>)

San Francisco farmers' markets ([http://www.pcfma.com/market\\_about.php](http://www.pcfma.com/market_about.php))

New York: urban fish farming (<http://goodfoodrevolution.wordpress.com/2011/06/09/urban-fish-farming-in-new-york-city/>)

## Transport

Curitiba, Brazil, public transport initiatives (<http://www.treehugger.com/cars/curitibaatms-bus-rapid-transit-23-million-passengers-a-day.html>)

# 18. ‘Nimbyism’?

The Green Party is well aware that opponents of the *One Core Strategy* may be smeared with the pejorative label of ‘nimbyists’ (i.e. not in *my* back yard). So, in conclusion, we will refute such slurs. For a start, it is a sure sign of a truly ‘big society’ that local people do fight to conserve what is good in their ‘back yard’. The huge turnouts at public meetings in the area at venues like Gosforth Civic Hall and the Falcons Rugby Club evidence just how much popular opposition there is to the *Strategy*. That alone constitutes grounds for a total rethink of the plan.

The main beneficiaries of this plan are the few: the developers and their shareholders. Persimmons, for example, has offered, it is being said, to pay £1 million towards community facilities at Dinnington. But the company stands to make many millions, possibly 30 times that figure, if the proposed developments go ahead. Prioritised new dwellings will not be ‘social housing’. It will be so-called ‘executive’ properties, the kind of housing that only a minority can afford.<sup>xvii</sup> These are prices way beyond the means of young first time buyers, for example.

By contrast there is evidence that local people in poorer areas like Walker *do* want development in their back yard. Yet the overwhelming bias of the *Strategy* is, especially in the first rounds of construction, on comparatively expensive new build on greenfield sites to the West and North of Newcastle. Similarly the main victims of the demolitions proposed in Gateshead will be ordinary working class people. It is well documented that the ‘father’ of the *Strategy*, the *Going for Growth* plan, benefitted the few at the expense of the many.

There have been far fewer objections to the plans for the urban core. Yet beneath all the glossy images and high flying rhetoric about “knowledge economies”, “leading edge innovation” and “new models of sustainable urbanism”, in a word ‘progress’, lies, a very limited vision. It is one that serves the selfish interests of a comparatively privileged strata likely to get the work... if, indeed, a significant number of jobs actually do transpire. Most people are not (nor likely to soon become) qualified to find employment in science-based enclaves. Meanwhile thousands of other people are already losing their jobs due to direct public sector staffing cutbacks and to the indirect effects of pay and benefits freezes. The emphasis in the *Core Strategy* on flagship retail and commercial developments will add to their number as more small- and medium-sized businesses will be driven to the wall.

Furthermore, the very serious damage to local biodiversity, especially that threatened by developments planned in North Gosforth, is not just a concern of a well-heeled few. ‘Jewels’ like Gosforth Nature Reserve are the inheritance of everyone. In practice, many millions take part in related activities from rambling to bird-watching. Indeed Tyneside was home to one of the first mass environmental movements in Victorian times<sup>xviii</sup>. Of course there are direct human benefits from contact with wild species and undeveloped landscapes.

But large numbers of people recognise the desirability of wildlife conservation as an intrinsic good. This is far from selfishness. It is certainly not selfish to desire the conservation of good farmland since future generations may desperately need such soils in the resource-hungry world that is likely to emerge over the coming decades. The net impact of the proposed developments and demolitions will be to aggravate many other ecological problems, not least the ‘carbon footprint’ of Newcastle-Gateshead. Yet climatic stability is most certainly in the collective interest.

It is the *Strategy* that advocates short-sighted, indeed selfish goals, that compromise the long-term well-being of most people and indeed most other species in the area. Green Alternatives such as the Green New Deal offer the only viable way forward, one that genuinely serves the collective interest. It also offers far more to the most vulnerable and deprived sections of society than plans based on speculative development.

---

<sup>i</sup> We will refer to the documents as one strategy, commenting on instances where there are policies specific to either Newcastle or Gateshead.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.journallive.co.uk/north-east-news/todays-news/2011/12/15/north-east-unemployment-figures-increase-again-61634-29956932/>. In fact, real unemployment figures are often worse than those commonly given by government ministers and repeated uncritically across most of the media. See, for example:

<http://www.radstats.org.uk/no079/webster.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/nov/04/greenhouse-gases-rise-record-levels>

<sup>iv</sup> For a critique of retail-led development, see:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/supermarket-led-development>

The fantasy thinking of the *One Core Strategy* about the cure of 'retail therapy' as well as the gap between its 'vision' of a consumer boom and the real world is exposed here:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/jan/22/future-of-high-street-hmv?INTCMP=SRCH>

<sup>v</sup> That said, there was a rumour at the time of writing that it was council planners who approached Persimmons regarding the development of the site (no. 4667) north of Heathery Lane, north Gosforth. If true, it would be a true disgrace that a council threatened the very viability of a critical habitat like Gosforth Nature Reserve in such a cavalier fashion. Of the existence of such rumours reflects the inadequacy of information in the public domain about the negotiations that produced the *One Core Strategy*.

<sup>vi</sup> It is surely self-evident that, if given the choice, developers will prefer to build more profitable executive-style houses on greenfield sites than affordable housing on brownfield sites, not least given the state of the property market and the few construction obstacles on the former sites.

<sup>vii</sup> For a visual guide, try: <http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-broke/>

<sup>viii</sup> For a critique of 'enterprise-based' development and hopes for salvation via 'inward investment, see:

<http://neweconomics.org/publications/filling-the-jobs-gap>

For a broader critique of growth-as-cure using the now very sick 'Celtic Tiger', Eire, see:

<http://www.feasta.org/documents/review2/cullen.htm>

<sup>ix</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2061260/Britain-Los-Angeles-style-ghetto-planning-reforms-warns-Lord-Rogers.html>

<sup>x</sup> Examples include Okotoks (Alberta, Canada), Qualicum Beach, (British Columbia, Canada), Noosa Shire (Queensland, Australia). 'Smart growth' simply does not work, since expansion still continues cancelling out whatever good things might be achieved, as can be seen where it has consciously tried, e.g. Boulder (Colorado, USA) and Portland (Oregon, USA). See also: Czech, B., & H. Daly. (2004). 'The steady state economy: what it is, entails, & connotes.' *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 32(2): 598-605. Posted @ <http://www.steadystate.org/files/SSE.pdf> as well as Bender, T. (1979). 'Sharing Smaller Pies'. In Lane de Moll and Gigi Coe, eds., *Stepping Stones: Appropriate Technology and Beyond*. Marion Boyars; Coates, G., ed. (1981). *Resettling America: Energy, Ecology and Community*. Brick House; Rees, W.E. (1999). 'Achieving sustainability: reform or transformation' in Sutterwaite, D., ed., *The Earthscan Reader in Sustainable Cities*. Earthscan, reprinted from *Journal of Planning Literature*, Vol. 9, No. 4, May 1995 pp. 343-61, pp.22-52; Stewart, G. & M. Ignatieva, eds. (2000), *Urban Biodiversity & Ecology as a Basis for Holistic Planning & Design*. Lincoln University International Centre for Nature Conservation; and Beatley, T. & K. Manning (1997). *The Ecology of Place: Planning for Environment, Economy & Community*. Island Pr.

See also: <http://www.growthbusters.org/> and [http://steadystate.org/wp-content/uploads/EnoughIsEnough\\_FullReport.pdf](http://steadystate.org/wp-content/uploads/EnoughIsEnough_FullReport.pdf)

<sup>xi</sup> The NPPF justifies the greenfield grabs it would unleash as 'sustainable development'. Such usage demonstrates how worthless that phrase has become, meaning whatever its user chooses it to mean. Normally, it boils down to a belief that one can have one's cake and eat it, something as physically impossible as that older term, 'sustainable growth', infinite physical expansion being an impossibility on a finite planet. The unsustainable reality of the NPPF can be seen in localities like Nuneaton and Rutland where big greenfield site developments are being forced through using the 'authority' of what, at the time, was still only a draft framework.

<sup>xii</sup> Supporters of the *One Core Strategy* imply that it is rather pointless to resist. We might call this the 'Vogon Argument', after the Vogons' battlecry "Resistance is useless" in *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. The Vogons, it may be remembered, were a race of constructors and developers.

<sup>xiii</sup> Councils are certainly very cash-strapped indeed. Some councils with the necessary political will are pursuing positive schemes to raise money e.g. parking levies in Nottingham:

<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2600> ;

Of course there is plenty of money 'out there', as grossly illustrated by: <http://www.channel5.com/shows/tamara-ecclestone-billion-girl>

<sup>xiv</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7951838.stm>

<sup>xv</sup> Notes from Green Party members present.

<sup>xvi</sup> They include the *Guardian's* George Monbiot, Melanie Philips of the *Daly Mail* & the leader writers of the *Daily Telegraph*.

<sup>xvii</sup> See, for example Anna Minton's *Ground Control* (Penguin, 2009) and the damning reports from the House of Common Public Accounts Committee (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmpubacc/106/106.pdf>) The Joseph Rowntree Foundation similarly reported substantial failures (<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/early-development-housing-market-renewal-programme>).

<sup>xviii</sup> This ‘paradigm’ can be traced back to the writings of John Stuart Mill in 1848 (<http://www.panarchy.org/mill/stationary.1848.html>) and doubtless before. But the two ‘texts’ were published in 1972: the *Blueprint for Survival* and the *Limits To Growth* report. The best-known proponent today is possibly the economist Herman Daly (see, for example: <http://www.theoil Drum.com/node/3941> )

<sup>xix</sup> See, for example:

Brown, L. (2005). *Outgrowing the Earth*. Earthscan.

Gilding P. (2011). *The Great Disruption*. Bloomsbury.

Greer J. (2008) *The Long Descent*. New Society.

Hansen, J. (2011). *Storms of My Grandchildren*. Bloomsbury.

Heinberg, R. (2007). *Peak Everything: Waking Up to the Century of Declines*. New Society

Heinberg R. (2011) *End of Growth* Clairview Books

Kunstler, J. (2005). *The Long Emergency: Surviving the Converging Catastrophes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Atlantic Books

Lovelock, J. (2006). *Revenge of Gaia*. Allen Lane

Martenson C. (2011) *Crash Course*. Wiley.

McKibben, B. (2011). *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*. St Martin’s.

Rogers, P. et al (2007). *Beyond Terror: The Truth About the Real Threats to Our World*. Rider & Co.

Saul, J. R. (2009) *The Collapse of Globalism*. Atlantic Books.

<sup>xx</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/story/2011/11/09/iea-world-energy-outlook-climate-change.html>

<sup>xxi</sup> See [http://www.sts.vt.edu/faculty/crist/Beyond\\_the\\_Climate\\_Crisis.pdf](http://www.sts.vt.edu/faculty/crist/Beyond_the_Climate_Crisis.pdf)

<sup>xxii</sup> See <http://steadystate.org/>

<sup>xxiii</sup> One example looking at various tipping points (or minefields) into which human society has transgressed can be found here:

<http://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/researchnews/tippingtowardstheunknown/thenineplanetaryboundaries.4.1fe8f33123572b59ab80007039.html>

The BBC posts almost daily news of the dangers at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science\\_and\\_environment/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science_and_environment/)

Other evidence can found at sites like:

[http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/earth\\_overshoot\\_day/](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/earth_overshoot_day/)

<http://www.wcs.org/humanfootprint/>

<http://vitalsigns.worldwatch.org/>

- <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx>;
- <http://www.unep.org/Geo/index.htm>;
- [http://www.panda.org/news\\_facts/publications/general/livingplanet/index.cfm](http://www.panda.org/news_facts/publications/general/livingplanet/index.cfm)
- <http://www.ipcc.ch/about/about.htm>;

<http://epa.gov/climatechange/index.html>

<http://www.realclimate.org/>

- <http://www.biodiv.org/gbo/>;
- <http://www.iucnredlist.org/>

<sup>xxiv</sup> There are various national and regional studies of ‘carrying capacity’, surely the fundamental starting point of any truly sustainable land use plan e.g.

Odum, E. (1970). ‘Optimum Population & Environment’. *Current History*, June: 355-359, 365.

Peterson, R. (1973). *Carrying Capacity Analysis of the Pacific Northwest*. Environment Protection Agency.

Pimentel, D. & M. Pimentel (1990). *Land, Energy & Water: The Constraints Governing Ideal US Population Size*. Negative Population Growth, Forum Paper 3.,

Rees, W. (1996). ‘Revisiting Carrying Capacity: Area-Based Indicators of Sustainability’ *Population and Environment*: 17(3) Posted @ <http://dicoff.org/page110.htm>

Smith, J.W., ed. (1991). *Immigration, Population & Sustainable Environments: The Limits to Australia’s Growth*. Flinders Pr.

<sup>xxv</sup> The total area of rural land lost to urban use between 1945-1990 has indeed been drastic: 705,000 hectares, an area the size of Greater London, Berkshire, Herefordshire and Oxfordshire combined. Indeed the loss of agricultural land to development continued, with about 15,000 hectares developed from 1996 - 2004 (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007).

<sup>xxvi</sup> The Sustainable London Trust has, for example, estimated that London requires land 125 (sic) times its actual physical size to supply the resources it consumes and dispose of its wastes.

<sup>xxvii</sup> See:

Alexander, C. (1978). *A Pattern Language*. OUP. See: <http://www.patternlanguage.com/>

Aberley, D. ed. (1994). *Futures by Design: The Practice of Ecological Planning*. New Society Publishers.

Beatley, T. & K. Manning (1997). *The Ecology of Place: Planning for Environment, Economy & Community*. Island Pr.

Dresser, P. van. (1972). *A Landscape for Humans: A Case Study of the Potentials for Ecologically Guided Development in an Uplands Region*. Biotechnic Pr.

McHarg, I. (1969). *Design With Nature*. Doubleday.

Newsom, M. (1992). *Land, Water and Development - River Basin Systems and their Sustainable Management*. Routledge.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Even Persimmons would appear to accept that hydrology would limit any build there to 400 houses, not the 600 picked out of thin air by the *Strategy*.

<sup>xxix</sup> Some suggestions can be found here:

Baines, C. & J. Smart (1991). *A Guide to Habitat Creation*. Packard, 1991.

Bunting, M. (2007). ‘Suburban girdles’. *Guardian*, Oct. 11, 2007. Posted @

[http://browse.guardian.co.uk/search?search\\_target=%2Fsearch&fr=cb-guardian&search=%22suburban+girdles%22&N=](http://browse.guardian.co.uk/search?search_target=%2Fsearch&fr=cb-guardian&search=%22suburban+girdles%22&N=)

Mills, S. (1995). *In the Service of the Wild: Restoring & Reinhabiting Damaged Land*. Beacon Pr.  
Noss, R. & A. Cooperrider (1994). *Saving Nature's Legacy Protecting & Restoring Biodiversity*. Island Pr.  
Noss, R. & L. Harris (1986). 'Nodes, Networks, MUMS: Preserving Diversity at All Scales'. *Environmental Management*, 10(3): 299-309.  
Smith, D. & P. Hellmund (1993). *Ecology of Greenways*. Univ. Minnesota Pr.  
Smyser, C., et al. (1982). *Nature's Design: A Practical Guide To Natural Landscaping*. Rodale Pr.  
Terborgh & M. Soulé (1999). 'Why We Need Large-Scale Networks & Mega-reserves: How to Design Them'. *Wild Earth*, Spring: 66-77.

<sup>xxx</sup> The costs of sprawl are evidenced here:

<http://www.numbersusa.com/content/issues/urban-sprawl.html> , <http://www.sprawlwatch.org/> and <http://www.cis.org/articles/2003/SprawlPaper.pdf>

<sup>xxxii</sup> Many suggestions can be found in *Superbia!* by D. Chiras and D. Wann (New Society Publishers).

Other examples include:

Dutton, J. A. (2001). *New American Urbanism: Re-forming the Suburban Metropolis*. (Skira);  
Bang, J. M. (2005). *Ecovillages: A Practical Guide to Sustainable Communities*. (Floris);  
Dawson, J. (2006). *Ecovillages: New Frontiers for Sustainability*. (Green Books);  
Jackson, H. & K. Svensson (2002). *Ecovillage Living: Restoring the Earth and Her People*. (Green Earth);  
Jackson, R. (2000). *And We Are Doing It! Building an Ecovillage Future* (Reed);  
Langdon, P. (1995). *A Better Place To Live Reshaping The American Suburb*. HarperCollins.  
Marshall A (2001). *How Cities Work: Suburbs, Sprawl, And The Roads Not Taken*. Univ. Texas Pr.;  
Miller, V. (2007). 'The Swedish Suburb that Sustains Itself'. *Guardian*, Dec. 6, 2007.  
Rudlin, D. & N. Falk (2004). *The Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood*. (Architectural Press);  
Note also the report on suburb of Hammarby where many 'eco-town' ideas are being put into practice. See <http://society.guardian.co.uk/streetsmarts/story/0,,2221756,00.html> & <http://www.ecocomposite.org/building/villagehomes.htm> (Village Homes in Davis, California).

<sup>xxxiii</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8224520.stm>

<sup>xxxiii</sup> In the short-term, it is true that an ageing population may create difficulties, though such imbalances are not new in demographic history. Given that it is self-evident that on a finite planet, infinite population growth is impossible, it is surely preferable to address any such transitional difficulties now, not at some later date when it will be immensely harder, if not impossible, without catastrophe 'remedies'.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf>

<sup>xxxv</sup> Actually the situation is more threatening. Bellway Homes have resubmitted their planning application to North Tyneside Council for new homes on farmland to the north-east of Gosforth Nature Reserve. They have increased the number of homes from 267 to 366 (i.e. by 30%)

<sup>xxxvi</sup> <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sustainability/assets/documents/Mapofproposeddevelopment.pdf>

<sup>xxxvii</sup> <http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?lid=3126> ;

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/multimedia/photos/report-cover-for-false-hope/> ;  
<http://bravenewclimate.com/2011/08/09/ipcc-renewables-critique/> ;  
[http://www.theecologist.org/investigations/energy/381967/will\\_carbon\\_capture\\_and\\_storage\\_work.html](http://www.theecologist.org/investigations/energy/381967/will_carbon_capture_and_storage_work.html) ;  
[http://www.risingtidenorthamerica.org/special/hoodwinkedv2\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.risingtidenorthamerica.org/special/hoodwinkedv2_WEB.pdf) ;  
<http://www.lowtechmagazine.com/2008/06/carbon-capture.html>

<sup>xxxviii</sup> By comparison, see:

Blumberg, L. & R. Gottlieb (1994). *War on Waste*. Island Pr.  
Gardner, G. & P. Sampat (1998). *Mind Over Matter: Recasting the Role of Materials in Our Lives*. Worldwatch Institute.  
Kharbanda, O.P., & E.A. Stallworthy (1990). *Waste Management: Towards a Sustainable Society*. Gower.  
McCorquodale, D., ed. (2006). *Recycle: The Essential Guide*. Black Dog Publishing.  
Young, J. (1991). *Discarding the Throwaway Society*. Worldwatch Institute.  
Young, J. & A. Sachs (1994). *The Next Efficiency Revolution: Creating a Sustainable Materials Economy*. Worldwatch Institute.

<sup>xxxix</sup> On ecological water management, see, for example:

Anon (1988). *Water-Efficient Technologies*. R.M.I. (Colorado, USA).  
Costner, P. (1989). *We All Live Downstream: A Guide to Waste Treatment That Stops Water Pollution*. Waterworks Books.  
Hunt, C. (2004). *Thirsty Planet: Strategies for Sustainable Water Management*. Zed Books.  
Newsom, M. (1992). *Land, Water and Development—River Basin Systems and their Sustainable Management*. Routledge.  
Rees, J. (1994). *Water For Life: Strategy for Sustainable Resource Management*. CPRE.

Such strategies need to be integrated into general land use planning as suggested in this pioneering study:

McHarg, I. (1969). *Design With Nature*. Doubleday.

<sup>xl</sup> See, for example: <http://richardheinberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Museletter-235.pdf>

<sup>xli</sup> The last item on the menu, food waste is enormous according to evidence presented by Tristram Hunt's *Waste* , Colin Tudge's *So Shall We Reap*, and Joanna Blythman's *Bad Food Britain*

<sup>xlii</sup> To be fair, it has to be recognised that, in a growing number of cases, poorer people are being pushed out by 'gentrification' in the inner city. The point being made here is a physical and psychological one, namely that density and quality of life can go hand-in-hand as can be seen in many continental cities. To a pint, good design can offset the dangers of 'cramming'.

<sup>xliii</sup> [http://www.propertyoz.com.au/tas/library/110122\\_Auspoll\\_My%20City%20The%20People%20Verdict\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.propertyoz.com.au/tas/library/110122_Auspoll_My%20City%20The%20People%20Verdict_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>xliv</sup> [http://www.fodorandassociates.com/Reports/Growth\\_&\\_Prosperity\\_in\\_US\\_MSAs.pdf](http://www.fodorandassociates.com/Reports/Growth_&_Prosperity_in_US_MSAs.pdf)

<sup>xlv</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432095/report.aspx?town=Newcastle%20Upon%20Tyne> and <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432094/report.aspx?town=Gateshead>

<sup>xlvi</sup> This problem was outlined in the 60s by people like K. W. Kapp (*Social Costs of Business Enterprise*) and E.J. Mishan (*Costs of Economic Growth*) but the penny still does not drop. If the profits of private enterprise were one and the same thing as the collective good, then Nissan should be allowed to manufacture heroin since it might make more money. Of course society not only suffers from 'spill-overs' but also has to pay for the clean-ups as well as the bail-outs of failed private enterprises.

<sup>xlvii</sup> For evidence, see: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/nov/28/university-applications-uk-students-fees?newsfeed=true> & <http://opac.yale.edu/president/message.aspx?id=91>

<sup>xlviii</sup> <http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/clone-town-britain>

<sup>xlix</sup> New Economics Foundation, *Re-imagining the High Street: Escape from Clone Town Britain*, 2010

<sup>l</sup> <http://deadmall.com/>; <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124294047987244803.html>; <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124294047987244803.html>; [http://finance.yahoo.com/news/pf\\_article\\_113232.html](http://finance.yahoo.com/news/pf_article_113232.html)

<sup>li</sup> According to a report to South Heaton ward committee.

<sup>lii</sup> <http://www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/library/pdfs/coastal-regeneration-handbook.pdf>

<sup>liii</sup> For evidence from London's East End, see <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/world-plate>

<sup>liv</sup> <http://www.bizfizz.org.uk/>

<sup>lv</sup> See for example: <http://docs.sandiego.gov/municode/MuniCodeChapter12/Ch12Art06Division05.pdf>

<sup>lvi</sup> One example can be seen here: <http://wiganplus.com/>

<sup>lvii</sup> See, for example:

Cooper, T. (1994). *Beyond Recycling*. New Economics Foundations.

Fischer, K. & J. Schot, eds. (1992). *Environmental Strategies for Industry*. Island Pr.

Frosch, R. and N. Gallopoulos (1989). 'Strategies for Manufacturing'. *Scientific American*, Sept.: 144-152.

Gee, D. (1994). *Clean Production From Industrial Dinosaur to Eco-Efficiency*. MSF (London).

McDonough, W. & M. Braungart (2003). *Cradle to Grave: Reaming the Way We Make Things*. Rodale Pr.

McLenighan, V. (1990). *Sustainable Manufacturing*. Centre for Neighbourhood Technology, Chicago.

Mitsch, W.J. & S.E. Jørgensen,, eds. (1989). *Ecological Engineering: an Introduction to Ecotechnology*. Wile.

<sup>lviii</sup> Lockwood, Bird and Alvarez (2007) *2050 vision: how can the UK play its part in avoiding dangerous climate change*, IPPR.

<sup>lix</sup> Edrich et al, *Kirklees Warm Zone: final report 2007-2010*, Kirklees Council). This initiative's *Economic Impact Assessment* (Butterworth et al for Kirklees Council, May 2011) calculated that 243 jobs had been created, and £249 million net economic benefit generated.

<sup>lx</sup> <http://www.environmentcity.org.uk/article.asp?ParentID=105&ArticleID=108>

<sup>lxi</sup> <http://www.climate-change-jobs.org/about>

<sup>lxii</sup> As the chairman of the House of Commons Public Accounts committee noted, *Pathfinder* was a total waste of public money. He said: "This is a disastrous piece of social engineering in which £2.2 billion has been spent and 10,000 homes demolished that should have been refurbished. And there is no evidence that anything has been achieved in terms of higher house prices or quality of life for the communities involved. We have wasted more than £2 billion for nothing. Given its performance to date, it is hard to think of another programme which was trumpeted with such a fanfare, but which has hit so many wrong notes."

<sup>lxiii</sup> *New Tricks with Old Bricks; how reusing old buildings scan cut carbon emissions*.

<sup>lxiv</sup> <http://www.emptyhomes.com/>

<sup>lxv</sup> <http://emptyhomes.com/statistics-2/breakdown-of-statistics/> See also [http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/details\\_of\\_empty\\_commercial\\_prop\\_151](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/details_of_empty_commercial_prop_151)

<sup>lxvi</sup> [http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/hig\\_home/grants\\_available/living\\_over\\_the\\_shop\\_grant.htm](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/hig_home/grants_available/living_over_the_shop_grant.htm)

<sup>lxvii</sup> See, for example: <http://www.greenbuildingpress.co.uk/index.php>; <http://www.ukgbc.org/site/home> <http://www.aecb.net/;and> <http://rmi.org/keysolutionsbuildings2>

<sup>lxviii</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/tv-and-radio/2011/nov/19/kevin-mccloud-housing-triangle-swindon>

<sup>lxix</sup> At the time of writing (December 2011), news is filtering out of plans to build new roads parallel to the A1 by-pass, in the area of Lobley Hill and the Metrocentre. Schemes are very expensive and do great damage. At best they will only ease existing congestion for a short period before they become clogged with more traffic. Of course, the fact that monies can be found for such follies suggests that any lack of funding for better alternatives is more a political than a purely financial issue.

<sup>lxx</sup> <http://www.aef.org.uk/>

<sup>lxxi</sup> By way of contrast, see: <http://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/docsummary.php?docID=3153>

<sup>lxxii</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/carbonreduction/>.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> We would note here that the 'green car' is a misnomer. 'Green con' is a better description of what is far from sustainable development. There is not just the issue of the actual power source feeding those electric charging points now sprouting in the city (coal? nuclear?). The problem is worse than just the source of electricity per se. What is said to be the world's most polluted locality, Norilsk in Russia, is badly contaminated by nickel smelters much of whose output goes into electric car batteries (which, eventually, are likely to end up polluting landfill sites). Actually most environmental impacts from cars originate in their manufacture, not use, something that electric cars do not change. Nor do they reduce the impact of roads, extra lighting, parking spaces and all the other infrastructure of car usage.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> e.g. <http://www.worldchanging.com/local/seattle/archives/009715.html>

<sup>lxxv</sup> Several are listed here: [http://www.eco-logica.co.uk/travel\\_plans.html](http://www.eco-logica.co.uk/travel_plans.html) Also see: [http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/ltp\\_stc\\_briefing.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/ltp_stc_briefing.pdf)

<sup>lxxvi</sup> <http://www.sutton.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=11905>

<sup>lxxvii</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cumbria-14041998>

<sup>lxxviii</sup> [http://newcycling.org/news/Newcycling\\_WIM\\_flyer.pdf](http://newcycling.org/news/Newcycling_WIM_flyer.pdf)

<sup>lxxix</sup>

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/smarterchoices/ctwwt/chapter9carsharing.pdf>

<sup>lxxx</sup> As Julian Baggini put it in *The Guardian* (August 25, 2004 “(the car-drunk) are the problem: over-dependent on their cars, critical of other road users but not themselves, and frustrated by anything that puts a brake on their speed”. The ‘Jeremy Clarksons’ of this world are indeed a formidable barrier to real progress.

<sup>lxxxi</sup> See, for example:

Alvord, K. (2000). *Divorce Your Car: Ending The Love Affair With The Automobile*. New Society Publishers.

Monbiot, G. (2000). ‘Close the Roads’ *The Guardian* 27-07-00. Posted @

<http://www.monbiot.com/archives/2000/07/27/close-the-roads/>

Newman, P. & J. Kenworthy (1999). *Sustainability and Cities: Overcoming Automobile Dependence*. Island Pr.

Tolley, R., ed. (1990). *The Greening of Urban Transport: Planning for Walking & Cycling in Western Cities*. Belhaven.

Whitelegg, J. (1997). *Critical Mass: Transport, Environment & Society in the 21st Century* Pluto Press.

Zuckermann, W. (1992). *From World Car Crisis to Sustainable Transportation*. Chelsea Green.

See also: [www.eco-logica.co.uk](http://www.eco-logica.co.uk)

<sup>lxxxii</sup> David Conn has penned much excellent material on the unsustainable economics and corporate capture of major sports like football and rugby in the pages of *Guardian*. See also Tom Bower’s *Broken Dreams: Vanity, Greed and the Souring of British Football* (Pocket Books, 2007) and

[http://www.theecologist.org/investigations/society/1001526/sustainability\\_and\\_football\\_why\\_the\\_beautiful\\_game\\_is\\_getting\\_a\\_green\\_makeover.html](http://www.theecologist.org/investigations/society/1001526/sustainability_and_football_why_the_beautiful_game_is_getting_a_green_makeover.html)

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Other downsides of a ‘digital culture’ are evidenced in books like Andrew Keen’s *The Cult of the Amateur* and Clifford Stoll’s *High-Tech Heretic*.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> According to Sport England, 142 school playing fields have been sold off entirely since 2001. An estimated 5,000 playing fields were sold off between 1981 and 1997 when the Conservatives were in power. Presumably the playing fields of Eton are safe.

<sup>lxxxv</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/jan/14/scotland-venezuela>

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Actually there is a case for treating the sites next to Gosforth Nature Reserve differently to all others since they possess unique ecological value.

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Some may note that, unlike before, Councillor Henry no longer lives in a street affected by demolition proposals.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> There was the ‘Scotswood Expo’, for example:

(<http://www.tynebridgepublishing.co.uk/press.nsf/newsbyid/E15A3D8CA5C00FD28025729F0047D028?opendocument> and the ambitious targets of *Going for Growth* : <http://www.safenewcastle.org.uk/wwwfileroot/regen/plantrans/NewcastleCity-wideGoingForGrowthPlan.pdf>

More generally, see ; <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/Pages/11062009newcastle.aspx> and <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing/marketrenewalpathfinders/reports/bridgingnewcastlegatesheadperformancereviews/Pages/Default.aspx>

<sup>lxxxix</sup> <http://www.cic.org.uk/home/CIC%20Press%20Release%20-%20Construction%20industry%20urged%20to%20back%20new%20planning%20reform.pdf> and

<http://andrewlainton.wordpress.com/2011/10/17/telegraph-the-huge-lobbying-war-chest-behind-the-nppf/>

<sup>xc</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1966/twosouls/9-6strains.htm>

<sup>xc1</sup> The story of Newcastle’s ‘West End’ is told by John Gower Davies in his book *The Evangelical Bureaucrat* (Tavistock, 1972). Kirkpatrick Sale’s *Human Scale* (Secker and Warburg, 1980), narrates the disaster of externally imposed ‘urban regeneration’ turned a functioning community into a wasteland (pp117-122). But perhaps the best example is to be found in Geert Mak’s *In Europe* (Vintage, 2008) in which he narrates how Berlin town planners used notional figures about residents’ bowel movements and the time they would spend in the toilet (assuming 24 hours usage!) to work out what facilities should be provided for the workers’ apartments that were being designed. It had little to do with how real people actually lived.

<sup>xcii</sup> See, for example:

Andrews, C (2006). *Slow is Beautiful*. New Society

Barber, B. (2007). *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults and Swallow Citizens Whole*. Norton.

Bertman, S. (1998). *Hyperculture; The Human Cost of Speed*. Praegar.

Bunting, M. (2004). *Willing Slaves: How the Overwork Culture is Ruling Our Lives*. HarperCollins.

Cross, G. (1993). *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture*. Routledge. De Graaf, J. et al (2005) *Affluenza: The All-consuming Epidemic* Berrett-Koehler

Frank, R. (2000). *Luxury fever: Why Money Fails to Satisfy in an Age of Excess*. Free Press.

Gleick, J. (1999). *Faster: the Acceleration of Just about everything*. Little Brown.

Hamilton, C. (2005). *Affluenza: When Too Much is Not Enough*. Allen & Unwin.

James, J (2007). *Affluenza*. Vermillion.

Honoré, C. (2004). *In Praise of Slow*. Orion.

Schor, J. B. (1992). *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*. Basic Books.

Schwartz, B. (2005). *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*. HarperCollins

Wann, D. (2005). *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*. Berrett-Koehler.

Whitelegg, J. (1993). ‘Time Pollution’. *The Ecologist*, 23(4), 1993: 132-134.

---

<sup>xciii</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11952027>

The Green Party recognises that some proposals for renewable energy like big wind turbine development also face local opposition and that, here too, there has to be real community involvement to produce really appropriate schemes.

<sup>xciv</sup> For a local example, see [http://www.eastendalliance.org.uk/assets/doc/EEPP\\_web\\_version.pdf](http://www.eastendalliance.org.uk/assets/doc/EEPP_web_version.pdf)

<sup>xcv</sup> For an additional cost of 1%, the Linacre building saves, when compared to an equivalent building regulation standard building, 35% reduced gas consumption, 25% reduced electricity and 36% reduced water consumption, savings paying for themselves in 5 or less years. There is a 31% cut in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, with remaining CO<sub>2</sub> production offset by the sponsorship of a forest reserve in Tasmania large enough to 'soak up' an equivalent amount of the gas. The building uses rain and grey water in the buildings sanitary systems. There was a full assessment of the embodied energy inherent in the construction process, not just running costs. Other notable features were great use of passive solar design, installation of high efficiency gas condensing boilers, use of recycled demolition materials for hardcore, avoidance of PVC pipework (with use of recycled copper for rainwater and internal pipes) and careful use of timber (mainly softwoods, with any hardwood sourced from North America and Europe). 'Greener' finishes included linoleum (instead of PVC flooring), natural fibre carpets and underlays, and organic varnishes, adhesives and paints.

<sup>xcvi</sup> At the time of writing, £365,000 is being asked for houses on the Great Park by Persimmons (<http://www.persimmonhomes.com/greenside-1912>).

<sup>xcvii</sup> <http://www.eh-resources.org/dbs.html>