

3. Statement of Reasons

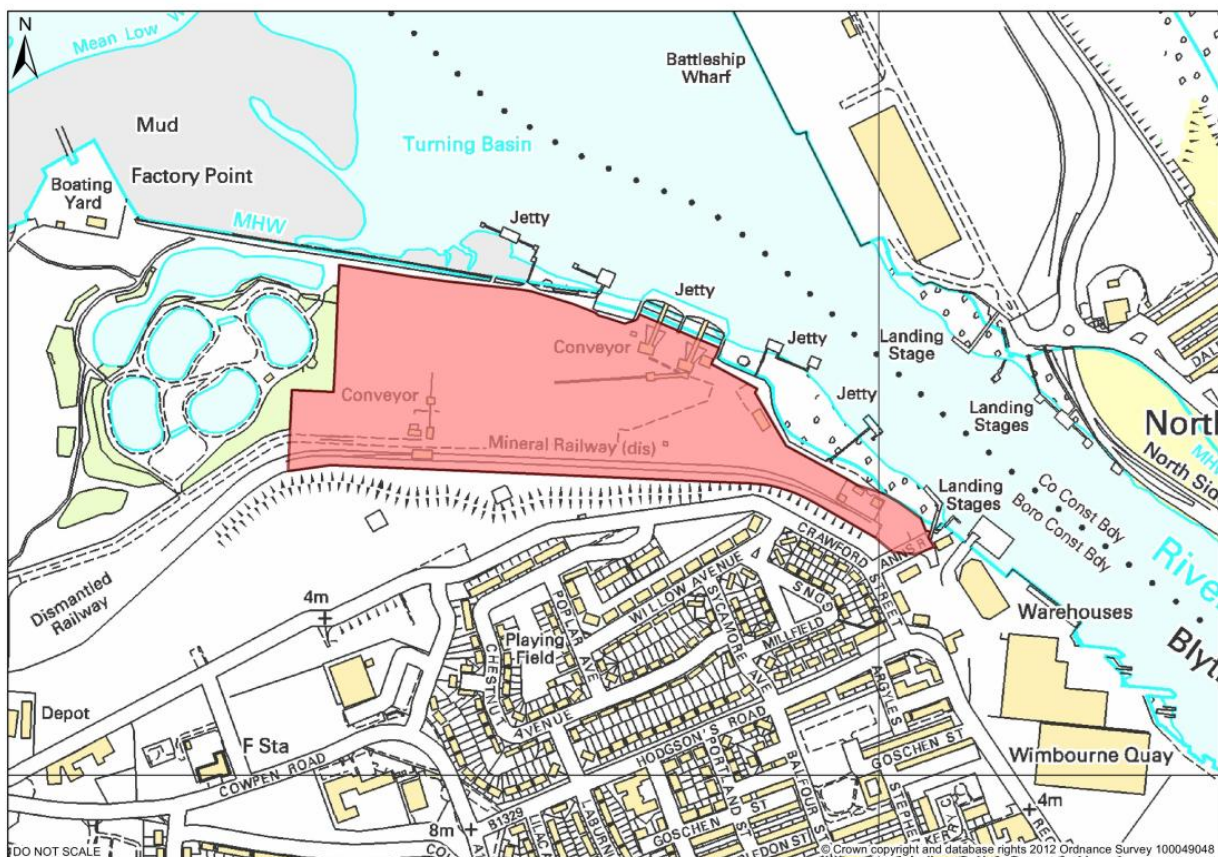
Overall Objective

Northumberland County Council has prepared this Local Development Order to help streamline the planning process and enable development of land at the Bates site as part of a wider initiative to create and support the conditions for economic growth.

The Site

3.1 The Bates site is located on the south shore of the River Blyth Estuary in Blyth, south east Northumberland. It is bounded to the north and north-east by the River Blyth.

Picture 3.1 Bates Site Location Plan



Description of Development Permitted

3.2 The LDO grants planning permission exclusively for the erection of buildings and/or the use of land and associated development for Uses Classes B1 (a) B1 (b), B1(c); B2; and B8 (and ancillary Use Classes A1, A3)⁽¹⁾ subject to various criteria (including development being in the target sectors - see para 3.10) and development conditions (see Tables 1 and 2).

¹ as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (and subsequent amendments)

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Justification for Creating an LDO

3.3 Northumberland County Council is committed to creating the conditions for economic recovery and growth. The designation of sites at Blyth Estuary as part of the North Eastern Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) Enterprise Zone (EZ) gives Northumberland and the wider NELEP area, a competitive advantage which the NELEP partners are keen to exploit.

3.4 There has been a long-standing history of off-shore industries in the North East⁽²⁾, and more recent successes in the low carbon and knowledge based sectors, including within south east Northumberland. Amongst other significant developments, the National Renewable Energy Centre (NaREC)⁽³⁾ has played an important role in supporting delivery of government's economic growth and green energy policy objectives, and in attracting and anchoring investment to the UK. The Centre hosts some of Europe's largest translational research, development and testing facilities for offshore wind, wave, tidal and electrical network technologies. Clients range from large multi-national companies, to technology start-ups, local authorities and major investors in renewable energy projects.

3.5 The incentives offered through the EZ will build on the existing BEREZ partnership initiative⁽⁴⁾. Jointly they will serve to further stimulate the creation of new businesses and jobs, and contribute to the vision of the NELEP '*... to rebalance the economy and create Europe's premier location for low carbon, sustainable, knowledge-based private sector-led growth and jobs*'.

3.6 Specifically the designation of some sites and the sectors being targeted by NELEP and Arch⁽⁵⁾ will optimise the locational advantages of Blyth and its Port facilities and potentially help to create a cluster of businesses or supply chains which will help drive competitiveness, innovation and ultimately sustainable economic growth.

3.7 This LDO has been developed as it is considered to represent the most appropriate and effective tool for simplifying the planning process and boosting enterprise at the Bates site.

Rational for Development Permitted

3.8 The type and form of development permitted by the LDO and the associated criteria and conditions have been identified on the basis of a comprehensive understanding of the site and its context (including its proximity to NaREC); the aspirations to deliver growth

2 The region is responsible for constructing 70% of all North Sea Oil and Gas platforms. Many companies have expanded into the off-shore renewables sector.

3 NaREC is the national centre for excellence for renewable energy, dedicated to the development, growth and commercialisation of new and renewable technologies. NaREC has invested over £150 million of UK government, private sector and European Union funding to create a unique portfolio of independent facilities in Blyth. The new Blade Test Facility is the largest in the world and has been designed to test the longer blades being developed for larger offshore turbines.

4 The Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone initiative is a partnership of public and private organisations working together to support further investment from the renewable and low carbon sectors, particularly in off-shore wind. The zone comprises extensive industrial and business park environments on the south and north banks of the River Blyth all within 2-4km of the Port of Blyth

5 Arch - the Northumberland Development Company, as asset backed arms length development company set up to drive capital economic and residential development, physical regeneration and business growth in Northumberland

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and the linked benefits such as skills development, wealth and job creation; the potential impacts of different forms of development; and a broad understanding of the types of development being sought by developers and businesses in the target sectors.

3.9 The development parameters are considered to be reasonable and practicable. The justification for each requirement and condition is identified in Tables 1 and 2. In essence the criteria seek to ensure: development is sustainable and contributes to quality of place; negative impacts of development, including impacts on the environment and the amenity of neighbouring interests are minimised; high development standards, including energy efficiency are achieved; and development factors such as infrastructure are effectively addressed.

3.10 The other key criterion is for development to be within the target sectors of manufacturing, maintenance and servicing of plant, machinery, equipment and parts for off-shore industries; advanced manufacturing and technology; port and logistic related businesses; and storage and distribution linked to off-shore industries. It is considered this description⁽⁶⁾ effectively captures the aspirations to strengthen existing established sectors and supply chains whilst also allowing a degree of flexibility for appropriate new areas of private sector led growth.

3.11 The LDOs seek to deliver new growth from inward investment or expansion of indigenous firms rather than resulting in 'displacement' of existing businesses onto the sites. This LDO specifically targets businesses not already located in Northumberland. However, businesses that are located in the area may be considered if they can make a case, which demonstrates that they are actively seeking to increase their existing business in the target sectors.

Statement of Policies that the LDO will Implement

3.12 The LDO supports the implementation of existing and emerging strategies, plans and policies at a national level and certain policies at a local level. Relevant policies include:

National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3.13 The NPPF cites the planning system as having a role in contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy. Planning is to operate to encourage sustainable growth in order to create jobs and prosperity and to tackle the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future.

3.14 Specifically the Framework encourages a proactive approach to meet the development needs of business and reduce the burden of planning requirements and suggests the consideration of LDOs to relax planning controls in some instances.

3.15 Existing business sectors are to be supported alongside planning for new or emerging sectors likely to locate in the area. Furthermore, the promotion and expansion of clusters or networks of knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries is to be positively planned for.

6 Further definition of 'sectors' in Section 6 of this LDO

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Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and Marine Policy Statement (MPS)

3.16 The Marine and Coastal Access Act is relevant to the LDO, given the estuary / coastal location of the site. The role of the marine environment is recognised as an asset including in respect of the social, economic and environmental well-being of coastal communities.

3.17 The Act introduced new systems of Marine planning, including the Marine Policy Statement (MPS). The MPS is the framework for progressing Marine Plans and taking decisions affecting the marine environment. At the time of preparing the LDO, a Marine Plan is not in place to cover the north-east marine environment, however the MPS was taken into account.

3.18 The MPS recognises that marine based activities, as permitted by this LDO, can provide opportunities for employment in long established industries including marine transport, port related storage and processing, oil and gas production and new industries such as the renewable energy sector.

Regional Policy

3.19 Although the Government has stated its intention to abolish the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East (RSS) this has not happened at the time of preparing this LDO. Within the RSS the regeneration of Blyth is promoted. More particularly, Policy 13 identifies Blyth Estuary as a brownfield mixed-use location for major mixed use development. The sustainable growth of Blyth Harbour is also supported.

Local Policies

3.20 The following local policies are of relevance:

Northumberland Consolidated Planning Framework

3.21 The Framework brings together relevant planning policy documents, both statutory and non-statutory⁽⁷⁾. Whilst LDOs are not required to implement local plan policies⁽⁸⁾, relevant policies that have been considered in drafting the LDO include:

Blyth Valley Core Strategy, July 2007

- Policy SS1 – Regeneration and Renaissance of Blyth Valley 2021
- Policy SS2 - The Sequential Approach and Phasing
- Policy SS3 – Sustainability Criteria
- Policy REG5 – Business Clusters

Blyth Valley Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2007

- Policy DC1 - General Development
- Policy DC9 – Mixed uses

7 Northumberland Consolidated Planning Framework bring together planning policies from the former planning authorities which merged as a result of Local Government Reorganisation in 2009

8 The primary legislative provisions related to LDOs were introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and amended by the commencement of section 188 of the Planning Act 2008. The effect was to remove the requirement that LDOs must implement local plan policies.

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- Policy DC 14 - Sites of National Importance for Nature Conservation
- Policy DC27 – Design of New Developments

Blyth Valley District Local Plan, May 1999 – (Various saved policies including:)

- Policy W3 - Port of Blyth continued activity
- Policy W4 - Port of Blyth Port Development Area

Emerging Northumberland Core Strategy

3.22 The Core Strategy Issues and Options document has been subject to public consultation and will now be progressed through various drafting stages and approval processes before adoption. The Issues and Options document identifies the Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone (BEREZ) as a strategic employment area and specifically a location for the low carbon sector. It proposes minor revisions to the existing employment site designations, which include the LDO site.

Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy - Northumberland: Resilient for the Future, May 2011

3.23 Re-balancing the economy is one of the big partnership issues identified in the Strategy. To be resilient, re-balancing is described as needing to be built from the expansion and diversification of the county's niche industrial sectors, including renewables. Within this, greater intent also is given to creating inter-dependencies between clusters of Northumberland-based firms.

Northumberland Economic Strategy

3.24 The Northumberland Economic Strategy is the framework for re-balancing the economy by reducing dependence on the public sector for employment and by strengthening the private sector's contribution to growth. A key objective of the strategy is to develop an exemplary low carbon economy, which includes seeking low carbon economic investment in the BEREZ.