

### 3. Statement of reasons

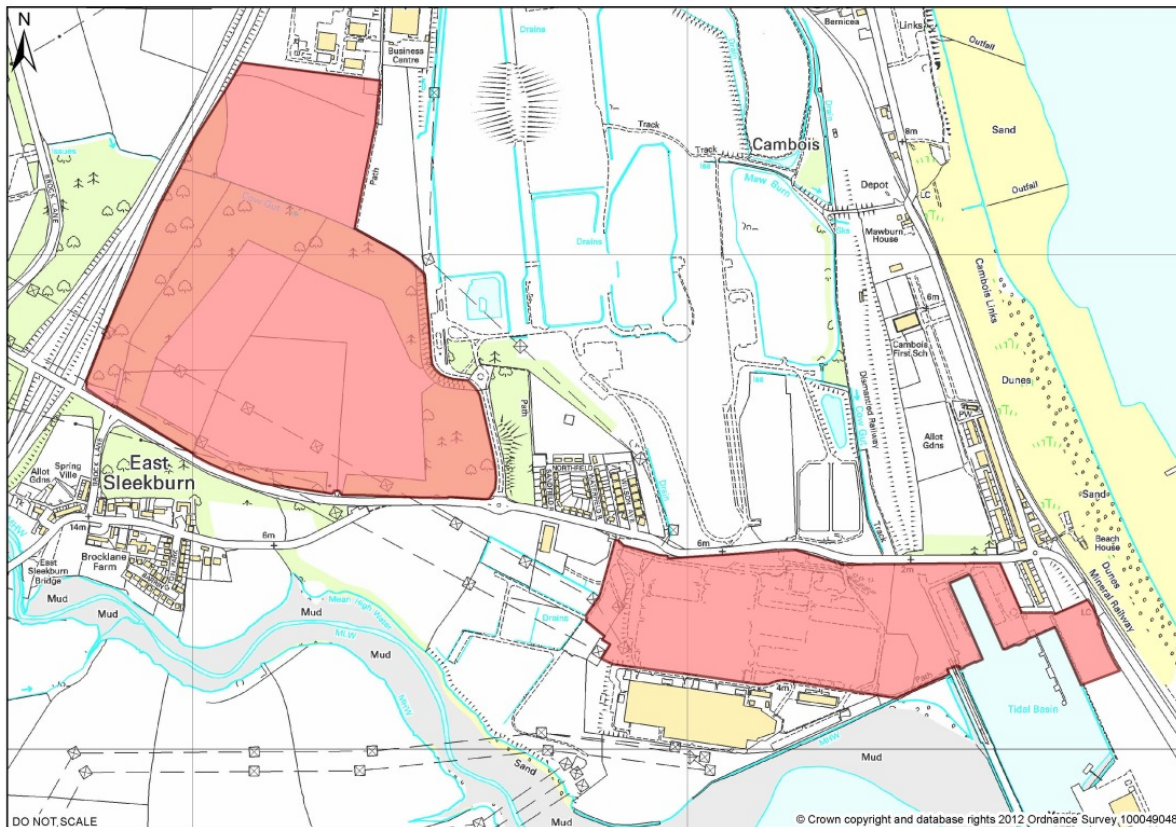
#### Overall Objective

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

#### The Sites

3.1 East Sleekburn Site 1(west) and East Sleekburn Site 2(quay) are located approximately 4km to the north west of Blyth Town Centre in south east Northumberland.

Figure 3.1 East Sleekburn 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)<sup>(1)</sup> 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)

## 3. Statement of reasons

### 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 <sup>(2)</sup>, 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)<sup>(3)</sup> has played an important role in supporting delivery of the 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 upon the existing BEREZ partnership initiative<sup>(4)</sup> 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 as EZ sites and the sectors being targeted by NELEP and Arch<sup>(5)</sup> will optimise the locational advantages of Blyth and its Port facilities, and help to create a cluster of businesses and 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 contributing to boosting enterprise at the East Sleekburn sites.

### 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 sites and their context (including their proximity to NaREC); the aspirations to deliver

---

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 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 - an asset backed arms length development company, set up to drive capital economic and residential development, physical regeneration and business growth in Northumberland

growth 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 condition is identified in Table 1. 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 the manufacture, maintenance and servicing of plant, machinery, equipment and parts for off shore industries; advanced manufacturing and technology; port and logistics related businesses; and storage and distribution linked to off-shore industries. It is considered this description<sup>(6)</sup> 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 LDO seeks to attract 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 already located in the area may still be eligible for EZ incentives (in respect of East Sleekburn site 2) 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 strategies, plans and policies at a national level and certain policies at a local level. Relevant policies include:

#### National Planning Policies

##### National Planning Policy Framework

**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.

---

<sup>6</sup> Further definition of 'sectors' in Section 5 of this LDO.

### 3. Statement of reasons

#### 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<sup>(7)</sup>. Whilst LDOs are not required to implement local plan policies<sup>(8)</sup>, relevant policies that have been considered include:

#### Wansbeck Local Plan 2007

- GP1 - Location of Development
- GP8 - The Coastal Zone
- EMP3 - Cambois Zone of Economic Opportunity
- EMP5 - Port related development

---

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.

### Emerging Northumberland Core Strategy

**3.22** The Core Strategy Issues and Options document has been subject to consultation and is now being progressed through various drafting and approval stages before adoption. The Issues and Options document specifically 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 includes the LDO sites.

### 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 is given to creating inter-dependencies between clusters of Northumberland-based firms.

### Northumberland Economic Strategy

**3.24** The Northumberland Economic Strategy is a framework for rebalancing 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.