



DESUIF

Disability Equality Service User Involvement Forum

**MetroGreen
Options Report
Consultation Nov-Dec 2015**

Response required by 21 December 2015

**Response to Gateshead Council
on behalf of
Gateshead's DESUIF Environment Group
and Gateshead Access Panel.**



MetroGreen Options Report Consultation Nov-Dec 2015

Response on behalf of DESUIF Environments Group and Gateshead Access Panel

Responses have been informed by the output of meetings and discussions at Gateshead Civic Centre with Gateshead Council Officers and service user engagement, including Gateshead's Disability Equality Service User Involvement Forum (DESUIF) Environment Group's 2015 Themed Focus Group Meetings and Technical Meetings, and supported by research and consultation by Gateshead Access Panel. The DESUIF meetings have considered Transport and Housing issues that are of importance to persons with physical, sensory or cognitive impairments including elderly persons and their carers. The output from these meetings have highlighted issues that are viewed as important to address so as to achieve environments to support an Inclusive Gateshead that is accessible to all people with impairments as far as possible, as well as being age friendly.

Responses to numbered questions in Options Report:

Q1: Do you support the MetroGreen vision?

A1: As previously identified in our response to the MetroGreen AAP Scoping Report in November 2014, we support the proposed MetroGreen vision for the regeneration of land around the Metrocentre.

Q2a: Do you support the MetroGreen objectives?

A2a: We support the MetroGreen objectives.

Q2b: Are there any other objectives that should be included?

A2b: No Comment.

Q3: Do you have any comments on the Metrocentre boundary?

A3: No Comment.

Q4a: Should the AAP have sub areas?

A4a: This seems to be appropriate.

Q4b: Are these the correct sub area boundaries?

A4b: This seems to be appropriate.

Q5a: Should the approach to housing delivery prioritise vacant and under used sites?

A5a: This would seem to be appropriate subject to having the appropriate infrastructure and flood defences such as the proposed bund in place prior to occupation of any new housing development.

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Q5b: Should the approach to housing delivery focus on sites currently in use?
A5b: This should be planned for so as to also progress the housing development as and when sites become or have the potential to become available.

Q6a: Is this the right approach to homes at MetroGreen?

A6a: This "Preferred Approach" appears to be the right approach. However, DESUIF and GAP would prefer to see additional support from Gateshead Council for the viability of Category 2 (Lifetime Home type) and Category 3 (Wheelchair Housing type) Homes as well as Affordable Homes provision, especially on sites where Gateshead Council are also the landowner.

6b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

6b: No comment.

Q7a: Is this the right approach to offices at MetroGreen?

A7a: This appears generally to be an appropriate approach in line with paragraphs 2.21 and 2.22 of the Options Report document. However, there is no indication in the report of where alternative provision will be made for coach parking and coach drop-off/pick-up for the Metrocentre which needs to be addressed as such provision is important for accessibility as well as commercial reasons.

Q7b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A7b: No comment.

Q8a: Is this the right approach to retail at MetroGreen?

A8a: This appears to be an appropriate approach for retail development in MetroGreen.

Q8b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A8b: No comment.

Q9a: Is this the right approach to leisure at MetroGreen?

A9a: This approach appears to be reasonable and appropriate.

Q9b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A9b: The potential for leisure activities on the river and around the riverside should also be included for consideration, along with accessible routes for pedestrians and routes for cyclists, where this may be appropriate and does not conflict with proposals for housing development and flood mitigation measures. Access to the riverside by motor vehicle transport should also give consideration to the needs for parking and drop-off/pick-up for persons with limited or impaired personal mobility, as should access to the river and to any river-going craft.

Q10a: Is this the right approach to the protection of amenities and businesses at MetroGreen?

A10a: This appears to be a reasonable approach.

Q10b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A10b: No comment.

Q11a: Is this the right approach to transport and accessibility at MetroGreen?

A11a: The proposed approach to Transport and Accessibility appears to mostly demonstrate an appropriate approach. However, in regard to the proposals for car parking charges in the Metrocentre/MetroGreen we recommend consideration of dispensation for people with mobility impairments, i.e. Blue Badge Holders, for whom the Metrocentre and the potential MetroGreen environments can provide some of the most accessible environments for leisure, culture, retail and employment in Gateshead and the region.

We welcome that the Options Report appears to make reference to the “Guidelines for Providing Journeys on Foot, Institute for Highways & Transportation, 2000” on page 11, which highlights the need for local authorities to:

- “ensure the needs of disabled people are taken into account in implementing planning policies and traffic management schemes”
- “use their planning and transport powers to give greater priority to walking and to produce strategies to make it easier and safer to get around by walking.”
- “In broad planning terms, they should identify networks of routes and locations where pedestrians will be given priority”
- “Ensure that new development is linked to a pedestrian network. It is far more effective to show, in the Local Plan, key pedestrian links, segregated from vehicular traffic (including cyclists) and along desire lines as far as possible”

The Options Report further makes reference to “4.28 CSUCP Policy CS13 - Transport supporting text at paragraph 11.12 sets the hierarchy of sustainable modes of transport which the MetroGreen AAP will adhere to”, placing pedestrians at the top of the hierarchy. We welcome this recognition of hierarchy in regard to transport network planning, giving the needs of pedestrians the highest priority, over other road users. We believe there is the need to recognise the importance of such hierarchy for the safe access of pedestrians and persons with impaired mobility, as appears to be demonstrated by the ‘Norwich Road User Hierarchy’ (referenced in the above IHT document) and also by the Transport for London (TFL) recognition of cycling as a form of vehicle transport and their policy of discouraging cycling on footpaths, as demonstrated in their statement: -

“Cycles must be treated as vehicles, not as pedestrians”

“Cyclists and pedestrians should not be forced together where there is space to keep them apart, creating unnecessary conflict, which can only

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increase as the number of cyclists rises. We have a strong preference against schemes requiring cyclists and pedestrians to share the same highway space, wherever they can be avoided. It will be necessary to use some shared areas in our cycle routes, particularly where the space is wide, but we will prefer to create delineated cycle tracks across it, perhaps with sloping, pedestrian-friendly kerbs or different surfacing.

Cyclists and pedestrians should not share the same space at crossings and junctions. Clearly - delineated separate and/or parallel routes should be provided for cyclists and pedestrians. Typical bad cycle design deals with junctions by making cyclists pretend to be pedestrians, bringing them on to the pavement and having them cross the road, often in several stages, on toucan crossings.”

As previously indicated in our response to the MetroGreen AAP Scoping Report, We recognise the current attractiveness of the area for cyclist and potential development of shared routes for pedestrians and cyclists. However, there continues to be considerable concern among disabled people and their representative groups around the hazards for pedestrians from cyclists on unsegregated routes. We therefore wish to echo the statements above from TfL and recommend that cycle routes are separated/segregated from pedestrian routes.

Q11b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A11b: Consideration should be given to supporting the potential expansion of shopmobility facilities, equipment and service provision beyond the current provision and locations in the Metrocentre to other locations outside of the Metrocentre and within the MetroGreen more generally, such as in association with expansion within the Metrocentre area and at other retail, leisure and office development locations, preferably with close proximity to public transport as well as accessible parking and drop-off/pick-up facilities; so as to support the widest range of transport options possible for disabled and elderly persons.

Q12a: Is this the right approach to flood risk and water management at MetroGreen?

A12a: The proposed approach appears to be appropriate for MetroGreen as far as we can tell from the information provided in the Options Report and the referenced reports including the earlier MetroGreen AAP Scoping Report.

Q12b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A12b: The potential for swales or drainage ditches running alongside and parallel to principal pedestrian and cycle routes as part of the accessible route network, both within and between the housing and multi-use developments, could also be considered as part of the surface water drainage, along with bridge links for footway and cycle routes.

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Q13a: Is this the right approach to green infrastructure and natural environment at MetroGreen?

A13a: The proposed approach seems to be appropriate.

Q13b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A13b: No comment.

Q14a: Is this the right approach to place-making at MetroGreen?

A14a: The proposed approach for place-making at MetroGreen appears to provide an appropriate basis from which to prepare a development framework, subject to further confirmation of the technical and design guidance, which should adhere to principles of inclusive design and best practice to support sustainability.

Q14b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

Q14b: As indicated at above response to question 14a.

Q15a: Is this the right approach to energy and waste at MetroGreen?

A15a: This seems to be appropriate.

Q15b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A15b: No comment.

Q16a: Is this the right approach to noise and air quality at MetroGreen?

A16a: This seems to be appropriate.

Q16b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A16b: No comment.

Q17a: Is this the right approach to contamination at MetroGreen?

A17a: This seems to be appropriate.

Q17b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A17b: No comment.

Q18a: Is this the right approach to infrastructure at MetroGreen?

A18a: This seems to be reasonable and appropriate.

Q18b: Are there other approaches we should be considering?

A18b: No comment.

Q19a: Do you have any comments on Plan Monitoring?

A19a: This seems to be reasonable and appropriate. However, it is also important that the reporting of Plan Monitoring is made available to inform our working with the Council and potentially with other stakeholders.

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Q19b: Have all of the key planning matters been identified?

A19b: The current AAP proposals in the Options Report do not appear to address issues relating to education or health and social care provision either within or in proximity to MetroGreen. We believe it is important that the strategy for such provision is identified in regard to facilities, capacity, and location, including what facilities are expected to be provided within MetroGreen and where appropriate how this may respond to current local, regional or national policies for provision.

In other respects this document and the proposed approaches to development appear to offer a comprehensive overview for the future planning of MetroGreen. However we believe that continued consultation with ourselves, and other stakeholders as appropriate, should be recognised as an important part of any continued approach to the plan for development of MetroGreen.

Q20a: Do you have any comments on Option 1?

A20a: Consideration should also be given to reinforcing and where necessary improving existing public transport routes and options for routes between and linking with the Gateshead towncentre and interchange and local neighbourhood centres, as well as existing river crossings; to further support the Metrocentre and MetroGreen viability for employment, training, leisure, retail, as well as resident and visitor accommodation.

Q20b: Do you support the preferred housing led approach?

A20b: We are generally in support of this approach.

Q20c: Are there any changes you would make?

A20c: The current AAP proposals in the Options Report do not appear to address issues relating to education or health and social care provision within or in proximity to MetroGreen. We believe it is important that the strategy for such provision is identified in regard to facilities, capacity, and location, including what facilities are expected to be provided within MetroGreen; as such matters are also likely to be of high importance to future residents as well as potentially impacting on the viability and sustainability of MetroGreen.

Q21: Do you have any comments on Option 2?

A21: We believe this approach would only be appropriate if access for pedestrians and cyclists was improved from areas outside the MetroGreen area, and in particular between areas of Dunston west of the railway line and the MetroGreen development where the highway route is currently restricted by the narrowing at the railway bridge.

Q22: Do you have any comments on Option 3?

A22: Whilst the potential improvement in strategic transport routes to Metrocentre and beyond including cross river routes are a very important consideration, the likely negative implications for MetroGreen require the fullest consideration and

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mitigation if the viability and accessibility for the proposed development area for housing and commercial uses are to be appropriately supported.

Q23: Do you have any comments on Option 4?

A23: Whilst this option creates potential improvement in strategic transport routes and increased opportunities for employment and leisure, the likely negative implications for MetroGreen require the fullest consideration and mitigation if the viability and accessibility for the proposed development area for housing and commercial uses are to be appropriately supported.

Q24: Do you have any comments on Option 5?

A24: This option appears to have high potentials for negative impact on the MetroGreen site viability and sustainability. We believe it is important for such viability and sustainability that the proposed infrastructure and flood mitigation measures for the whole of the MetroGreen development area are progressed as soon as possible and ahead of any further expansion of development within the MetroGreen area, especially where this impacts on housing provision.

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