

Darlington Local Development Framework Core Strategy: Draft Spatial Vision

This vision gives spatial expression to the Community Strategy, whose four visionary goals are as follows:

- An area for creating and sharing prosperity
- A place for learning, achievement and leisure
- A place for living safely and well
- A high quality environment with excellent communications links

The vision is that.....

Over the next 15 years or so, Darlington will continue to develop as the physical and economic gateway to North East England, and as a key link in the chain of economic opportunity identified in the Northern Way. A range of previously developed and greenfield sites, within and on the periphery of its compact urban area, coupled with the Borough's accessibility and quality of life, will make Darlington an attractive location for the growing number of entrepreneurs building local businesses, and for relocating businesses keen to tap into a highly skilled local workforce. The principal growth sectors are expected to be financial and business services, civil engineering, construction related businesses and logistics, creating economic growth, which may not otherwise locate in the region.

Unused and underused land and buildings within the existing urban area will also provide the focus for accommodating population growth, meeting the needs and affordability criteria of people in the western Tees Valley, but also the demands of those choosing to move to the Borough to live. The Borough will present a high quality, healthy, safe and green living environment that is an attractive alternative to the Borough's southern and western rural hinterlands, and the local workforce and their families will benefit from the modern educational infrastructure provided to support efforts to drive up the skills of all.

The Borough will also continue to carve out its own unique identity as an increasingly important player in the regional and sub-regional economic, retail and cultural landscape. Its uniqueness will derive on the one hand, from the character and quality of its established historic, open space and environmental resources, and on the other, from the distinctive design and sustainability of its most recent developments and open spaces. The distinct identities of neighbourhoods and settlements within the Borough will be apparent as ever, but past disparities in local environmental quality, economic, social and recreational opportunities will be significantly reduced. Comfort, ease and safety of access will characterise journeys to, from and within the main urban area, contributing to the high quality of life enjoyed by the Borough's residents, wherever they may live. There will be particularly marked improvements for those making trips on foot, by bike or by public transport, for those with a mobility or sensory impairment, and for others who currently experience barriers to social inclusion.

The open character of the countryside to the south of the town will be protected to maintain visual links with the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors, but elsewhere, the Tees Forest will provide a softer, more accessible and recreationally valuable edge to the urban area. New development in the Borough's villages and hamlets will be limited to small-scale developments that help sustain their vibrancy and reflect their individual character and appearance.

People will recommend Darlington as a place to live, visit and do businesses to their friends and colleagues because of its high quality, comfortable living and working environments, its accessibility, educational provision, and the opportunities for stimulating and rewarding work and after-work activities. They will also be able to boast of the Borough's record and regionally recognised credentials as the place where sustainable development happens.