

Interim Planning Position Statement

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pending the adoption of a new local plan, this Interim Planning Position Statement sets out local guidance on the Council's current position regarding planning for key matters. This is not a statement of policy, but this sets out planning principles based on local context and evidence which will inform decisions on planning applications.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- 1) The National Planning Policy Framework;
- 2) Relevant up to date policies contained within the Darlington Core Strategy 2011 (see **Annex i**);
- 3) Saved and up to date Policies from the Borough of Darlington Local Plan (adopted 1997, with alterations 2001) (see **Annex i**);
- 4) Relevant evidence base documents as detailed in **Annex ii**.

2. DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE

In the Darlington Core Strategy¹, Darlington Town Centre, is the first priority for development and regeneration activity in the borough² and is at the top of a hierarchy of centres³. It continues to be the primary retail centre in the borough and as such, a key location for other main town centres uses⁴, in line with national planning policy⁵. The boundary of the Town Centre is considered in the Darlington Retail and Town Centre Study and for clarification is shown on the plan at **Annex iv**.

To help realise the core strategy vision and objectives⁶, a Draft Town Centre Development Strategy and Vision was agreed in 2012⁷. The Town Centre Strategy is currently still being developed. A Retail and Town Centre Study was completed in 2014⁸, to inform that work and planning policy. Account also needs to be taken of the provisions in national policy^{3,9}.

Modern retail facilities are needed within the town centre, to accommodate businesses who want to come to Darlington, and ultimately, to increase Darlington's market share. As identified in the Core Strategy, and recommended in the Retail and Town Centre Study, the Commercial Street area remains the sequentially preferable location to accommodate a comparison-led retail development within the town. Options are being considered to bring forward development alongside

¹ Darlington Core Strategy (adopted May 2011)

² Policy CS7 and CS8 of the Core Strategy

³ Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy

⁴ As defined in the National Planning Policy Framework Annex 2, CLG 2012

⁵ National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) CLG 2012

⁶ Darlington Core Strategy CS7 and strategic objectives in its Section 2

⁷ Cabinet 4th December 2012 Minute C84 (1): Darlington Town Centre Regeneration Strategy, Part 1: Developing the Vision, Cherishing the assets

⁸ Darlington Retail and Town Centre Study, WYG Ltd, September 2014

modifications to the inner ring road to create a better urban form, improve pedestrian and cycle links, also opening up other sites for development to the north adjacent to Gladstone Street and Four Riggs.

The Retail and Town Centre Study indicates that there is currently no significant quantitative need for additional food retail development but that there would be a need for between 1,200m² and 2,900m² at 2026. It is likely that this will be provided through several smaller developments throughout the plan period. Additional large-scale food retail development is not being planned for at this time. There may be a qualitative need for additional foodstore provision during the plan period.

The car parking strategy⁹ sets out where parking should be provided, what type of parking should be provided, parking charges, payment methods and what could be done to protect the interests of residents living in areas with high levels of demand for parking. The strategy identifies a need for additional parking in the Feethams area of the town centre. Work has recently been completed on a new Multi-storey car park on land at Beaumont Street. Additional parking will be required as part of development at Commercial Street.

The Core Strategy¹⁰ identifies the town centre as one of the top priority locations for office development, recognising that this can help boost pedestrian flows and retail trade, and can help make workplaces as accessible as possible. It indicates that after the Commercial Street area, the top priority location for major non-retail town centre uses in the borough will be other parts of the present town centre, including the Feethams / Beaumont Street area. Office and leisure development is being promoted on the remaining development land there, capitalising on the cinema development, and should be designed to encourage linked trips with the existing town centre offer.

Improvements and investment in the covered market are part of the agreed vision for the town centre¹¹. Work is ongoing to bring forward a private sector partner for the Covered Market that refreshes the offer of this key town centre building.

The vision for the town centre also includes continued support for the independent retail sector to the south and west including Grange Road and Coniscliffe Road. This will be achieved by continued working with the businesses there to try to increase footfall and promote its unique offer, including developing the evening economy and the cultural life of the town centre. The Council will also work with traders to investigate options for regeneration of the Skinnergate area.

The design of development within the town centre must be of a high quality, reflecting the prominence of the development sites identified, and appropriate in terms of its surroundings, in line with the principles contained in the Council's adopted Design of New Development SPD.

⁹ Darlington Parking Strategy, 2014-2026

¹⁰ Policy CS7 (The Town Centre) of the Darlington Core Strategy

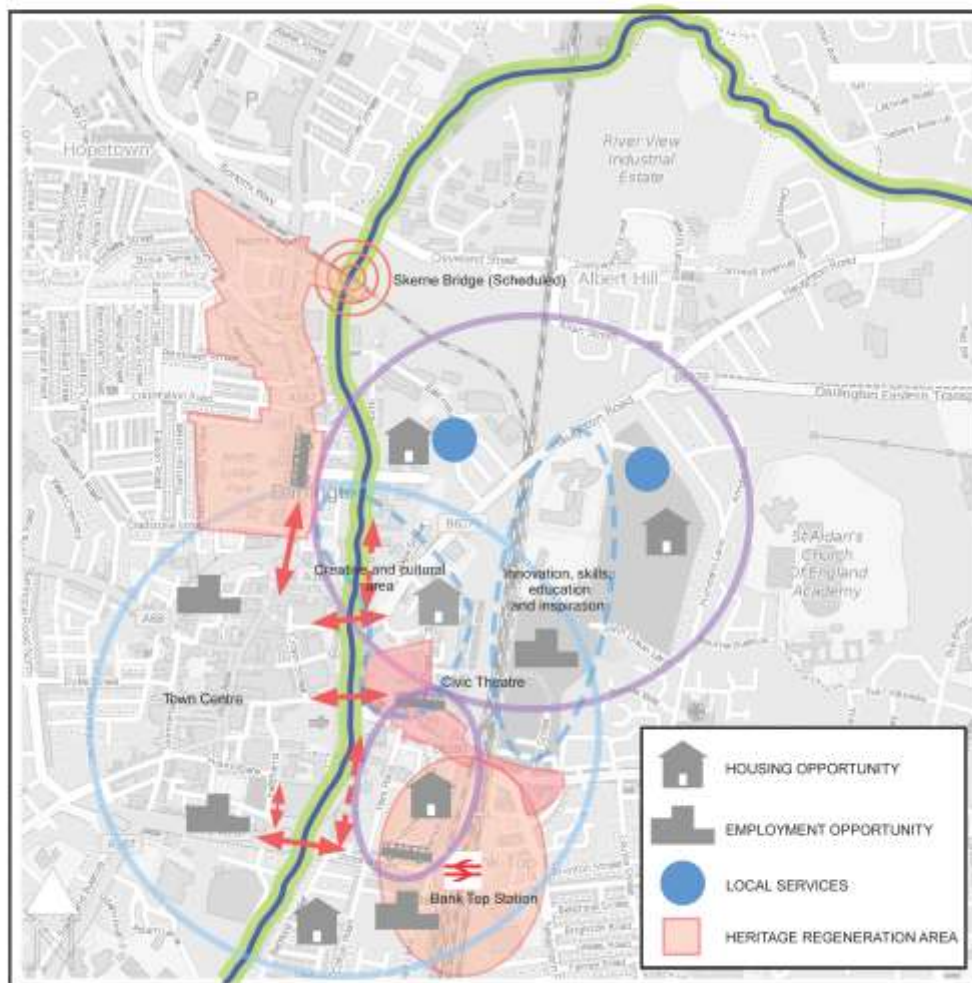
¹¹ The NPPF requires local planning authorities to retain existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones, ensuring that markets remain attractive and competitive.

Figure 1

DARLINGTON CENTRAL GROWTH ZONE - DELIVERING THE VISION

The transformation of Darlington's central areas both physically and economically, building on current successful projects and benefiting from the natural and built assets in the area. Well connected to Darlington Town Centre, and Darlington's suburbs the Central Growth Zone will provide a great quality of life for new and existing residents and fertile conditions for economic growth.

	MOVEMENT	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	HERITAGE AND DESIGN QUALITY	ECONOMIC GROWTH	HOUSING	
KEY PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	Reduced severance caused by Ring Road for all modes	A restored River Skerne	Design SPD compliant new developments	Increased employment opportunities in the area	Mix of tenures throughout the area as a whole	ACTIONS TO DELIVER OVERLEAF
	Walking and cycling route along River Skerne	Environmentally improved River Skerne & tributaries	Decent homes standard existing housing in the area	Accessible local shops and services in the area within 400m of every resident	Investment in existing housing	
	Improved links to Town Centre from Bank Top Station	Protected existing and the creation of new greenspaces	The showcasing and celebration of railway heritage	Protection of existing businesses	An appropriate mix of dwelling types	
	Bus connectivity	Creative play	Improved public realm in existing streets	Reduced worklessness and entrepreneurship	New homes up to Code 3 standard	
	Connected streets	Habitat creation, protection and mitigation	Improvements to heritage assets	Enhanced footfall in the Town Centre	Conversion of former industrial and commercial buildings to housing	
	Station improvements creating a regional gateway		An enhanced cultural offer through industries, activities and the built environment	Leading the way in innovation, skills and education	The reduction of fuel poverty in the area	
Parking that works for the town						



3. RETAIL PROPOSALS INCLUDING TOWN, DISTRICT AND LOCAL CENTRES

National planning policy¹² indicates that the Council should pro-actively promote competitive town centre environments that provide consumer choice and a diverse retail offer. The Darlington Core Strategy¹³ sets out the overall approach to town centres and retailing, to ensure the vitality and viability of the town centre is maintained and enhanced and so that it continues to provide a range of retail, leisure and business uses. Its role as the sub-regional centre for the western part of the Tees Valley City Region and neighbouring parts of North Yorkshire and south and west Durham, is protected and promoted, including its role as a market town.

The Core Strategy¹⁴ sets out the hierarchy of centres in the borough, defining the role and appropriate developments for each, to ensure that their role in providing food shopping and a range of local shops, leisure uses and services, is safeguarded and enhanced.

TOWN CENTRE

The Core Strategy¹⁵ seeks to focus retail activity within the town, district and local centres in the borough, and to avoid developments outside of these centres that would compromise their vitality and viability, by drawing significant amounts of trade away from them. These policies do not prevent the development of small shops or convenience stores that serve local needs, but do help to ensure that development within centres is consistent with a centre's scale, function and physical capacity to integrate extensions. Adverse impact on vitality and viability could result in local services and amenities not being available and accessible to local communities, meaning people with restricted mobility will lose services and others will have to travel further.

The hierarchy of centres is set out in the Core Strategy¹⁶. The town centre is at the top, followed by Cockerton and North Road District Centres and then the local centres of Mowden, Neasham Road, Whinfield, Yarm Road, West Park and Middleton St George.

This document defines the extent of Darlington town centre, the Primary Shopping Area (these are defined below) and the District and Local Centres. This is important as it identifies where town centre uses will be acceptable, and when a sequential assessment will be required.

¹² National Planning Policy Framework (CLG, March 2012), Para. 23

¹³ Darlington Core Strategy (May 2011) Policy CS7

¹⁴ Darlington Core Strategy (May 2011) Policy CS9

¹⁵ The NPPF includes district and local centres within the definition of town

¹⁶ Darlington Core Strategy (May 2011) Policy CS9

TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARY

The town centre is the defined area where main town centre uses will be located. Main town centre uses are¹⁷ retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment facilities, the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls), and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities). Strengthening the town centre by channelling new main town centre uses is vital if Darlington is going to fulfil its role as a sub-regional centre (see Core Strategy¹⁸).

The town centre boundary is defined in the Darlington Retail and Town Centre Study 2014¹⁹ and includes the Commercial Street development area to the north, Duke Street and Bondgate stretching out from Skinnergate to the west and is bounded by St Cuthbert's Way to the east and Victoria Road to the south, for clarification this area is shown on the plan at **Annex iv**.

PRIMARY SHOPPING AREA

The Primary Shopping Area (PSA)²⁰ is defined as the area within the town centre where retail development, the presence of which is the main contributor to vitality and viability, is concentrated and should be focussed. The council's current understanding of the PSA is shown on the plan at **Annex iv**, this area may vary dependent on new uses or existing uses ceasing that may alter the boundary. It covers all primary shopping frontages, and those secondary shopping frontages that are contiguous and closely related to the primary shopping frontage.

Primary shopping frontages are those frontages where the Council wants to retain that should continue to contain a higher proportion of shops (class A1 of the use classes order). The primary frontages are around High Row and Northgate and include the Cornmill Centre and Queen Street. To maintain vitality and viability, the Council will permit non-retail uses in these frontages only in exceptional circumstances and subject to the proposal fully satisfying the following considerations:

- a) The characteristics of the unit and its attractiveness to A1 retailers; and
- b) Its position within the frontage; and
- c) The pedestrian flow associated with the unit and the wider centre; and
- d) The length of time that the unit has been actively marketed on competitive terms.

¹⁷ As defined in National Planning Policy Framework, CLG 2012

¹⁸ Darlington Core Strategy (DBC, May 2011) CS7

¹⁹ Paragraph 9.33

²⁰ Primary Shopping Area is defined in the NPPF as 'defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are adjoining and closely related to the primary shopping frontage'.

Secondary shopping frontages are those where there is the opportunity for a more diverse mix of uses. The secondary frontages radiate out from the primary frontages and include Skinnergate, Blackwellgate, Post House Wynd, Bondgate and Tubwell Row. The Council will consider a more diverse mix of uses on these frontages, subject subject to the proposal fully satisfying the following considerations:

- a) It would not result in an over-concentration of non-A1 uses where the cumulative impact would lead to a negative impact on the shopping character of the frontage;
- b) It would not result in an over-concentration of similar uses that would lead to amenity problems;
- c) It will have an attractive shop front which contributes positively to the appearance of the street; and
- d) It would not result in the creation of frontage that is not in use during the day; and
- e) It is compatible with adjoining uses.

The primary and secondary frontages are considered in the Darlington Retail and Town Centre Study and for clarification are shown on the plan at **Annex iv**.

The Council acknowledges the need to be flexible where appropriate, and the changing role of town centres, which are no longer solely a shopping destination, but provide a range of other leisure and social functions including housing and the use of upper floors. Protection of the core retail function will remain a priority.

DISTRICT AND LOCAL CENTRES

The District and Local Centres are important in meeting local needs, providing food shopping and a range of other local shops, services and leisure uses. They are both accessible and help reduce the need to travel. These centres are generally healthy with exceptionally low vacancy rates.

National planning policy²¹ indicates that policies should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs, and ensure that established shops and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable so they are retained for the benefit of the community.

The District and Local Centres are identified on the Core Strategy Key Diagram as being:

District centres

Cockerton
North Road

Local Centres

Mowden
Neasham Road
Whinfield

²¹ National Planning Policy Framework (CLG, March 2012); Para. 70

Yarm Road
West Park
Middleton St George

For additional clarity boundaries of these areas are provided in **Annex v** these boundaries were also considered as part of a 'health check' contained within the Darlington Retail and Town Centre Study 2014²². A range of uses, including shops, financial services, restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments, hot food takeaways, and a range of community and leisure facilities (included within classes A2-A5, D1 and D2 of the use classes order) but will be expected to:

- a) be of an appropriate scale, taking into account the role of the centre;
- b) be physically integrated with the rest of the centre;
- c) have good pedestrian links with the rest of the centre;
- d) achieve an acceptable level of amenity;
- e) achieve an acceptable level of highway safety in accordance with Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy.

DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE OF EXISTING CENTRES

The Council's policy²³ and national policy is that main town centre uses should be within existing centres. However, where development does take place elsewhere, it is important that it does not undermine existing centres.

Those proposing development of main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre should undertake a sequential assessment²⁴, to ensure that consideration is given to sequentially preferable locations. This also applies to proposals that are below the local floor space thresholds set out within the Retail Study. A sequential test is not required for proposals for office development within the identified employment areas or other employment sites identified in this plan and is also not required where the proposal reflects the existing use of the site.

Matters to be set out in a sequential assessment are set out in national planning policy and guidance.

A locally set floorspace threshold for the requirement for impact assessments²⁵ to be provided with development proposals has been set to ensure that the impact of proposals has been properly considered. Any proposals that are above these thresholds and on the edge of or outside of these centres must be accompanied by an impact assessment, to ensure that full consideration is given to the scale of development and any significant impacts that could result from retail proposals, when taken both individually and cumulatively with other proposals and developments. The impact assessment will be expected to be proportionate to the

²² Chapter 5

²³ Darlington Core Strategy (May 2011) Policy CS7-CS9

²⁴ Applications for main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available, should out of centre sites be considered. (NPPF, para. 24)

²⁵ Based on evidence set out in the Darlington Retail and Town Centre Study, WYG Limited (2014)

scale of the proposal. These thresholds are set as being broadly the maximum allowance in such locations before the Borough's retail strategy could be compromised.

Matters to be considered in an assessment are set out in national planning policy and guidance.

SHOP FRONTS

In assessing development that will impact on the shop fronts in Darlington Town Centre, district and local centres, the Council will have regard to the Council's Design SPD²⁶ as regards shop fronts, signs and shop security, and any subsequent updated guidance on this issue. Regard should also be had to the requirements of Equality Act 2010 which carries an obligation to make reasonable adjustments to premises to facilitate their use by people with disabilities.

4. NORTH WEST URBAN FRINGE

The North West Urban Fringe is identified as a strategic location for new housing and employment development in the Darlington Core Strategy²⁷. It is greenfield land which wraps round existing and emerging residential areas of West Park and High Grange, either side of the A68 West Auckland Road, extends south to the Barnard Castle Railway Path and is contained to the east by the A1(M).

The main issues considered in identifying the land allocation and mix of uses for the primarily residential element of development at the North West Urban Fringe were:

- a) making sure that new housing can be readily integrated with existing and planned areas of new housing, and is as close as possible to existing shops and services;
- b) providing an appropriate amount of affordable housing²⁸ and/or other housing to meet specific needs or demand, to create a mixed and balanced community;
- c) providing appropriate new community infrastructure, such as local shops, school places and health services to meet the needs arising from the new development;
- d) including other uses, e.g. employment, sports club provision;
- e) providing appropriate amounts and types of open space and green infrastructure is needed, to meet the needs of the new development and to provide an attractive setting for it;
- f) ensuring that travel on foot, by bike or by public transport to, from and within any new development is an attractive choice;

²⁶ Revised Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document , DBC, July 2011

²⁷ Policies CS1, CS5 and CS10

²⁸ defined in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework, CLG, 2012

- g) ensuring that the extra traffic generated by the development does not have a severe impact on the local highway network, or affect the efficient functioning of the strategic highway network, particularly at Junction 58 on the A1(M);
- h) in the interests of residential amenity, investigating whether the power lines across the site can be diverted or undergrounded, or whether the masterplan will have to take account of their existing alignment.

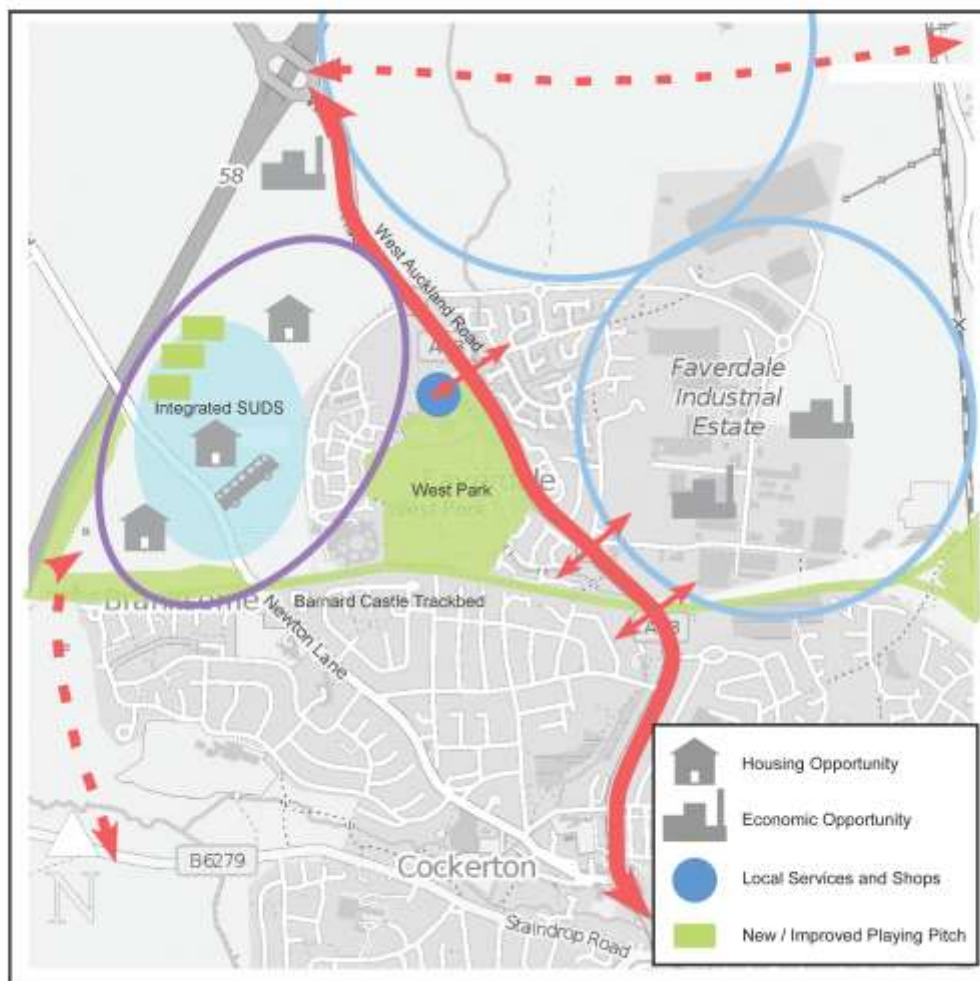
Aspirations for the North West Urban Fringe are represented on the following concept plan.

Figure 2

DARLINGTON NORTH WEST GROWTH ZONE - DELIVERING THE VISION

The creation of a new suburb and employment area in Darlington with great access to jobs and the countryside and benefiting from the natural and built assets in the area. Building on the high quality award winning development at West Park and economic growth successes such as Argos and Aldi this part of town will accommodate the growth ambitions of the town, taking advantage of excellent road links.

	MOVEMENT	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	DESIGN QUALITY	JOBS, GOODS AND SERVICES	HOUSING	
KEY PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	Reduce severance of West Auckland Road	Good natural surveillance over green infrastructure and off-road paths	Design SPD compliant new developments	Increased employment opportunities in the area	Mix of tenures throughout the area as a whole	ACTIONS TO DELIVER OVERLEAF
	Safeguard West Park to Staindrop Road link and links to Whessoe Road	The retention of existing hedges, trees and habitats	Integration with existing housing	Local shops, schools and services in West Park local centre	Good levels of amenity in terms of acoustics and air quality	
	Integrated cycling provision	Enhanced playing pitch provision	High quality gateway development on prestige employment sites	Shops and services within 300m of every resident	A mix of densities across the site making a good edge to the countryside.	
	Bus connectivity and new homes within 300m of a stop.	New creative play spaces	High quality public spaces	'Shovel ready' sites identified and promoted	Provision of appropriate facilities	
	Safe and walkable street network	Connect to existing green infrastructure	Integrated SUDS			



5. EASTERN URBAN FRINGE

The Eastern Urban Fringe is identified as a strategic location for new housing in the Darlington Core Strategy. It is an extensive greenfield site covering about 96ha, adjacent to the existing Red Hall Regeneration area, extending east to the A66 (T) and is contained to the north west by the River Skerne, to the north by Great Burdon and Stockton Road and to the south by the Eastern Transport Corridor.

Essential for the proper planning of the area is to create a neighbourhood where people will aspire to live and to ensure that the new community integrates positively with the existing neighbouring residents at Red Hall. The details will need to be identified in a comprehensive masterplan, agreed with the Council and the Design SPD²⁹ to guide the development and infrastructure of the area within the plan period and beyond.

The phasing of supporting infrastructure will be important. Key infrastructure (such as road links from the Eastern Transport Corridor and Stockton Road) should be put in from the outset, and other on and off site infrastructure, such as the internal road network, should be designed with capacity to accommodate further development beyond 2026. The Red Hall link road should also be delivered in the first phase to ensure that all residents enjoy easy access to a range of shops, services and community facilities as well as providing a safe route to school.

Whilst about 610 new homes are envisaged by 2026 to ensure that there is a continuous supply of housing land there is an expectation that further significant new development will continue on this site well beyond 2026. To enable this, residential development should be planned to be built out from the south and north in parallel progressing to the centre of the site in the long term.

The development will be expected to include a range of house types and sizes. This area is particularly suitable for three and four bedroom homes, addressing a shortfall in the stock compared to demand, whilst land closest to community facilities, shops and services would be suitable for older people and for those with disabilities. An appropriate amount, type and mix of affordable housing will also be required unless a viability statement indicates otherwise. A flexible approach is proposed; on site provision, an equivalent financial contribution, or a combination, may be appropriate³⁰. All should be designed to meet the appropriate national sustainability standards, be safe and accessible to a range of shops and services.

A new local shopping centre will be created, including a local food shop (up to 400m²) with other units (up to 100 m² gross) (see Core Strategy Policy CS9) to meet local residents everyday shopping needs. Ideally this should be in conjunction with other community facilities, such as medical facilities, from which sustainable travel routes should radiate, linking provision to both existing and proposed housing areas and other local community facilities.

²⁹ Revised Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document , DBC, July 2011

³⁰ see Planning Obligations SPD, DBC, 2013

The nearby Red Hall Primary School will be re-modelled and extended to meet the needs arising from the early years of this development. A safe, well-lit route between the Eastern Urban Fringe and the school will be required.

A Flood Risk Assessment will ensure that development does not increase fluvial and surface water flood risk up or downstream, and preferably, secures betterment. A large part of the north western area close to the River Skerne is a natural flood plain and lies within high risk Flood Zone 3 rendering it unsuitable for built development. It is important that this large area is fully integrated into the overall masterplan and utilised as a valuable green infrastructure resource particularly for recreation and wildlife. Consistent with the NPPF good use will be made of land in medium risk Flood Zone 2. Up to 4ha of playing fields will be provided for over the plan period to accommodate existing and future residents sporting needs³¹.

Parts of the Eastern Urban Fringe are at high risk of surface water flooding, meaning that a sustainable drainage network of highly biodiverse balancing ponds, swales and other features needs to be integrated into the new development and green infrastructure. The scheme should also complement the existing Red Hall Wetland, increase the level of protected and priority habitats and species that are found in the area and provide for recreation and education.

New development should have a positive vibrant green interface with the strategic Darlington-Stockton green corridor, a much softer, wildlife rich interface with the strategic River Skerne wildlife corridor and other local green corridors. Within their buffer zones new development should reflect local variations in landscape character and wildlife habitats identified in Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy.

A Statement of Significance will ensure that important connections to Darlington's unique past, including the Scheduled Second World War Starfish Bombing Decoy in the north-eastern part of the site, the former 1825 Darlington-Stockton railway trackbed and any associated archaeological remains are identified, protected and mitigated appropriately. Where practicable mitigation should form part of the green infrastructure network, for example, through innovative interpretation or public art.

A Transport Assessment will ensure that the extra traffic generated by the development does not have an adverse impact on the local highway network, or affect the efficient functioning of the strategic highway network, particularly at junctions with the A66(T) which experiences a high volume of traffic, particularly at peak times. To avoid severe impacts on these networks the proposed development will need to mitigate its impact by contributing to highways improvements along the Eastern Transport Corridor and A66(T) on a pro rata basis reflecting the amount and type of development proposed. The development must also include roads designed to an appropriate standard to link areas of new development to the existing highway network. These will form a package of measures secured through a s106 agreement.

Aspirations for the Eastern Urban Fringe are represented on the following concept plan.

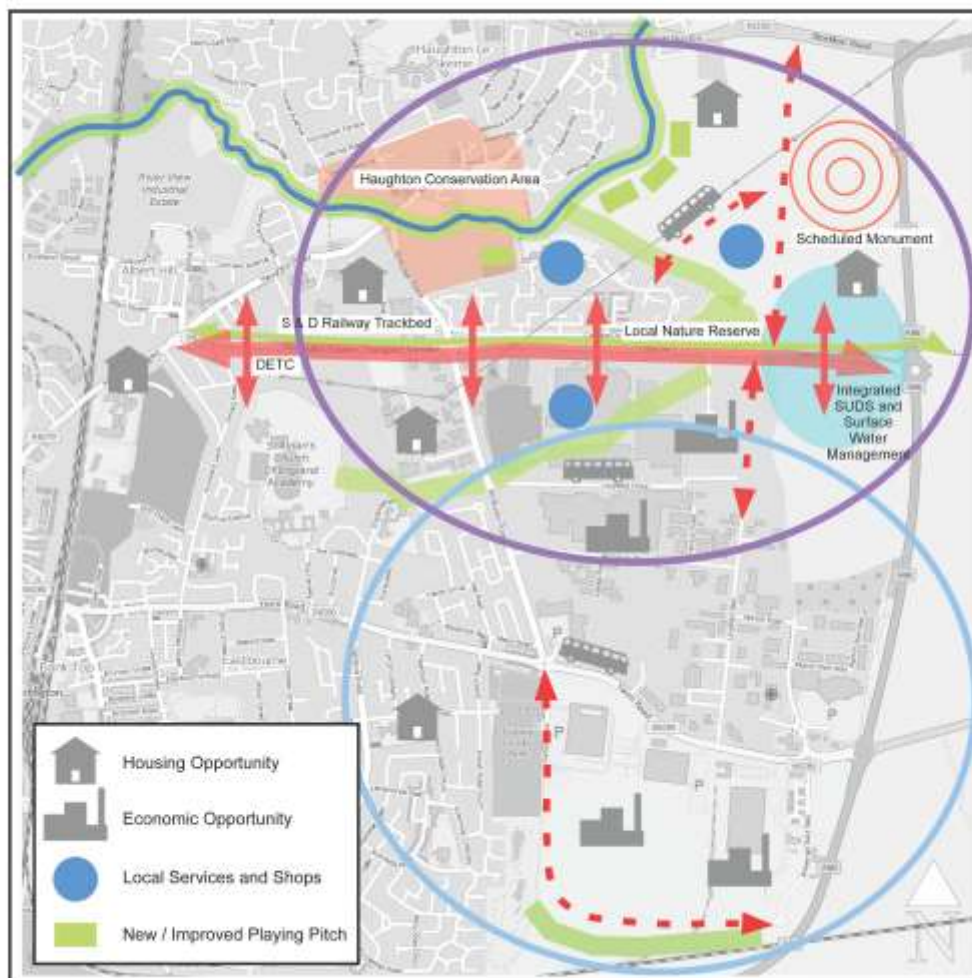
³¹ Playing Pitch and Sports Facility Needs Assessment and Strategy 2015

Figure 3

DARLINGTON EASTERN GROWTH ZONE - DELIVERING THE VISION

The creation of a new suburb of Darlington with great access to jobs and the countryside and benefitting from the natural and built assets in the area. Well connected to Darlington Town Centre, the Tees Valley and beyond the Eastern Growth Zone will provide a great quality of life for new and existing residents and fertile conditions for economic growth.

	MOVEMENT	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	DESIGN QUALITY	JOBS, GOODS AND SERVICES	HOUSING	
KEY PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	Reduced severance caused by DETC	Protected and enhanced LNR, biodiversity and trees	Design SPD compliant new developments	Increased employment opportunities in the area	Mix of tenures throughout the area as a whole	ACTIONS TO DELIVER OVERLEAF
	Deliver Red Hall to Burdon Hill link road	Environmentally improved River Skerne & tributaries	Red Hall homes up to Code 3 standard	Local shops, schools and services in Red Hall and Burdon Hill	Investment in existing housing	
	Integrated cycling provision	Enhanced playing pitch provision	Positive image of the area	Shops and services within 400m of every resident	An appropriate mix of dwelling types	
	Bus connectivity	New creative play spaces	Remodelled front to back relationships	Reduced worklessness in Red Hall	Empowered residents	
	Reduce pressure on strategic road network via links	Integration with Burdon Hill	Protected and enhanced heritage assets inc. SAM and S&D trackbed		Direct developer involvement in Red Hall Regeneration	
	Safe and walkable street network					



6. PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Darlington Core Strategy³² indicates generally where and how a continuous and diverse supply of employment land will be provided within the Borough to meet the needs of existing and future economic development. It plans for up to 235ha of additional land for general and mixed use employment across the Borough in the period up to 2026.

National planning policy³³ says that employment sites should not be protected over the long term if there is no reasonable prospect of them being used for that purpose. It also indicates that where this is the case, planning applications for alternative uses should be treated on their merits, having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.

Since the Core Strategy was adopted, a Business Sites and Premises Review³⁴ has updated earlier evidence³⁵ taking account of the latest local economic strategy³⁶. It found that the Borough's economy experienced strong job growth during the early-mid 2000s, but severe contraction during the recession. Darlington is now experiencing substantial new jobs growth, with the number of residents employed returning to pre-recession levels. Current strong employment sectors include business services, public administration, education and health services, manufacturing and advanced engineering. Further growth is forecast in these areas and in a number of emerging sectors including digital and media, biopharmaceuticals, telehealth and healthcare.

The council recognises the contribution that alternative uses can make to employment areas, where they comply with the objectives of the plan and are applied consistently, and can help to realise the development of employment uses, and the continued retention and attractiveness of employment sites. Acceptable uses are predominantly those that have a similar character to employment uses, but may not be in the same use class, and could include training centres related to employment in the industries on the estate, or related to a particular occupier, genuinely ancillary uses such as small cafes or nurseries serving the employees of the industrial area, or more diverse uses where they relate to the function of the estate or the surrounding area.

Existing Employment Areas as defined in Saved Local Plan Policy EP2 as:

- EE1 Faverdale Industrial Area (84.43ha)
- EE2 Cleveland Street (20.07ha)
- EE3 Albert Hill (15.34ha)
- EE4 Red Barnes Way (12ha)
- EE5 Banks Road (9.69ha)

³² Darlington Core Strategy (May 2011); Policy CS1 and CS5

³³ National Planning Policy Framework (CLG, 2012) Paragraph 22

³⁴ Review of Business Sites and Premises; NLP/DTZ; 2013

³⁵ Darlington Employment Land Review; Report and Recommendations (DBC 2009)

³⁶ Economic Strategy for Darlington 2012-2026 (DBC, Darlington Partnership)

- EE6 Lingfield Point (34.69ha)
- EE7 Yarm Road Industrial Area (114.86ha)
- EE8 Aycliffe Industrial Estate (15.33ha)

In addition to these existing employment sites the Business sites and Premises Review and the Saved Policies of the Local Plan as being:

New Employment Sites

- EN1 Faverdale East Business Park (32.38ha)
- EN2 Yarm Road South Extension (32.64ha)
- EN3 McMullen Road West (6.62ha)
- EN4 Heighington Lane North (4.54ha)
- EN5 Lingfield Park (7.52ha)
- EN6 Albert Hill (1.87ha)
- EN7 Cleveland Street (0.81ha)
- EN8 Faverdale Industrial Estate (11.1ha)
- EN9 Banks Road (0.72ha)

Key Employment Location

- KEL1 Faverdale Reserve (120ha)

Prestige Employment sites

- ENP1 Yarm Road North (30.56ha)
- ENP2 Former Torrington's Site Yarm Road (7.41ha)

Office / Business Park Development

Exclusively for B1 (Business) use or B1 (Business) as part of a B1-led mixed use development:

- ENB1 Morton Palms (8.18ha)
- ENB2 South East Town Centre Fringe (1.59ha) (mixed use)
- ENB3 Central Park South (9.1ha) (mixed use)

7. HOUSING PROPOSALS

The National Planning Policy Framework supports planning being plan led, with plans providing a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency. However, where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impact of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole, or in specific circumstances where development should be restricted. It should be noted that national policy is set against a presumption that Local

Authorities should take necessary steps to *'boost significantly the supply of housing'*³⁷.

In relation to housing, the NPPF requires local authorities to plan positively for housing development to meet the needs of their area. It advises that policies for the supply of housing (parts of Core Strategy policies CS1 CS10, and Local Plan policies E2 and H7) should not be considered up to date if the Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. This 5 year supply should be measured against a housing requirement based on an up to date, objectively assessed need (OAN).

Members endorsed the objectively assessed need (OAN) for housing in Darlington was 9900 new homes over the 20 years from 2016 to 2036, an average of around 500 new homes per annum. Having established an overall housing requirement for the plan period, it is necessary to convert this into an annual housing requirement for each year of the 20 year plan period. Setting a phased annualised housing requirement will enable the supply of sites for housing to be phased through the plan, taking into account availability, developability and deliverability of sites recorded in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). A further detailed report on this housing requirement is also due to be reported to this Cabinet Meeting on 5 April 2016. Owing to a shortfall in housing provision in previous years (in the region of 1162 dwellings since 2011) it is proposed these should be spread across the remaining 20 years of the new plan period, raising the total housing requirement between 2016 and 2036 to 10850, an average of 543 dwellings per year.

In order to achieve a five year supply the council needs to deliver housing quickly and cannot wait for a comprehensive local plan to be in place otherwise a backlog of under delivery will continue to grow. While the new local plan is being prepared the council will therefore consider suitably located sustainable sites. In order to assist developers and decision makers as to what constitute key sustainability considerations in Darlington Borough when applying the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development further guidance will be provided in the following paragraphs.

Identified Sustainable Housing Sites

Owing to the rigorous site assessment process already undertaken it is considered that the sites identified below and detailed on the plan in **Annex iii** be capable of accommodating a sustainable housing development, subject to the submission of an acceptable scheme in relation to other material considerations, be deemed acceptable against national policy criteria.

³⁷ NPPF Paragraph 47.

Table 1 – Identified Sustainable Housing Locations

Interim Site Ref.	Site Name	Former MGP Preferred Options Ref.
Strategic Sites (as identified in Core Strategy)		
IHs1a	Lingfield Point (Phase 1)	Hs1a
IHs1b	Lingfield Point (remainder)	Hs1b
IHs2	Central Park	Hs2
IHs3	West Park	Hs3
IHs4	Town Centre Fringe	Hs4
IHs5	North West Urban Fringe	Hs5
IHs6	Eastern Urban Fringe	Hs6
Housing Commitments (with existing planning permission)		
IHc1	Former Corus Site, Whessoe Road	RHc1
IHc3	Rear of Heron Drive	RHc3
IHc4	Ruck/rear Cockerton Club	RHc4
IHc5	Croft House, Hurworth Place	RHc5
IHc6	Former Eastbourne Nursery	RHc6
IHc7	Former Arts Centre, Vane Terrace	RHa9
IHc8	1 Blackwell Lane	RHc8
IHc9	Forge Tavern, Albert Hill	RHc9
IHc10	136 Lawson Street	RHc10
IHc11	Rise Carr Club	RHc11
IHc12	Former Eastbourne School footprint	RHc12
IHc13	Woodburn Nursery	RHa13
IHc18	Hammond Drive	RHa18
IHc23	Rear of Scargill Shops	RHa23
Housing sites capable of accommodating a sustainable scheme³⁸		
IH2	Former Eastbourne School playing field	RHa2
IH3	Muscar House Farm South	RHa3
IH4	Former Springfield School and area	RHa4
IH5	Cattle Mart and car park, Clifton Road/Park Lane	RHa5
IH7	Alexander Street/Blackett Road	RHa7
IH8	North of Red Hall	RHa8
IH10	Hartington Way/Bellburn Lane	RHa10
IH11	South of Bowes Court/Haughton Rd	RHa11
IH12	Former Alderman Leach School Field	RHa12

³⁸ Further consideration the suitability of these sites for development can be found in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Consultations periods were carried out on all of these sites as part of the Making and Growing Places plan preparation: at Preferred Options stage in summer 2013, on Revised Housing Site Proposals in summer 2014 and on New Housing for Blackwell in Summer 2015. The responses to these Revised Preferred Options were reported in detail to a Special Place Scrutiny Meeting in October 2014.

IH14	Mowden Hall	RHa14
IH16	Darlington Timber Supplies	RHa16
IH19	Ravensthorpe, Carmel Road North	RHa19
IH20	Land at Haughton Road	RHa20
IH21	Back Greenwell Street	RHa21
IH22	Lime Avenue Open Space	RHa22
IH24	Upper Russell Street	RHa24
IH25	Blackwell Grange – Rear of Upsall Drive, Blackwell Lane	He1
IH26	Blackwell Grange – Blackwell Grange Hotel, Blackwell Lane	He2
IH27	Blackwell Grange – east of Grangeside/The Spinney	He3
IH28	Blackwell Grange – east of Carmel Road South	He4

The revised housing site proposals agreed and consulted on in summer 2014 included an Option A and Option B for about 370 new homes on the northern edge of Darlington in the Burtree Lane/Harrowgate Hill area.

As more housing land is now needed, both sites are considered capable of accommodating sustainable housing development, though delivery of them both will be subject to satisfactory mitigation of the highway impact that will arise from a combined potential capacity of 750 dwellings, and appropriate primary school (and other local shops and services) provision. Given the relationship of land at 22-26 Burtree Lane to both of these areas, it is also sensible to include that land within the land identified. Work is underway to produce a comprehensive masterplan for the area to address strategic issues such as transport and community infrastructure requirements. These sites are:-

Table 2 – Identified Sustainable Housing Locations (Burtree Lane/Berrymead Farm)

Interim Allocation Ref.	Site Name	Former MGP Preferred Options Ref.
Burtree Lane/Berrymead Farm		
IH1i	Land south of Burtree Lane	RHa1i*
IH1ii	Land north of White Horse Pub/Berrymead Farm South	RHa1ii*
IH1iii	22-26 Burtree Lane	N/A

* Boundaries are amended from that previously consulted upon. Rha1i required a portion of land included in Rha1ii to the North of White Horse Pub. Revised site areas are provided accordingly.

Approach for land not previously identified for housing

In the interim, the Council will use the best information it has available to determine whether a 5 year supply of housing land can be demonstrated. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) seeks to determine sites' potential

contribution to meeting housing need by considering their suitability, availability and deliverability. Where a site is considered likely to produce housing completions within five years, it is included in the five year supply calculation. At present, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment does not include sufficient suitable, available and deliverable sites to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land in Darlington.

The Council identifies in Core Strategy Policy CS10 a fallback position, supporting windfall housing development in appropriate locations at the Urban Fringe and within or adjacent to larger villages if housing delivery fell below projected rates. This part of Policy CS10 continues to be relevant to determining applications. However, in order to continue to plan positively for housing development to meet the needs of our population, applications for planning permission for residential development in all areas of the Borough will need to be considered in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. This means that planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impact of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole, or in specific circumstances where development should be restricted. Saved Local Plan policies and surviving Core Strategy policies (**Annex i**) continue to be relevant to determining site specific issues and whether a development can be considered 'sustainable'.

Policy CS10 indicated that if there was insufficient new housing coming forward, new housing could be permitted in appropriate locations at the urban fringe and then within or adjacent to the larger villages provided schemes were subject to conditions or other arrangements agreed to ensure the early delivery of housing. As there is insufficient housing coming forward to meet needs this fall back position remains a valid approach.

The Gladman appeal decision³⁹ provided good pointers as to how the sustainable development consideration should be applied. It highlights the need to weigh the economic, social and environmental dimensions contained within the NPPF so any proposal made contrary to the development plan will be expected to be accompanied by a full appraisal of appropriate considerations.

Key considerations in Darlington are ensuring proposals:

- Do not unacceptably impact strategic infrastructure without sufficient mitigation;
- Have access to education facilities that have sufficient capacity or capability for expansion (typically 1km to a Primary School with appropriate safe route);
- Have access to goods and services (including shops, post office, etc.);
- Accessibility to public transport and connectivity with existing settlements (such as footpath and cycleway links);
- Good design that respects the character of the area;
- Does not prejudice the good planning and future delivery of the strategic vision for the borough.

³⁹ Appeal Ref: APP/N1350/A/14/2217552, Land off Sadberge Road, Middleton St George, Darlington, County Durham, DL2 1JT

- Compliance with restrictive policies identified in the NPPF⁴⁰. For Darlington these could be a combination of:
 - Sites protected under Birds and Habitats Directives and/or Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
 - Local Green Space
 - Designated Heritage Assets (within the Borough of Darlington this could include Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks & Gardens or Conservation Areas)
 - Locations at Risk of Flooding

At both pre-application and application stage these principles will be applied and balanced in an assessment of the sustainability credentials of a proposal being made under the national presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Most locations within the main urban area of Darlington⁴¹ are considered broadly acceptable for housing development, subject to detailed consideration against other relevant policy considerations. Existing infrastructure in these areas are generally good and will often be able to access existing facilities such as schools and shops through an appropriately designed scheme. Sites immediately adjoining the urban area are also likely to have significant potential to demonstrate fulfilment of the national presumption in favour of sustainable development, however the likelihood that developments will need to provide infrastructure and facilities (or significant financial contributions toward such provision) is much greater. Such areas may also be of a scale that a comprehensive masterplan may be the only appropriate method of demonstrating a development will be sustainable. The council acknowledges that this may be a long term plan for an area and facilities may only be provided once a critical mass of development is reached. Without such a masterplan it will be difficult to judge development favourably against the presumption in favour of sustainable development if it comes forward on a piecemeal basis.

Aside from sites in and immediately adjoining the main urban are of Darlington there is the opportunity for some of the villages to provide some capacity for future housing growth. As detailed above, Core Strategy Policy CS10 acknowledges that in a position for under delivery larger villages could also provide suitable locations for growth. The three Villages identified as larger villages in the Core Strategy are selected for their levels of existing infrastructure and service provision. A summary of some of the key practical sustainability factors are included in **Table 3**. It should be noted that this table is not exhaustive and a balanced judgement will need to be made of various factors in order to successfully apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The table below also provides information on the general provision of each village it is not site specific so individual proposals will ideally be assessed at pre-application or application stage.

⁴⁰ National Planning Policy Framework, Footnote 9

⁴¹ As identified in the Core Strategy Key Diagram

Table 3 -Summary Of Key Sustainability Factors For Darlington Borough Villages

Village	Large Villages			Other Villages (select examples)					
	Hurworth/ Hurworth Place	Middleton St. George/ Middleton One Row	Heighington	Sadberge	High Coniscliffe	Bishopton	Neasham	Great Stainton	Piercebridge
Primary Schools Proximity (Within 1km)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Public transport – Bus (Daytime Service 8am to 6pm) every 30 mins or better	✓	✗ 1 service, hourly, weekdays only	✓	✗ 3 journeys on a Monday only, and supported by subsidy.	✓	✗ 3 journeys on a Monday only, and supported by subsidy.	✗ 3 journeys on a Monday only, and supported by subsidy.	✗ 3 journeys on a Monday only, and supported by subsidy.	✓
Public transport – Rail (within 2km of Rail Halt)	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Local/District Centre (within 2km)	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Local Shop/Post Office (within 1km)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
GP Surgery Proximity (Within 1km)	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

Other Villages Not Included Above :- Barmpton; Beaumont Hill; Oak Tree; Brafferton; Killerby; Denton; Little Stainton; Redworth; Great Burdon; Low Coniscliffe; Merrybent; Summerhouse; Virginia Estate are unlikely to be of sufficient scale to accommodate new housing development other than suitable small scale infill or replacement dwellings.

Affordable Housing

The Council’s approach to affordable housing is set out in the adopted Planning Obligations SPD and typically requires 20% affordable housing on most development sites (30% at identified strategic locations) unless a financial viability assessment is submitted to demonstrate the site is not viable at these levels. Other exemptions apply as set out in the SPD.

Viability

As the type of sites that can deliver new homes quickly are likely to be greenfield sites outside the urban area which are relatively free of physical development constraints, the Council will expect that the planning requirements and obligations (contained in the adopted development plan policies and associated SPD) will typically be met in full. If an applicant considers a development to be unviable with these obligations then a detailed financial assessment should be submitted to accompany the application to enable further debate on potential compromise.

Delivery

As one of the main reasons for this interim planning position for housing is to significantly boost housing delivery over the next five years or so to meet the housing need identified, then if an outline planning application is being considered outside of the urban area, it is considered appropriate to impose a constrained time limit (in the region of 18 months) for the submission of all outstanding reserved matters and typically a 1 year time limit for the commencement of development from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters. In order to further promote rapid delivery of sustainable housing schemes the council would encourage developers to submit applications for full planning permission if practicable.

8. GYPSY AND TRAVELLERS ACCOMMODATION

The Darlington Core Strategy makes provision for travelling groups at the existing sites of Honeypot Lane and Neasham Road, together with other small sites within the Borough. It also indicates that additional accommodation to meet needs over the plan period should be allocated in accordance with a set of criteria, such criteria also being the basis for making decisions on windfall sites.

Since the Core Strategy was adopted, the Government has updated national policy. In addition to the criteria set out in Core Strategy Policy CS13, national policy now indicates that the Council should set pitch targets for Gypsies and Travellers and plot targets for travelling showpeople, to address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs of travellers in their area, and should update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites, sufficient to provide five years' worth of sites against those targets, and a supply of specific developable sites or broad locations for growth for years six to ten, and, where possible, years 11-15.

To provide a robust evidence base, a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment has been produced, to determine needs in Darlington. This provides the basis of the pitch targets for the plan period. As the five year supply currently relies on a windfall allowance, any sites coming forward at present should be considered against Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy.

9. SAFEGUARDING THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Darlington Core Strategy Policy CS14 identifies the importance of protecting, enhancing and promoting the quality and integrity of Darlington's designated heritage assets. This statement provides more specific detail on how these will be assessed, and provide assistance on considering non-designated assets as set out in the NPPF.

The Borough also contains a wealth of non-designated heritage and archaeological assets. Non-designated heritage assets can be summarised as parts of the historic environment including buildings, structures, areas and archaeology that are considered by the Local Planning Authority to be locally significant. They are identified through strategic planning, development management and can include a Local List, which can sometimes be deemed as significant as designated assets⁴². Development that would result in substantial harm to historic assets would be contrary to the NPPF and would normally be refused permission or Listed Building Consent.

Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The Council has a statutory duty to protect listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. This is supported by a national planning policy presumption in favour of their conservation⁴³, informed by survey information about the condition of and risk to them⁴⁴ and any potential improvements required.

Conservation Areas

The Council will expect special regard to be taken in all planning decisions to the desirability of conserving and enhancing a Conservation Area's significance.

Historic Parks and Gardens

A Register of Parks and Gardens of "Special Historic Interest" is maintained by English Heritage, to encourage their protection and conservation, but has no associated statutory controls. The two registered sites within Darlington Borough are both Grade II, and both publicly owned: South Park and West Cemetery.

Archaeology (Designated and Non-Designated)

Significant archaeological finds in the Borough include those from the Iron Age, Roman and Medieval periods. New investigations and finds mean the HER is always being updated, and this forms part of Darlington's positive strategy for the historic environment. Survey and recording prior to development is an important way of adding to the record, particularly in areas of known local historical interest, such as within designated Conservation Areas, and non-designated Areas of Special Archaeological Interest⁴⁵, where archaeological finds are more likely. It may be that an area has already been archeologically sterilised by an activity, such as mineral extraction. In such cases an evaluation report is unlikely to be required.

Designated and Non- Designated Heritage Assets of significance to Railway, Quaker or Industrial Heritage

Darlington has particularly strong railway and Quaker heritage. Opened in 1825, the Stockton and Darlington railway was the world's first publicly financed passenger railway. Its route through the Borough is mostly intact, serving some transport

⁴² Paragraph 139 NPPF

⁴³ Paragraphs 132 to 134 NPPF

⁴⁴ Listed buildings list and Scheduled Ancient Monument 2009 work

⁴⁵ drawn up by Durham County Council's Archaeology Service and include Scheduled Monuments (including 50 m buffer zone), undesignated deserted or shrunken medieval villages, Conservation areas, the 'historic cores' of settlements (defined in the County Durham and Darlington Historic Landscape Characterisation Project), Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, areas identified from existing research, areas previously only marked with a point rather than a spatial indication of their true extent.

functions. The route includes several important structures, but only some, such as the scheduled Skerne Bridge, have statutory protection. The area around North Road Railway Station and within the Northgate Conservation Area has a particular concentration of railway heritage, e.g. the North road Station and buildings, the lime cells, a goods shed and associated Victorian residential terraces. In addition to designated assets, Westbrook Villas, off North Road, the Coal Drops to the rear of Westbrook Villas and the Railway Tavern Public House on Northgate are examples of non-designated assets to be found in the Borough with strong links to the town's railway heritage. This area forms the core of the emerging 'Heritage Campus' which also includes the Town Centre, Quaker Suburbs and Bak Top Station and is being established to mark the 200th anniversary (in 2025) of the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway and drive the visitor economy.

Darlington Quakers played an active part in the government, industry, commerce and development in the town during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were responsible for many of Darlington's Victorian public buildings and manor houses, parks and cemeteries, including South Park, the indoor market/clock tower and the Friends Meeting House. The value and significance of these assets, for their contribution to the unique identity of the borough and their potential contribution to tourism is recognised. Non-designated heritage associated with the Quaker movement includes Elm Ridge Methodist Church and Carmel School.

Darlington has also played a significant role in the development of industry. It has a number of designated heritage assets of significance to industries like leather, tanning, textiles and steel. Designated assets include Tees Cottage Pumping Station and the Cummins building on Yarm Road, the latter being the most recently built listed building in the borough.

Identification of Non-Designated assets shall be undertaken through:

- i) the development management process using published criteria; and
- ii) through the production of Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans; and
- iii) the creation of a Local List, which would include those identified through i) and neighbourhood plans and public engagement.

Protection of non-designated heritage assets shall be achieved through:

- iv) Proposals for the demolition of non-designated heritage assets must demonstrate that there is no sustainable use of the building; and
- v) proposals for alterations and extensions must be based on a proportionate understanding of the significance of the asset including the structure, and respect the architectural character, and detailing of the original building. The structure, features, and materials of the building that contribute to its architectural and historic interest should be sustained or enhanced with appropriate materials and techniques proportionate to their significance; and
- vii) proposals must protect and enhance the setting of non-designated heritage assets through good design and be proportionate to their significance

Non-Designated Archaeological Sites and Scheduled Monuments

The NPPF⁴⁶ states that non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are of equivalent value to scheduled ancient monuments (SAMS) should be considered against the same policies as SAMS. The NPPF <ref to para 169> also requires local authorities to use up to date evidence to identify areas where unidentified heritage assets are likely to be found. Work has been undertaken jointly with the Durham County Archaeology Team to identify these 'Areas of Special Archaeological Interest'. A borough wide map is attached at **Annex vi**. Applicants and developers will be advised at pre-application stage if their proposal is within one of these areas. Development proposals involving ground disturbance in 'Areas of Special Archaeological Interest' will be expected to be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report, except for all householder development and extensions, and for alterations to existing commercial premises of 40m² or less, unless the proposed development directly affects or is within 50m of a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Outside Areas of Special Archaeological Interest, planning applications on sites of more than 1 hectare must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report, unless the area is already known to have been archaeologically sterilised by previous development (such as mineral extraction).

10. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The National Planning Policy Framework, 2012⁴⁷ indicates that valued landscapes should be protected and enhanced, with guidance provided against which development proposals affecting these areas will be assessed. Meanwhile, the Darlington Core Strategy protects and seeks to appropriately enhance the distinctive character of the Borough's natural and historic townscapes and landscapes, including unique features like rural gaps, green wedges, green corridors, strategic historic routes and parklands. However, there are some parts of the inner urban area where landscape or townscape quality could be improved⁴⁸, in particular to better promote Darlington's railway heritage.

Any proposals within the rural area or on the fringes of existing development will be expected to have regard to the Darlington Landscape Character Assessment 2015 and adequately mitigate any impact on the identified character.

11. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Darlington Core Strategy recognises the value of Darlington's extensive green and blue infrastructure network; its multi-functional green spaces, green corridors, rivers and watercourses provide links within the Borough and to the rest of the Tees Valley, Durham and North Yorkshire. In accordance with the National Planning

⁴⁶ Paragraph 139

⁴⁷ National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG, 2012

⁴⁸ Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy, DBC, 2013

Policy Framework, 2012⁴⁹, a landscape scale approach to green infrastructure will be encouraged, to using and managing land for what it is best suited to. Through investment, management and maintenance across the network, priority projects⁵⁰ will be delivered that will make more of the network so that a range of green and blue infrastructure needs are delivered in each local area, and in the Borough, as a whole.

Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy facilitates the planning, design and management of the network to meet the environmental, social and economic needs of the community; by supporting recreation, sport and play, walking and cycling, food production⁵¹, flood storage and sustainable drainage benefits as well as the biodiversity and geological features that are found within it⁵². It can also contribute to achieving the appropriate sustainable building standards required in new developments and enhance amenity for residents.

In the long term the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan⁵³ will guide the creation of a new green corridor adjacent to the River Skerne and development at the Eastern Urban Fringe will seek to establish an extensive new wildlife friendly space further upstream adjacent to the river. Both will help re-create a more natural course for the river, provide environmental and water quality enhancements and improve access for people and wildlife; a key priority in One Darlington: Perfectly Placed⁵⁴.

Each corridor has a buffer zone identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy; strategic corridors are wider than local corridors reflecting the minimum width needed for habitats within or adjacent to the corridor to function, for a distinct landscape to be recognised, and to provide appropriate and sufficient space for access and recreation. Within their buffer zones development should reflect variations in the local landscape character identified in the Darlington Landscape Character Assessment.

Allotment provision is discussed within the Darlington Allotment Strategy⁵⁵.

As the Borough is relatively rich in the amount of open space it contains, new space will only be sought as part of major new development where the amount and mix of development proposed requires substantial green infrastructure to deliver a sustainable new neighbourhood, or to create an appropriate business or leisure environment. The Council recognises it is not always possible to achieve this all on site; in those cases, equivalent off site provision will be sought. For smaller developments in areas of open space deficiency a contribution towards improving the quality and functionality of existing open space may be required to ensure that the space is able to meet the needs of additional residents. This approach will also ensure that the network can continue to provide for other functions that green infrastructure is needed to perform.

⁴⁹ National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG, 2012, paragraph 117

⁵⁰ Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy, DBC, 2013

⁵¹ as identified in the Darlington Allotment Strategy, DBC, 2009

⁵² as identified in the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan, Tees Valley Nature Partnership, 2013

⁵³ Town Centre Fringe Masterplan, DBC/EA/HCA, 2013

⁵⁴ One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, Darlington Partnership, Revised 2014

⁵⁵ An Allotments Strategy For Darlington 2009-2019

In exceptional cases where these requirements cannot be delivered a comprehensive, open book viability assessment should be submitted with the planning application to show why a development cannot achieve these requirements.

12. OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

The Darlington Core Strategy⁵⁶ recognises the important role quality, accessible, managed outdoor sport and recreation facilities can have on residents' health and quality of life. Consequently, it aims to protect, enhance and extend the sporting offer, to ensure that provision meets residents' needs now and in the future. As a result, any loss of sports facilities will only be considered in exceptional circumstances in accordance with the criteria in the Core Strategy and the Playing Pitch and Sports Facility Needs Assessment and Strategy 2015.

13. PROTECTING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY

Core Strategy Policy CS15 sets out the broad principles for protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity and should be read in conjunction with the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy.

In comparison to neighbouring authorities, Darlington does not have much designated land of a European or National standard, so the 300ha of other local wildlife friendly greenspaces, for example, Cocker Beck and Baydale Meadows, are therefore of high importance within the borough.

To ensure species can move easily across and beyond the Borough connectivity will be improved along watercourses, including the strategic River Tees and River Skerne, public rights of way and railway lines and along field margins in the rural area^{7,46}. Improving the wildlife value of lower quality urban greenspaces will also provide valuable habitats.

There are also opportunities to increase the stock of protected and priority habitats and species through well-designed new developments⁵⁷, especially in the strategic locations. Development at Central Park and in the Town Centre Fringe particularly, will enrich biodiversity in areas with limited existing biodiversity provision.

Biodiversity varies according to location and the presence of protected and priority habitats and species and so therefore does the impact of development on it. The type and level of assessments required alongside new development proposals will reflect biodiversity value, and a Phase 1⁵⁸ Habitat Survey (Extended), tree surveys and/or detailed species surveys may be required if protected or priority habitats and

⁵⁶ Policy CS18 : Promoting Quality, Accessible Sport and Recreation Facilities

⁵⁷ in accordance with the Design SPD, DBC, 2011

⁵⁸ Phase 1 Habitat Survey: assess habitats present, rare plant species and whether the habitat has potential to shelter protected or BAP species

species are likely to be present. Through an Ecological Masterplan and/or the Design, Access and Sustainability Statement⁵⁹, the design and layout of new development is informed by, and responds positively to, the ecological value of the site and the immediate environment and how this will be protected and enhanced. Where little biodiversity exists, functional ecological networks should be created; landscaping schemes and green roofs and walls can provide nesting sites, roosting sites and shelter for birds, bats and amphibians. Provision in or adjacent to a green corridor or a designated site, should be informed by the strategic aims of the corridor or the site's management plan.

It should be noted that the presence of protected species or habitats is not limited to the designated sites. Where internationally and nationally protected species, such as the otter and water vole are identified, development should protect them and their breeding and resting places from disturbance or injury. This will be monitored through application of the derogation tests set out in national legislation⁶⁰.

With the exception of protected species, where a licence may need to be sought from Natural England, impacts which are unavoidable, should be fully mitigated within the locality. Appropriate approaches can include maintaining existing priority habitats, creating new habitats, providing sustainable drainage schemes with wetlands and reedbeds, new native woodland and street trees and the protection of existing trees⁶¹ (including ancient woodland and veteran trees) on or off site, particularly in the strategic locations. Planning conditions and/or planning obligations⁶² may be used to secure mitigation.

Off site mitigation measures will only be considered where there are justifiable ecological reasons that would result in a more appropriate solution to potential impacts on biodiversity as a result of development. This may include the relocation of a species or habitat to a more favourable location owing to existing circumstances or the creation of new habitats in an area nearby that will have a greater gain in Biodiversity than that which can be provided on site. Such provision would be an exception from the normally accepted choice of protecting species and habitats onsite, or providing alternative on site mitigation measures and will therefore be expected to clearly set out in the supporting ecological study why off site provision would be an acceptable solution. It is not considered that geological mitigation could be provided off site and satisfactory on site solutions should be found.

To ensure suitable schemes are brought forward and that the long term quality of all biodiversity features proposed is maintained, plans showing how the features will be designed should be submitted with any major planning application, together with a management and maintenance plan, showing how the features will be maintained in the long term. A maintenance contribution secured via a Section 106 agreement is likely to be required.

⁵⁹ submitted with a planning application.

⁶⁰ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010

⁶¹ Through Tree Preservation Orders

⁶² in accordance with the Planning Obligations SPD, DBC, 2013 (or any update)

14. IMPROVING ACCESS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Development that offers better access to all forms of travel will help the borough to become more sustainable, healthy, green and prosperous place to live and work in. Sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling, public transport and facilities for alternative fuel vehicles will be promoted through travel planning as well as good design. The Core Strategy (Policy CS2) seeks to ensure links to existing networks are convenient for all.

In accordance with national policy⁶³ development proposals that are likely to generate significant additional journeys should be accompanied by a Transport Assessment⁶⁴ and a Travel Plan⁶⁵ whilst smaller developments will require Transport Statements⁶⁶. Where the transport impacts of development are not significant, it may be that no Transport Assessment or Statement or Travel Plan is required. Local planning authorities, developers, relevant transport authorities, and neighbourhood planning organisations should agree what evaluation is needed in each instance.

Additional transport infrastructure and other measures will be required for areas of new development, so that people living and working there can make sustainable and efficient travel choices. The kind of transport links and demand management measures needed to ensure that growth takes place as sustainably as possible were considered when the strategic locations in this Core Strategy were selected (Policy CS1). Proposals that link into the sustainable transport routes identified in the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy⁶⁷ will be encouraged particularly at the strategic development locations. Parking should be provided at levels appropriate to the use and location and should promote sustainable transport choices (Policy CS2).

Highway infrastructure, improvements and new roads, will be combined with travel information and marketing measures to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport wherever possible, particularly on or near Key and Secondary Public Transport Corridors as identified on the Policies Map. Travel plans and the funding of new sustainable travel interventions through planning obligations (Policy CS4 & Planning Obligations SPD) will be the main tools used to embed sustainable travel choices and behaviours into new developments from the outset.

Whilst most roads have a footpath alongside and the Rights Of Way network⁶⁸ provides a comprehensive network of footpaths and bridleways areas around the borough, there are still gaps in the walking network for some, meaning it is difficult to connect to other modes of transport such as rail or bus.

⁶³ Carbon Reduction Strategy for Transport, Low Carbon Transport: A Greener Future, DfT, July 2009

⁶⁴ Transport Assessments are thorough assessments of the transport implications of development this may include recommendations of appropriate mitigation.

⁶⁵ Travel Plans are long-term management strategies for integrating proposals for sustainable travel into the planning process

⁶⁶ Transport Statements are a 'lighter-touch' evaluation to be used where this would be more proportionate to the potential impact of the development

⁶⁷ Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy 2013-2026, DBC, October 2013

⁶⁸ Including Public Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways

Despite the already extensive network of cycle routes, more needs to be done to make cycling a more attractive option compared to the private car. Larger employers, particularly within the urban area, will therefore be encouraged to provide facilities such as secure cycle parking, changing and showering facilities, where practicable.

Access to a variety of sustainable transport options should be integrated into the design of new developments from the outset, and guidance is provided within the Design of New Development SPD⁶⁹ as to how this may be achieved. The creation of safe and convenient access to all buildings and public spaces is also a priority to help ensure that everyone can help create and benefit from a more prosperous Darlington⁷⁰.

15. PARKING PROVISION

The provision of sufficient high quality and safe parking for motorised vehicles throughout the Borough is crucial in keeping Darlington as a competitive place to do business, whilst maintaining the environment that contributes to a high quality of living.

National policy⁷¹ requires local authorities to consider setting local parking standards for new development and to ensure there is an improved quality of parking in town centres that is convenient, safe and secure.

Local parking standards for new development and changes of use in place, set out in the Tees Valley Highway Design Guide⁷². Further advice on integrating parking within new development is included in the Council's Design of New Development SPD appropriate provision for disabled parking and secure motorcycle parking.

In the town centre parking, the adopted Parking Strategy⁷³ indicates that by 2020, the demand for parking is likely to exceed supply unless further provision is made. Construction is now complete at Beaumont Street/Feethams of a Multi Storey Car Park this should be capable of meeting localised demand.

The Parking Strategy sets out a zonal approach to providing enough convenient parking options to support the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. It provides a small number of time limited short stay parking spaces in central locations with wider short stay provision within the Inner Ring Road (area identified as 'Town Centre'). Outside of the ring road will generally be protected for long stay parking and Residents Parking Zones⁷⁴.

⁶⁹ Revised Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document, DBC, July 2011

⁷⁰ One Darlington: Perfectly Placed A Vision for Darlington: 2008 – 2021 p.20

⁷¹ NPPF Paragraphs 39 and 40

⁷² Tees Valley Design Guide & Specification: Residential and Industrial Estates Development, Tees Valley Authorities

⁷³ Darlington Parking Strategy 2014-2026

⁷⁴ Parking in central areas where residents can pay for long term permits to park in on street bays.

The Council will continue to support and facilitate the sustainable development of businesses in the town centre by offering contract parking for operational needs to businesses with more than 5 employees⁷⁵ who have an employee travel plan in place. This initiative recognises that businesses located in the town centre can be more sustainable in terms of the transport movements that they generate, yet need convenient parking for operational purposes to keep commercially competitive.

16. PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The term 'physical infrastructure' embraces all services necessary for any development, including water supply, waste water and its treatment, energy and telecommunications. Transport infrastructure is addressed separately in Policy CS19, and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) in the following section.

National planning policy⁷⁶ requires the Council to identify priorities for infrastructure provision, including the need for strategic infrastructure and to support the expansion of high quality electronic communications networks, including telecommunications and high speed broadband. The Core Strategy⁷⁷ encourages enhanced infrastructure provision that supports delivery of its vision and objectives.

Policy CS4 of the Core Strategy sets out strategic requirements for developer contributions to support the delivery of infrastructure, including utilities infrastructure. The Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, adopted in January 2013, which sets out how developer contributions will operate for most forms of infrastructure, however it does not cover utilities infrastructure.

Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU)⁷⁸ has prepared a Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP)⁷⁹ the conclusions of which inform this section. The SIP considers infrastructure themes which impact upon Tees Valley's strategic sites⁸⁰ including utilities, flood risk, energy and broadband.

17. SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS (SuDS)

Climate change and the significant amount of new development proposed in the Local Plan could increase the risk of surface water flooding if they are not adequately mitigated. The National Planning Policy Framework⁸¹ requires that new development in areas at risk of flooding⁸² should not increase flood risk to people and property, and gives priority to sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), where practicable. National Planning Policy Guidance (April 2015), states that in areas at risk of

⁷⁵ Traffic Regulation Order

⁷⁶ National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

⁷⁷ Darlington Core Strategy (DBC, May 2011) Policy CS1

⁷⁸ the Tees Valley's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

⁷⁹ Tees Valley Strategic Infrastructure Plan April 2014

⁸⁰ Enterprise Zones, new housing sites of 250 dwellings or more, employment sites with over 500 employees

⁸¹ National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG, 2012

⁸² ²⁵Flood risk zones: flood zones 3b, 3a and 2

flooding, new development should only be considered appropriate if use of SuDS has been prioritised and when considering major^{10.26} development in all areas, SuDS should be provided unless demonstrated to be inappropriate.

The Darlington Core Strategy promotes the use of SuDS as a key part of any flood risk management strategy⁸³, supported by detailed guidance in the Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document (2011). It also requires an integrated surface water management solution for development in the Town Centre Fringe, Darlington's only Critical Drainage Area⁸⁴.

To produce the best scheme for each site, SuDS need to be considered early in the land acquisition and design process. At this point the design of the public realm, open space and the amount of space provided for SuDS can be informed by the specific characteristics of the site and its surrounds, including layout, topography, geology, flood risk zones and contaminated land. Sustainable drainage systems can also be designed to meet other environmental and social needs of the new development and the wider community⁸⁵, supporting recreation, biodiversity⁸⁶, drinking water resources, local amenity and water quality⁸⁷. The Tees Valley Local Standards for Sustainable Drainage (Tees Valley Authorities, 2015) provide detailed guidance on designing and implementing SuDS schemes including design standards and criteria, the various components of SuDS schemes and environmental and water quality considerations.

Each SuDS scheme should be designed to meet the standards set out in the Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems⁸⁸ and the Tees Valley Local Standards for Sustainable Drainage (or any relevant successor national or local standards) to ensure the future performance, sustainability and technical feasibility of the drainage system. Where strategic developments involve more than one landowner, a coherent approach should be taken to surface water management through a Surface Water Drainage Strategy, to ensure the comprehensive delivery of the system rather than multiple developments providing individual systems.

In some cases, it may be inappropriate to introduce a SuDS scheme either due to the type of development proposed, its location or site specific restrictions. However, the aim should be to discharge surface run off as high up the hierarchy of drainage options as reasonably practical⁸⁹. In determining what is reasonably practical, the Council will have regard to the Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems and will take advice from the relevant flood risk management bodies. This will principally be the Lead Local Flood Authority⁹⁰, but could also include Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency where appropriate.

⁸³ Policy CS16: Protecting Environmental Resources, Human Health and Safety

⁸⁴ Critical Drainage Area: an area within Flood Zone 1 which has critical drainage problems

⁸⁵ see EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC

⁸⁶ see the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan, Tees Valley Nature Partnership, 2013

⁸⁷ Northumbria River Basin Management Plan & Tees River Catchment Plan – both Environment Agency 2009

⁸⁸ Sustainable drainage systems: non-statutory technical standards – DEFRA 2015

⁸⁹ NPPG Paragraph 80

⁹⁰ Unitary authorities or county councils responsible for managing local flood risk and for preparing local flood risk management strategies.

Generally, the design and construction costs building and maintaining of a SuDS scheme will be lower than the cost of complying with the relevant building regulations in another way^{91,92,93}. However, where this is demonstrated not to be the case, alternative drainage solutions may be considered appropriate, as long as developments in areas at risk of flooding will be safe and flood risk will not be increased elsewhere. Where discharge to a public sewer is considered acceptable, developers will need to demonstrate that capacity exists to serve their development, and that the approach is acceptable to Northumbrian Water. Discharge to main rivers (Tees, Skerne and Cocker Beck) and other water courses will require permission from the Environment Agency or the Council, depending on the location and type of watercourse.

The satisfactory performance of SuDS depends not only on good design and construction, but also on appropriate long term management and maintenance. Developers could choose to maintain systems themselves or use a maintenance company with the maintenance levy paid by each household/occupier. Alternatively, developers could seek to arrange for maintenance to be undertaken by a range of public and private sector bodies, such as the Council, Northumbrian Water or Highways England, particularly where the SuDS scheme includes public realm or works within the Highway. This would be financed by a commuted sum⁹² or a levy paid by each household/occupier. Where SuDS serve more than one property, the Council may enter into an arrangement to maintain the scheme, should it meet both the National Standards and Tees Valley Standards; however, this will be by separate negotiation. The maintenance of SuDS serving only one property will be the responsibility of the property owner.

To be effective, the selected maintenance option should be identified in a planning application, and where appropriate within a Flood Risk Assessment or a Surface Water Drainage Strategy. It must be clear who will be responsible for maintaining the system, how the funding will be sourced and managed, and set out a minimum standard to which the sustainable drainage systems will be maintained. This will be particularly important in the strategic locations, given the amount and mix of development proposed. Provision will be secured via a legal agreement⁹³ or planning condition, as appropriate.

18. AIRPORT SAFETY

The Core Strategy (Policy CS16) indicates there should be no detrimental impact on the health and safety of the community arising from new development, and this includes air passengers.

The safeguarding zones and Public Safety Zone is shown in **Figure 4**, as required by Government policy⁹⁴. Various types of development will not be permitted in a Public Safety Zone if it increases the number of people living, working or

⁹¹ Delivering Sustainable Drainage, DEFRA, 2014

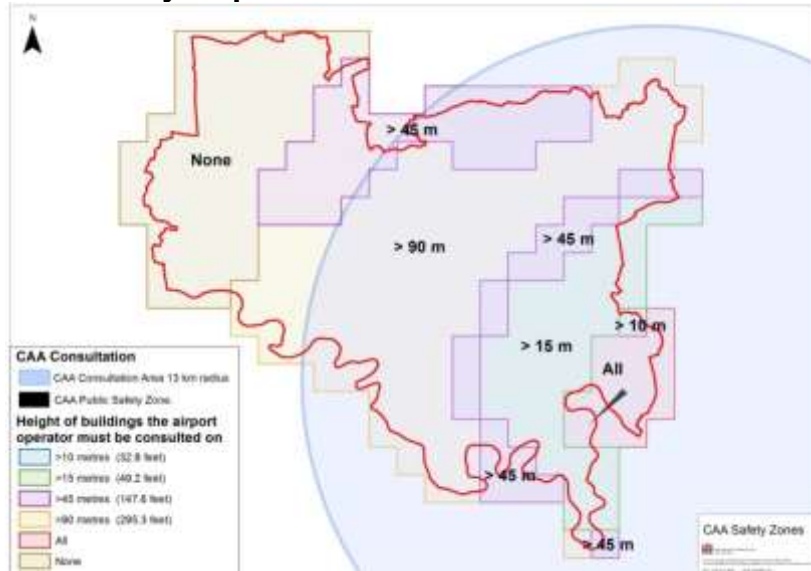
⁹² Commuted sum: capital payment made by a developer to the Council which will cover the future maintenance of an asset which will be adopted by the Council

⁹³ see Planning Obligations SPD, DBC, 2013

⁹⁴ DFT Circular 01/2010

congregating within the Zone and, over time, the number should be reduced, as circumstances allow.

Figure 4: Safeguarding Zones and Public Safety Zone associated with Durham Tees Valley Airport



Reference list of key documents referred to in the Interim Planning Statement

European

EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC

National

National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG, 2012

Planning Practice Guidance, DCLG

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (SI 2010 No.490)

Carbon Reduction Strategy for Transport, Low Carbon Transport: A Greener Future, DfT, 2009

Sustainable Drainage Systems : Non-statutory technical standards, DEFRA, 2015

Delivering Sustainable Drainage, DEFRA, 2014

DfT Circular 01/2010 - Control Of Development In Airport Public Safety Zones

Regional

Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan, Tees Valley Nature Partnership, 2013

Tees Valley Design Guide & Specification: Residential and Industrial Estates Development, Joint Tees Valley Authorities

Tees Valley Strategic Infrastructure Plan, 2014

Northumbria River Basin Management Plan, Environment Agency, 2009

Tees River Catchment Plan, Environment Agency, 2009

Local

Darlington Core Strategy, Darlington Borough Council, 2011

Darlington Retail and Town Centre Study, WYG Ltd, 2014

Darlington Parking Strategy 2014-2026, Darlington Borough Council, 2014

Revised Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document, Darlington Borough Council, 2011

Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, Darlington Borough Council, 2013

The Darlington Playing Pitch and Sports Facility Strategy, Darlington Borough Council, 2015

Review of Business Sites and Premises, NLP/DTZ, 2013

Darlington Employment Land Review; Report and Recommendations, Darlington Borough Council, 2009

One Darlington: Perfectly Placed - Economic Strategy for Darlington 2012-2026, Darlington Borough Council/Darlington Partnership, Revised 2014

Listed Building and Scheduled Ancient Monument List, Darlington Borough Council, 2009

Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy, Darlington Borough Council, 2013

Darlington Allotment Strategy, Darlington Borough Council, 2009

Darlington Town Centre Fringing Masterplan, Darlington Borough Council/Environment Agency/HCA, 2013