
TAKING FORWARD THE DARLINGTON GATEWAY

**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor David Lyonette,
Regeneration and Planning Portfolio**

Responsible Director(s) - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To update members of the work being undertaken to define the future direction of major economic regeneration projects, beyond delivery of the existing Darlington Gateway programme.

Information and Analysis

Darlington Gateway

2. The Darlington Gateway concept was established in 2002 following work carried out by consultants Donaldsons and SQW. This concept reflected the fact that Darlington plays a vital role linking Tees Valley with South Durham and North Yorkshire, and has particular characteristics (namely its accessibility and quality of life), which if capitalised upon would make a significant contribution to the prosperity of the region.
3. The Darlington Gateway has been very effective as an economic concept for us to promote and has successfully driven our regeneration efforts over the past few years. Having a clear strategic direction for Darlington, that can be embedded within higher level strategies has enabled us to benefit from significant levels of external funding and moved us to a position where development activity is happening or imminent across many areas of the town, including:
 - (a) Central Park
 - (b) Morton Palms
 - (c) The Pedestrian Heart
 - (d) Faverdale East Business Park
 - (e) Durham Tees Valley Airport
 - (f) Lingfield Point
 - (g) Commercial Street
4. The success of the Darlington Gateway concept in enabling us to secure funding has meant that all our major regeneration projects are either underway or have the relevant funding in place to begin their delivery stage. At present we do not have any major projects lined up for future rounds of One NorthEast or European funding.

Process

5. The success of the Darlington Gateway has largely been as a result of three key factors:
 - (a) A clear vision that fits within the regional/sub-regional strategic context.
 - (b) Well developed projects founded on extensive preparatory work.
 - (c) Detailed evidence of impact and demand.

6. To develop the programme beyond the range of projects already underway, it is necessary to carry out the following:
 - (a) Review the regional/sub-regional strategic context to ensure the appropriate local direction.
 - (b) Undertake preparatory work to identify and test a range of new major projects.
 - (c) Develop the evidence base to justify demand and sustainability, including refreshing the previous analysis of key economic sectors in Darlington.

7. Undertaking such detailed preparatory work will ensure that the Council is in the best possible position to influence funding providers such as One NorthEast and the Tees Valley Partnership and embed the next generation of Darlington projects in future strategies and delivery plans. It will also give us a clear strategy for developing the economy of Darlington in the second decade of the 21st Century.

Reviewing the Strategic Context

8. There are a number of external influences that need to be taken into account when considering our own direction. Recently developed regional/pan-regional strategies such as the Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Spatial Strategy and the Northern Way will guide funding decisions in future years and our strategic direction and project aspirations need to be consistent with their overall aims.

9. To inform our future strategic direction once the current Darlington Gateway programme has been delivered, work has been undertaken to identify emerging strategic trends. The areas where Darlington can potentially benefit have been highlighted, as well as areas where we could potentially miss out. The results of this work can be summarised as follows:
 - (a) *Physical Regeneration*
The direction of the physical regeneration element of the existing Darlington Gateway programme is still appropriate to the overall strategic context and future developments should follow the same principles as those followed for existing developments (strong evidence base, targeting particular sectors, good transport links, supporting key economic drivers, etc.)

 - (b) *Sector Specific Support*
The sectors that we have previously targeted (logistics, financial and business services) are still recognised as areas for growth and remain an appropriate focus for what we are doing. There is however a heavy emphasis on developing sectors which we are not currently linked in to such as:

- (i) Chemicals
- (ii) Renewable energy
- (iii) Healthcare and health sciences
- (iv) Emerging technologies
- (v) Digital media

10. A strong emphasis is also placed in increasing levels of R&D and developing closer links with universities, which presents obvious issues for a non-university town.

Next Steps

11. This review of the strategic context has raised a number of issues that require further research to be undertaken in order to ensure that projects are appropriately targeted. These issues require the input of external consultants and have consequently been packaged as follows:
- (a) Assessment of the impact made by the Darlington Gateway including key successes, transferable best practice and potential for external recognition.
 - (b) An examination of how we can support and expand current growth sectors including: financial services; business services; logistics; civil engineering; construction and creative industries.
 - (c) An assessment of the opportunities presented by strategically important sectors (chemicals, renewable energy etc.) and how Darlington can take advantage of them.
 - (d) A full employment land review looking at: the location and potential usage of future supply; potential for re-developing existing sites with potential to change in the next 15 years such as areas between Central Park and the town centre, and potential for master planning of existing commercial areas.
 - (e) An assessment of the infrastructure (physical and non-physical) required to maximise levels of entrepreneurship in Darlington and what needs to be put in place to achieve this.
12. The employment land review will also contribute to work required to complete the Darlington Local Development Framework, and as such has been defined in partnership with colleagues in Planning.
13. The outcome of this work will include:
- (a) Research studies identifying sector specific opportunities and challenges;
 - (b) A plan to increase levels of entrepreneurship in Darlington;
 - (c) An employment land review with specific proposals for future development;
 - (d) An overall strategic level document outlining the options for taking forward the Darlington Gateway;
 - (e) A stand-alone awards submission pack for previous work.
14. Undertaking this detailed research work will provide the Council with an ideal opportunity to:
- (a) Look carefully at future strategic direction;
 - (b) Engage partners and the local community in an informed debate, with the appropriate supporting evidence;

(c) Consider future project options.

15. A further stage of more detailed project development and delivery will follow on from this research phase, once the appropriate consultation and debate around its findings has taken place. Undertaking this work will be the subject of further reports and Single Programme funding applications.

Timescales and Funding

16. As the process to embed Darlington projects within wider strategies and funding programmes can take a number of years, we need to be identifying potential ideas now so that preparatory work can commence. This work is necessary if we are to avoid a gap between the current crop of Darlington Gateway projects and any subsequent ones. The process to achieve this had originally been built into the Darlington Gateway package for 2006/07. The accelerated delivery of existing Gateway projects means that this process also needs to be accelerated, to avoid a gap in development and a loss of momentum.
17. If we are to deliver projects from 2008/09 onwards then we need to be carrying out initial preparatory work during 2005/06 and detailed feasibility and design work between 2006/07 and 2007/08.
18. A sum of £48,000 from the Council's Economic Regeneration and Tourism budget has been used to 'lever in' a further £48,000 of Single Programme funding, enabling this external work to be carried out between January and July 2006. The Single Programme contribution was agreed by the Tees Valley Partnership at their meeting on 29 November 2005.
19. It is planned that the contract for this work would be let through the Development and Environment Department's framework partnership with various consultants.

Outcome of Consultation

20. Consultation on the preparatory work to be undertaken has been carried out internally within the Council and externally through the Darlington Partnership and the Economy and Environment Sub Group. Partners consulted to date strongly support the value of further research to identify future projects to take forward the Darlington Gateway Programme. Further consultation on the full brief is planned with other external stakeholders including One NorthEast and North East Chamber of Commerce.

Legal Implications

21. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

22. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those

functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

23. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

Decision Deadline

24. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter

Key Decisions

25. This report constitutes a key decision as it affects more than two wards.

Recommendation

26. Members are asked:
- (a) To agree the approach set out in this report to research future economic opportunities for Darlington and develop future Darlington Gateway projects; and
 - (b) To release the £48,000 of Single Programme funding.

Reasons

27. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) Work needs to be undertaken to develop the detailed evidence base and extensive preparatory studies required to support the next generation of Darlington Gateway projects.
 - (b) Investing in this work will enable the Council to influence funding providers and embed our aspirations in future strategies and delivery plans.

John Buxton
Director of Development and Environment

Background Papers

The Northern Way Growth Strategy – Northern Way Steering Group
The Regional Economic Strategy (Draft) – One NorthEast
Darlington Economic Regeneration Strategy – Darlington Partnership

Richard Horniman : Extension 2681
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