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**LOCAL PLAN: REVISED DRAFT NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris McEwan,  
Economy and Regeneration Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report is to seek Cabinet’s agreement to a revised draft Local Plan policy on new housing development, and for public and other consultations to be carried out on the revised draft policy.

**Summary**

2. A revised draft Local Plan policy on new housing development has been prepared to address site specific and housing delivery issues that emerged as a result of consultations last summer, and to incorporate measures that will help to ensure the policy is found sound and can be adopted by the Council in due course. The revised draft policy also reflects the Council’s desire to help accelerate new housing delivery to support its economic ambitions for the Borough and improve the wealth base of the community and the Council.
3. The revised draft policy proposes small adjustments upwards to the annual housing targets to meet the overall requirement for 5,800 new homes by 2026 that is set out in the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy. The revised draft policy also allocates land capable of delivering about 5% more than this, for about 6,200 new homes, so that the overall requirement can be met, even if some sites do not come forward as envisaged.
4. The revised draft policy includes potential new housing sites that have not been the subject of previous consultations, and increases the amount of new housing planned at the Eastern Urban Fringe. The draft policy also reduces significantly the amount of new housing that is planned to come forward by 2026 at the Town Centre Fringe and Central Park, for deliverability and alternative use reasons respectively.
5. The revised draft policy also includes two options for further housing delivery and the reservation of land for a new primary school and nursery at the urban fringe in

the Beaumont Hill/Harrowgate Hill area, for consultation on an 'either/or' basis.

6. Some sites previously identified for new housing but are not now proposed for new housing are also identified in the report.
7. Public and other consultations need to be carried out on these changes, so that those affected have the same chance to have their say as those interested in the original draft policy had. For reasons of efficiency and effectiveness, it is proposed that this specific consultation be targeted.
8. Identifying where new development will take place through the local plan process will help to ensure that Darlington retains the high quality of place that makes it a distinctive and attractive place to live and do business. An up to date adopted local development plan will help the Council to resist proposals for development in places that could compromise this, and which could cost the Council and local people more over the long term.

### **Recommendation**

9. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) the revised draft Making and Growing Places Policy MGP16 set out at **Appendix 1** be agreed;
  - (b) the revised annual housing targets for 2015-2026 set out in Table 1 be agreed;
  - (c) additional housing land be identified so that up to about 6,200 new homes could be provided by 2026;
  - (d) the deletions/amendments/additions to the original proposed housing allocations, highlighted in paragraphs 24 to 35 are agreed;
  - (e) the options for new housing in the Beaumont Hill/Harrowgate Hill area are agreed for consultation, on an 'either/or' basis;
  - (f) targeted public and other consultations be carried out as soon as possible on revised Draft Local Plan Policy MGP16;
  - (g) the Director of Economic Growth, in consultation with the Economy and Regeneration Portfolio holder, be authorised to make minor amendments to the proposed housing sites, to reflect the findings of sustainability appraisal and any other new information available before the start of consultations.
10. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-
  - (a) To enable further progress on the preparation of an up to date adopted development plan;
  - (b) To meet the requirements of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

**Ian Williams**  
**Director of Economic Growth**

### **Background Papers**

- (a) Darlington LDF Core Strategy, 2011
- (b) Making and Growing Places Preferred Options, June 2013
- (c) Housing Technical Paper 1: New Housing, June 2013

- (d) Darlington Strategic Land Availability Assessment Update 5, December 2013
- (e) Darlington LDF Statement of Community Involvement, July 2010
- (f) National Planning Policy Framework, CLG 2012
- (g) National Planning Policy Guidance, CLG 2014
- (h) Darlington Business Sites and Premises Review, NLP Planning, 2013.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	The revised draft policy does not specifically address crime and disorder as this has already been done through an adopted Local Plan Policy (Core Strategy CS2) and its accompanying Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document.
Health and Well Being	New can help reduce overcrowding and improve the overall quality of the housing stock.
Carbon Impact	The overall pattern of development proposed is intended to reduce or at least keep to a minimum any increase in carbon emissions in the Borough.
Diversity	An Equalities Impact Assessment and a Disability Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out on the original draft policy. This policy does not significantly differ, in as far as it affects specific groups or people with disabilities – more detail given in the report.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	Yes – the decision is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the Borough.
Urgent Decision	No.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Once finalised, the Making and Growing Places document will, together with the Darlington Core Strategy, provide the spatial expression of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed.
Efficiency	Costs can be met within budgets. Making progress towards having a full up to date development plan in place may reduce the Council's exposure to instances of award of costs against the Council at planning appeals. Proposed housing allocations will help to support new housing delivery, which translates to a form of income to the authority through the New Homes Bonus and Council tax receipts from the eventual residents.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

11. Consultations were carried out on a draft portfolio of housing land allocations during summer 2013, as part of the Making and Growing Places (MGP) Preferred Options consultation (Minute C171(3), 2013 refers). The draft allocations presented at that time were considered sufficient to meet the Borough's housing requirement of about 5800 new homes for the period 2011-2026. The requirement comes from the Council's Core Strategy Development Plan Document, adopted in May 2011, which is the strategic context for developing MGP policies.
12. The consultation responses and new information that has emerged since last summer have both been considered in detail since then. It has been concluded that significant changes need to be made to the draft new housing development policy, to ensure that it will be found sound and recommended for adoption by an Inspector at a public examination in due course.
13. The remainder of this report sets out the main matters that a revision to the policy needs to address, and highlights the key changes to the draft policy proposed. The revised draft housing development policy, on which it is proposed that targeted consultations be carried out, is attached at **Appendix 1**, and a plan showing where the sites making up the revised preferred option is included in **Appendix 1**.

### Adjusting the local plan housing requirement

14. Several consultation responses from housebuilders and landowners suggested that the local plan housing requirement should be significantly increased, to take account of the most recent household projections and other data prepared since the 2011 Census, and to meet the full objectively assessed needs for housing. This is not being proposed because the overall housing requirement of 5,800 new homes was adopted relatively recently (May 2011), and is considered an ambitious figure, as it is linked to an assumption of 2.5% year on year regional economic growth, to which Darlington was expected to significantly contribute. Also, the purpose of the Making and Growing Places planning document now being prepared is to provide more detailed and site specific interpretation of that higher level policy, not to revisit it.
15. There is a small risk associated with this approach, as some local planning authorities elsewhere have been advised to withdraw plans which have relied on housing requirement data from before the NPPF was published in 2012. So far though, these have only been plans that sought to establish strategic housing needs, and where the proposed requirement was less than previously emerging through regional plans.
16. Notwithstanding the above, an adjustment to the phasing of when new housing should be delivered is needed, to reflect underdelivery against plan targets so far. The proposal is that the targets for new housing to meet the overall housing requirement be revised, to about 400 per annum (p.a) for 2015, 420 p.a. from 2016 to 2021, and 480 p.a. from 2021 to 2026, an increase from the Core Strategy figures of 350 p.a. to 2021 and about 400 p.a thereafter.

## **Reduced expectations for new housing delivery at Town Centre Fringe and Central Park**

17. The loss of an anticipated £20m of funding from the HCA in 2013 for infrastructure and regeneration (as a result of the HCA stopping funding regeneration nationally) has significantly adversely affected the viability, deliverability and proposed timing of planned new development in the Town Centre Fringe, including about 650 new homes envisaged by 2026. Whilst regenerating this area is still a priority for the Council, it is likely that it will take longer than originally envisaged to get the land ready for development. With the exception of specific sites like the Cattle Mart, it is not now envisaged that new housing will come forward until 2021, and that only up to about 300 new homes would be delivered there by 2026.
18. At Central Park, whilst developers have an option for further housing to be developed on Central Park South, there are uncertainties about timescales and commitments to this later phase. In addition, the recent success in attracting interest in development land at Central Park for employment uses has re-opened up the prospect of delivering more employment uses there than has recently been envisaged, and it would be prudent to take this into account in estimating the remaining housing capacity of the area. This suggests a target of about 400 new homes would be appropriate, rather than the 500 previously indicated, allowing flexibility for either housing or employment uses to be delivered at Central Park.
19. This flexible approach to Central Park means that land for about 100 new homes will need to be found elsewhere.
20. Taking into account both of the above, land for at least 450 new homes needs to be found elsewhere.

## **Need for a flexible policy position**

21. Several consultation responses suggested the Council adopts a housing development policy that is sufficiently flexible to be able to respond to changes in the housing market and to allow for the planned housing requirement to be met, even if some sites do not come forward as envisaged. Suggestions ranged from identifying between 5% and 20% more housing land than is needed, on top of the national planning policy requirement to identify an extra 5% of land in the first five years of the plan period, brought forward from later years of the plan period. It was also highlighted that the new housing required but not delivered since 2011 (it is estimated that about 950 of the 1800 required from 2011-2015 will not come forward) still needs to be brought forward as soon as possible.
22. To provide flexibility and reduce the risk of the local plan not being found sound in due course, it is proposed that enough land is identified that is capable of delivering the housing requirement (5,800), plus an additional 5%, i.e. about 6,200 new homes. Because of national policy phasing requirements and the fact that by the time this part of the local plan is adopted, four years of the plan period will have elapsed, most of this additional land will need to be capable of delivering new homes between 2015 and 2026. The resulting amount of land for housing that

needs to be identified each year for the remainder of the plan period is shown in **Table 1** below.

**Table 1: Amount of new housing for which land needs to be identified, 2015-2026**

Time period	2015	2016-21	2021-26
Proposed capacity of planned allocations	450p.a	460 p.a.	500 p.a.
To meet housing requirement	400p.a.	420 p.a.	480 p.a.

23. Identifying 5% more land should provide enough flexibility for all the new housing required to be delivered, whilst minimising the risk of there being so much readily developable land for new housing available that developers cannot be attracted to the more suitable and sustainable regeneration sites, like in the Town Centre Fringe, within the plan period. It should also help support the Council's stated aim in its Medium Term Financial Plan, to help accelerate housing delivery so as to support its economic ambitions for the Borough and improve the wealth base of the community and the Council.

### **New housing sites within the main urban area**

24. As a result of consultation responses and decisions of the Council regarding its own land and a planned council house building programme, it is proposed that the following additional small and medium sized sites in the main urban area of Darlington be draft housing allocations, capable of delivering about 300 new homes:

- (a) land at and around 221 Haughton Road (17 homes, previously developed land)
- (b) former Ravensthorpe School site (20 homes, previously developed land).
- (c) part of Lime Avenue Open Space (14 homes, greenfield land),
- (d) land north of Red Hall (50 homes, greenfield land)
- (e) the Cattle Mart and car park, Clifton Road/Park Lane (80 new homes, previously developed land)
- (f) the former Arts Centre (50 homes, previously developed land)
- (g) Alexander Street/Blackett Road (50 new homes, previously developed land)
- (h) Upper Russell Street (6 new homes, previously developed land)
- (i) Back Greenwell Street (16 new homes, previously developed land).

25. An allowance is also made for about 60 new homes on underused greenfield land that will be delivered as part of the Red Hall Regeneration Programme.

26. A representation was received proposing land at Polam Hall School for new housing. The site was assessed in the 2013 Update of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and assessed as being suitable, available and deliverable. However, more recent advice from the Council's Conservation Officer indicates that this land is not suitable for new housing, as it would unacceptably harm the significance of the West End Conservation Area and the setting of the Grade II listed building, Polam Hall.

27. A representation was also received seeking the allocation of land to the south of Albert Road for housing. This land is not considered suitable for new housing development for environmental health reasons; there is a general industrial area

immediately to the north and railway lines bordering the site immediately to the south and east. Also the site is unlikely to be viable, because it is a low value housing area and there are likely to be significant costs associated with cleaning up land contamination.

28. Further consideration was also given as to whether land identified for employment use at the southern end of Faverdale Industrial Estate could be allocated instead for new housing development. Whilst some of the land does adjoin an established residential area, it was concluded that it should not be allocated for housing. This is because it was identified as an essential part of the employment land portfolio in the Business Sites and Premises Review carried out for the Council last year, and because it could give rise to potential conflict on environmental health matters between future residents and operators of general industrial premises nearby to the east and north, and the possible loss of those businesses from the area. It may be possible for a mixed use solution including some housing to come forward on this land, but this is being considered against the existing Core Strategy employment land policy (CS5) and the MGP employment land policy (MGP11).

### **Proposed expanded new housing land allocations**

29. Before looking for new sites, the capacity of identified sites to accommodate more housing was considered. More detailed work on layouts and land parcels indicates that the former Eastbourne and Springfield School sites can deliver more housing than originally envisaged, whilst still ensuring there will be enough suitable open space and routes through the sites for pedestrians and cyclists. Land at Eggleston View, that is being brought forward for new Council housebuilding for apartments, is also expected to deliver more new homes than originally envisaged.
30. It is also proposed to identify additional land for development at Hartington Way/Bellburn Lane, but for this wider area to require 1.8ha of open space to be included in the overall design, as well as providing about 50 new homes, up from the 32 originally indicated. This is being proposed to help ensure a viable development can be delivered, and to respond to comments received during consultations regarding potential drainage problems on part of the site originally identified.
31. Land at the Eastern Urban Fringe (to the east of Red Hall, Haughton and Great Burdon) was identified for about 250 dwellings from 2021 to 2026 last year, as part of the wider development of the area as a new neighbourhood after 2026. Developers are keen to bring forward this land for development earlier, and if they did so, it could deliver about 600 new homes in the plan period, making a significant contribution to meeting the overall housing requirement. This accords with the Core Strategy that allows this, when the amount of new housing being built is falling below targets. The developers are preparing an overall masterplan for the area and are expected to undertake pre-application consultations on it before consultations are carried out on the draft revised policy being considered in this report.
32. Consideration was also given as to whether the development of land at the North West Urban Fringe could be brought forward. This is now a possibility, alongside continuing development for a further four years or so at neighbouring West Park.

However, a link road between Newton Lane and Edward Pease Way is required before development can commence, and this link is recognised as being of strategic importance within the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan. Therefore, no changes are proposed that the amount and timing of new housing at the North West Urban Fringe, but in response to consultation feedback, a commitment is made to involve local people, at both the West Park and Jedburgh Drive ends of the scheme, in further work to develop the masterplan for this area, including as part of this proposed consultation.

### **Sites no longer being proposed as new housing allocations**

33. As a result of consultation response and further information available, it is proposed that the draft housing allocations for the following sites that were identified in the Making and Growing Places Preferred Options document last year be deleted:

- (a) Ha13, Land at Carmel School - this is difficult to deliver acceptably, as access would be across school playing field and through the main school entrance, and the site itself had more significant ecological interest than first thought, reducing the developable area. These factors mean the benefits are unlikely to outweigh the costs of bringing this site forward during the plan period.
- (b) Ha12, Land at Glebe Road South – this needs to be retained as informal and ‘kickabout’ open space, to ensure that the standards of open space provision in this neighbourhood are comparable with other areas of the town, taking account of the additional pressure on open space generated by recent and proposed new housing in the area, e.g. at Glebe Road North and Lime Avenue Open Space;
- (c) Ha16, East of A167, opposite White Horse – this is unlikely to be delivered as the housebuilder with an interest in this site has indicated that it is too small to be brought forward on its own, and should be considered as part of a wider area of land to the east and north.

34. It is also proposed that a number of other small sites are deleted, where sites have planning permission and schemes are expected to be completed within the next year. These include sites like Buxton Moor/Emley Moor and the former Harrowgate Hill Infants School.

### **Modest urban fringe extensions**

35. The adopted Core Strategy (Policy CS10) allows modest numbers of new dwellings to be brought forward at the urban fringe to ensure that new house building is brought back up to the level required if not enough is being built. At its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February, Cabinet decided to release part of Council owned land at Muscar House Farm in the Whinfield area for about 90 new homes to help ensure that more new housing is built quickly (Minute C111(2), 2014 refers).

### **Additional urban fringe greenfield housing allocations: the need and options**

36. If all the sites identified from the sources outlined above came forward, there would still be a shortfall of land for about 150 new homes. The likely timing and build out programmes for each site also suggest that further provision of at least 50-150 new

homes is needed to ensure that there will be a continuous five year + 5% supply of suitable, available and deliverable sites throughout the plan period. Furthermore, if there is only one builder on a site, only 50 dwellings are likely to be delivered in any one year, less in the current market conditions. Also, some sites that are identified may have the capacity to continue delivering new homes beyond the plan period.

37. Previous work underpinning the draft housing allocations policy (MGP16) published last year, and the Core Strategy before that, indicate that the North Darlington area is the most suitable and sustainable urban fringe location for new housing development after the North West Urban Fringe and the Eastern Urban Fringe. It has also become apparent, as a result of public and other consultations and the latest population projections, that a new primary school and nursery will be needed in this area to accommodate the needs arising from new housing, and that highway works will be needed to mitigate the traffic impact. The amount of new development that this location can accommodate in total should be no more than about 400 new homes, so as to remain below the scale of development being proposed at the strategic development locations. This is to avoid undermining the adopted Core Strategy, and the opportunities for challenge that could result.
38. The best option would therefore be to identify further modest extensions at the urban fringe that are capable of delivering:-
- (a) about 350 new homes; and
  - (b) land capable of accommodating a 315 place primary school and a 26 place nursery, and some funding to help support the delivery of a 210 place primary school; and
  - (c) a form of development and associated highway works and improvements to bus, cycling and walking networks that results in the least traffic impact on key arteries in the area, such as the A167 and the A1150.
39. Taking into account the above, two main options have emerged:
- Option A** - allocate land to the south of Burtree Lane and to the east of Whessoe Road for new housing and a new primary school, and retain the draft Ha2 (land to the north of White Horse) allocation. Taking into account the reservation of 1.72 ha of land for a new primary school and nursery and safeguarding of great crested newts on the southern part of the site, these sites could deliver about 380 new homes.
- Option B** – allocate an enlarged area of land to the north of White Horse Pub/Hotel, capable of accommodating about 370 new homes and a new primary school and nursery, and delete the proposed allocation Ha5 (south of 22-24 Burtree Lane).
40. Those acting for the landowners and potential developers of both options above have indicated their willingness to provide land for a new primary school, but further discussions on financing are still needed.
41. A summary of Options A and B compared with the Preferred Option proposed for the Harrowgate Hill area in the Making and Growing Places last year is provided in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Options considered for accommodating new housing in Harrowgate Hill area**

SITES INCLUDED	OPTION A	OPTION B	MGPPPO
<b>Sites within urban area</b>			
Glebe Road North	Now coming forward with HCA funding for 34	Now coming forward with HCA funding for 34	23
Glebe Road South	x	x	28
Land at Lime Avenue	14	14	x
<b>Total dwellings</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Urban fringe sites</b>			
Ha5: south of 22-24 Burtree Lane	300	X	50
Other land south of Burtree Lane		x	
Ha2: North of White Horse Pub/Hotel	80	<b>370</b>	80
Further land north of White Horse Hotel/Pub	x		
Ha16: East of A167, opposite White Horse	x	x	20
Suitably located land for a new 315 place school and 26 place nursery	√	√	x
School place comments	Four landowners and a housebuilder are working together to bring forward the land south of Burtree Lane. They have indicated that land for a new school could be provided in lieu of Section 106 contributions (about £3000/house).	Two housebuilders and a developer control land north of the White Horse Hotel/Pub. They have gained Board level approval in principle to deliver a primary school on the site, subject to further discussions on financing.	Additional school places would have to be provided at existing schools elsewhere in the town, as those nearest are full.
Traffic/transport comments	Would be accessed off Burtree Lane and Whessoe Road, allowing bus penetration of the site. Further transport assessment work is required.	Would require a new access off the A167 as well as access of Burtree Lane, but this arrangement would facilitate bus penetration of the site. Further transport assessment work is required.	Traffic impacts would be mitigated with improvements to Burtree Lane and junction with the A167.
<b>Total dwellings</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Total no. of new homes</b>	<b>About 430</b>	<b>About 420</b>	<b>c.200</b>

42. Other options that have been considered and dismissed are as follows:

**Option C** – allocating land at Elm Tree Farm and Sparrow Hall Drive Open Space, and retaining Ha2 and Ha5 to deliver about 310 new homes. Whilst land at Elm Tree Farm showed similar levels of suitability for new housing development as the part of Muscar House Farm that the Council has resolved to dispose of for housing,

and the suitability of Ha2 and Ha5 have already been established, this option does not provide the land to deliver the new primary school that would be needed.

**Option D** – allocating land to the east of the A167, as well as retaining the draft allocations of Ha2 (north of White Horse Pub/Hotel) and Ha5 (south of 22-24 Burtree Lane), which would deliver about 250 new homes. This option has been dismissed, mainly because it does not provide the land to deliver the new primary school that would be needed, the traffic impact on to the highway network is likely to be harder to resolve, and because the land is in several ownerships, with no evidence of co-ordination to deliver.

43. Allocating the remainder of Muscar House Farm was also considered, but it was concluded that it should not be allocated for housing at this time, because sites at Harrowgate Hill are preferable in relation to the provision of school places. It is proposed that this Council owned land be held in reserve so that it can be considered for disposal for new housing should there be a need to respond quickly to any unforeseen shortfall in the supply of new housing land in the future.
44. Consideration was also given to allocating the DFAM land at Neasham Road. Whilst the Council is 'minded to grant' planning permission for new housing here as enabling development for the relocation of the cattle mart, because the land is physically isolated from the rest of the main urban area and is remote from shops, services and main areas of employment, it is not proposed as a housing allocation.
45. Because the planning and deliverability considerations for options A and B are so finely balanced, and because discussions with parties with land interests are still at an early stage, it is proposed that public consultations be carried out on both, on an 'either/or' basis. The advantages of this approach are that it will enable the promoters of the sites to better understand and respond to the public's concerns about potential new development, and to provide more time for further discussions with officers about the deliverability and viability of each option. It will also avoid the need for further consultations on housing sites before the pre-submission draft is prepared, and so avoid further delay to the plan preparation programme.
46. As essential infrastructure, delivering a new school will be a key item for discussion and negotiation going forward, and the relative contributions that can be made by the gift of land, planning obligations and Council funding and the timing of delivery need to be established. Developer contributions for school places (set out in the Council's Planning Obligations SPD) could amount to up to £3055 per dwelling from all private housing sites in North Darlington, but the amount that would be available to the Council through basic need funding from the Government is uncertain and unlikely to fill the funding gap.
47. The location of a new school within the area will also be important, as it will need to be as accessible as possible to those it is intended for, and to avoid the Council incurring home to school transport costs.

## Sites on the Edge of Villages

48. Some consultation responses were received suggesting that sites should be identified in or on the edge of villages to provide a range and choice of sites. Consideration has been given to this, but it was concluded that identifying the limited additional amounts of land at the urban fringe was a more sustainable option than distribution provision across sites in less preferable locations. A key consideration was the provision of school places, as schools in all of the larger villages are at capacity.
49. Notwithstanding the above, Middleton St. George and Low Dinsdale Parish Councils have together just started to prepare a neighbourhood plan, and this may or may not lead to the identification of a new site(s) for housing there, which could provide an additional contribution to meeting the Borough's housing requirement.

### **Durham Tees Valley Airport**

50. Following the publication of the draft airport masterplan in autumn 2013, there is the potential for about 400 new homes to come forward there. However, as the location is not one identified in the Core Strategy as a priority for the development of new housing, and because it may only be acceptable if it was justified as 'enabling development', it is not proposed to allocate land at the airport for new housing; if it does come forward and planning permission was granted, it would be treated as a windfall, and would contribute to the five year supply of deliverable land and to the range and choice of sites across the Borough.

### **Top-end Executive Housing**

51. This report does not deal with top-end executive housing. Further work is still underway to consider whether the consultation responses and new information available requires the draft MGP policy to be changed. This will be brought to a future Cabinet meeting, scheduled for mid-July.

### **Financial Implications**

52. The additional consultations proposed can be met within existing budgets. Expenditure for a Public Examination in 2015/16 has already been identified.
53. As mentioned in paragraph 46 above, sum of over £1million is likely to be needed to support the delivery of a new primary school and nursery. This capital sum would be in addition to any developer contributions and basic need funding that the Council might receive. This has not been identified in the current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), and could be a significant pressure in future years.

### **Legal Implications**

54. This Revised Preferred Option has been prepared and the consultation proposed to fulfil the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as they apply to local plan making prior to preparing a pre-submission Publication Draft.

## **Corporate Landlord Advice**

55. The proposed revised housing sites portfolio includes several Council owned sites within it, all of which have now have Council agreed resolutions to dispose in place. Disposals of these sites for new housing will generate capital receipts, and the completion of new homes on these sites will generate additional revenue for the Council in the future, in the form of New Homes Bonus and Council Tax receipts, all of which have been taken into account in the current MTFP.

## **Consultations**

56. This revised preferred option takes into account comments received during the consultation carried out on the preferred options last year, and which were reported to Place Scrutiny Committee in December. A summary of all the comments received and responses is available to view on the Council's website. There was also further consultation with landowners and potential developers regarding the suitability availability and achievability of specific potential housing sites as part of work to update the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment in autumn 2013.
57. It is proposed that targeted public and other consultations be carried out so that those with an interest in the proposed new sites and the proposed deletions have the same opportunity to comment as those interested in the initial draft portfolio of housing sites put forward in the Making and Growing Places Preferred Options document last June. Subject to Cabinet's agreement, these will be carried out for six weeks from mid/late May 2014. Public drop-in events will be held as near as possible to the locations where new housing is proposed, as well as in the town centre. Also, to ensure that everyone affected has the chance to have their say, publicity of the consultation and the dates and times of drop-in events will be by post to the properties nearest the sites identified, and through the June issue of Darlington Together, the Council's website and other local media.

## **Sustainability appraisal and equalities impact assessment**

58. Work is underway to complete the sustainability assessment of this revised preferred option and to assess the relative sustainability of all the sites considered. This will be available and published in time for the consultations. There is a risk that the sustainability appraisal may not reach the same conclusions about what should be the preferred housing allocations. If this occurs, this will have to be considered and addressed before the next stage of plan preparation, and could result in more representations at a later stage than would otherwise be made, unless good reasons for deviating from the SA findings are put forward.
59. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQA) was carried out on the Making and Growing Places Preferred Options last year. Regarding housing, it identified that new housing development could potentially have a positive impact on the elderly, through the provision of more suitable accommodation, and as the total amount of new housing to be provided is the same in this report, this would not change. However, the alteration to the distribution of proposed housing land set out in this report, particularly the reduced housing numbers proposed in the town centre fringe and at Central Park could mean that a smaller proportion of the total housing that

will come forward will be highly accessible to town centre shops, services and employment, which could disproportionately affect people on low incomes, people with disabilities and the elderly. The policy approach has sought to minimise the effect of this, by including access to public transport, cycling and walking networks as one of the criteria governing site selection; for example, sites like land to the south of Burtree Lane have been identified over other options in part because of the opportunities the likely form of development presents for bus penetration into the site.

60. A full updated EQA will be carried out once revised preferred options for all the local plan themes have been agreed, and this will inform the preparation of the pre-submission draft Making and Growing Places document later this year.

### **Next Steps**

61. Because of the need for this further consultation, and to allow for any further consultations on policy changes needed to reflect the findings of ongoing studies, e.g. for the town centre and retailing, the Draft Making and Growing Places document is now likely to be presented to Cabinet to get agreement to publish a pre-submission draft in November, with final adoption anticipated by end of 2015. Further details on this programme will be in the Local Development Scheme Report which will be presented to the next Cabinet meeting.