
**DARLINGTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
DESIGN OF NEW DEVELOPMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor John Williams, Economy Portfolio
Responsible Director - Richard Alty Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration)**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report outlines the content and highlights some of the key issues that are addressed in the Darlington Local Development Framework (LDF) Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document (Design SPD). It seeks Cabinet's agreement to the contents of the document and for public and other consultations to be carried out on the document.

Summary

2. Following consideration of the consultation responses received in respect of the High Quality Design workshops and the LDF: Issues and Options earlier this year as well as to One Darlington: Perfectly Placed and further detailed work, a Design SPD has now been prepared. Providing further detail and clarification on several Local Plan policies, the document sets out draft design guidance to guide the future location, form and type of new development in the Borough. Once finalised and adopted, it will carry considerable weight in making decisions on planning applications.
3. The Design SPD sets out general design guidance for movement, community safety, sustainability, green infrastructure and public space, and heritage and local distinctiveness. It provides a zone map for the Borough with accompanying design codes which set out detailed design guidance for a range of issues such as density, height, built form, relationship to the public realm and materials.
4. Publication of the document and carrying out public and other consultations on it will be important steps towards fulfilling the regulatory requirements for preparing a LDF Design SPD.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that the Local Development Framework Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document be agreed as the basis for carrying out public and other consultations, in line with regulatory requirements and the Council's commitments to community engagement set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

Reasons

6. The recommendation is supported to fulfil the regulatory requirements of Local Development Framework document preparation.

Richard Alty
Assistant Chief Executive, Regeneration

Background Papers

- (i) Darlington Local Development Framework Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document January 2009
- (ii) Darlington Local Development Framework Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document Sustainability Appraisal January 2009
- (iii) Darlington Local Development Framework Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document Habitats Regulation Assessment January 2009
- (iv) Darlington Local Development Framework Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document Equalities Impact Assessment January 2009

Karen Johnson: Extension 2047

S17 Crime and Disorder	Crime and Disorder is a specific theme (Promoting Community Safety) considered in the Design SPD, and is supplemented by detailed design guidance on Safety and Security for new development.
Health and Well Being	The Design SPD contains general and detailed design guidance for matters such as green infrastructure, sustainable transport provision, new housing for all and environment protection that will encourage and enable people to lead more active lifestyles and improve health and well being.
Sustainability	Improving Sustainability is a key theme of the Design SPD; sustainable building standards are set out and detailed guidance is provided on appropriate energy efficiency and microgeneration. A sustainability appraisal has informed the preparation of the Design SPD and will be published alongside it. A Habitats Regulation Assessment has also been carried out.
Diversity	An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the Design SPD, and a Disabilities Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken during the consultation period for the Design SPD.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	Preparation of the Design SPD and the proposed consultations on it have and will be achieved within the revenue budget allocated to the Local Development Framework for 2008/09.
Key Decision	Yes.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision. The Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee will have had an opportunity to consider and make comments on the Design SPD at its meeting on 6 November.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The LDF Design SPD is the spatial expression of the design elements of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed.

MAIN REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the content of the draft Local Development Framework (LDF) Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document (the Design SPD), highlighting the proposed approach for securing high quality design in the Borough, and seeking Members' views on the content of the draft document.
2. The aim of the draft SPD is to influence and significantly raise the standard of design to help create a high quality, distinctive, safe and sustainable built and natural environment for Darlington's residents and those who wish to visit or invest in the Borough.

Context

3. The LDF will guide the development and use of land in Darlington. One of its more detailed policy documents will be the Design SPD, providing further detail and clarification on several saved Local Plan policies:
 - (a) General design policies that apply to all forms of development (Policies E1, E10, E14, E25, E29, E46, R1, T13 and T24); and
 - (b) Criteria based policies where design is one element of the policy, relating to particular buildings or environments, or to a specific form of development (Policies E7-E9, E12, E15, E23-E24, E38, E42, E45, E49, H7, H11-H12, EP6, R7 and R13).

Once adopted by the Council, the Design SPD will carry considerable weight in making decisions on planning applications.

4. The draft Design SPD is closely linked to the themes in One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. It will help develop locally distinctive, sustainable, safe, accessible neighbourhoods with a good range of local facilities, which were strongly identified as being important to the community during the consultation process, and which have been reflected in its vision, its themes and associated work strands.
5. The content also reflects the approach taken in the draft LDF Core Strategy, (presented to Cabinet on 7th October), particularly policy CS2 Promoting Good Quality, Sustainable Design and the adopted Open Space Strategy. Some design matters, such as sustainable transport measures and biodiversity provision, where appropriate, may be sought through planning obligations. These will be identified in the forthcoming Planning Obligations SPD.
6. The Design SPD will also elaborate on relevant national, regional and local plans and strategies that have been published since the Local Plan's adoption in 1997. These include government guidance, for example, Manual for Streets and the Code for Sustainable Homes, and the recently published Regional Spatial Strategy.

Outcome of Consultation

7. Many of the comments made on the LDF Core Strategy: Issues and Options report and to One Darlington: Perfectly Placed identified the need to maintain local character and distinctiveness in the development process. Several attendees from the five High Quality Design Workshops that were held during June-July 2008 have provided numerous photographs and supporting information of the key design characteristics of their local neighbourhood or village. Taken together, this has helped inform the draft Design SPD.

Sustainability Appraisal

8. It is a regulatory requirement that a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) are carried out when developing a supplementary planning document. Initial work indicates that in general, the content of the Design SPD scored positively against sustainability appraisal objectives recognising that the promotion of a higher standard of design should have a positive economic, social and environmental effect on the Borough and further afield. It should:
 - a) enhance the economic value of a new development
 - b) provide a safer environment for the community
 - c) promote a higher standard of sustainable development
 - d) generate health benefits for the community through more functional spaces
 - e) produce improved quality homes generating a higher standard of living
 - f) improve air and water quality in the long term
9. The findings outlined above, together with further recommendations of the sustainability appraisal will need to be taken into account when finalising the Design SPD.

Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document: Approach

10. The draft Design SPD sets out the new approach for significantly improving the quality of design in the Borough. It has drawn on all the matters considered under the 'Context' section above. The findings of the sustainability appraisal, habitats regulation assessment and equalities impact assessment have also been taken into account.
11. The Design SPD sets out two distinct but reinforcing elements:
 - a) General design guidance; and
 - b) A zoned approach to detailed design guidance.
12. Firstly, all new development must be consistent with adopted planning policies for the Borough. Then, under this new approach, the Council will expect all new development to accord with the general design guidance. By identifying the zone their development falls within, developers will then be able to apply the design code, using the appropriate design solution(s) for that zone from the detailed design guidance.

Design Codes

13. Design codes are promoted by the Government to deliver better quality development, particularly in areas where this may have been lacking in the past. The design code for Darlington provides a positive statement about the particular qualities of Darlington's neighbourhoods and villages that have been identified as being important to achieving good quality design and to reinforce local distinctiveness. It is a distinct form of detailed design guidance comprising a set of specific written and visual design standards that would provide a quality development for a particular zone in the Borough. The code also includes sustainability measures and biodiversity standards to ensure attractive, walkable and distinctive neighbourhoods are created. For each zone, appropriate guidance for a range of matters including density, height, built form, relationship to the public realm and materials are specified. But the code does not establish the overall outcome, providing scope for innovative and distinctive design.
14. Design codes have many benefits. Not only do they lead to improved quality development, they reflect the local distinctiveness of a neighbourhood or village and promote safety and sustainability, which could see the design of new development receiving more support from the local community. They also provide more certainty and a level playing field for developers to operate within. By creating a positive sense of place and better quality design the code can enhance the economic value of a new development.
15. This new approach ensures that, for any given location, developers have strong, consistent guidance within a regulatory framework in which to deliver high quality, safe and sustainable development, but which also reinforces the principles outlined in the general design guidance, appropriate to the location and density of the development.
16. The remainder of this report will demonstrate how the Design SPD will raise the standard of design in the Borough. A copy of the draft Design SPD is attached (**Appendix 1**).

General Design Guidance

17. Developers are expected to submit designs that positively incorporate the general design guidance. Five, interlinked themes have been identified which set out general design principles and good practice:
 - a) Improving Movement
 - b) Promoting Community Safety
 - c) Achieving Sustainability
 - d) Integrating Green Infrastructure and Public Space
 - e) Reflecting Heritage and Local Distinctiveness

Improving Movement

18. This theme sets out the key design principles to ensure new development provides for permeable, safe, inclusive, movement networks that promote ease of safe access for everyone, particularly to local shops and services whether by private car or by walking, cycling or public transport.

19. It is proposed that cul de sacs of more than 5 dwellings should be discouraged. This will promote permeable streets, easily accessible by everyone. Small cul de sacs will also ensure overlooking is promoted; it will become more noticeable when people are present who do not belong there.
20. Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 1997, sustainable transport use has gained a more prominent role, particularly in Government Guidance, Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 and the Manual for Streets. The draft Design SPD sets out the new maximum car parking standards for the Tees Valley, which have been designed to operate alongside complementary travel plan initiatives and sustainable transport provision. This approach will provide a consistent, transparent basis for parking provision across the sub region. Continuing the current approach, minimum standards will be adopted by each local authority in the Tees Valley.
21. Under this new approach, car parking standards for residential development remain unchanged, but the draft Design SPD does propose using a combination of allocated and unallocated parking spaces, particularly in new residential development. This should help reduce the potential for on street commuter parking, ensuring residents have sufficient space to park their cars.
22. Many of the maximum car parking standards for non residential development, have been lowered slightly, compared to those previously set out in the adopted Local Plan. For example, new offices (up to 2500m² gross floor area) will provide 1 space per 35m² instead of 1 space per 30m², previously. Primary schools will provide 0.8 spaces per full time teaching staff compared to 1 space previously.
23. These new standards will ensure that new development provides a package of transport measures to meet the needs of the whole community. Whilst the new standards will continue to ensure that an appropriate level of high quality, safe, car parking will be provided at all non residential development to meet the needs of those who wish to or need to use a car, they recognise the needs of those members of the community who do not have access to a car or who wish to travel by sustainable transport to work, school or leisure. Also reflecting this, new cycle parking standards have been included.

Promoting Community Safety

24. Creating well-designed, safe places that promote community safety is an important theme that runs through the draft Design SPD and will also address a key aspiration of the SCS, to make the community feel safer in their environment. The design of new development has a significant role to play in reducing crime and the fear of crime and anti social behaviour, particularly when coordinated with measures implemented through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and other organisations such as the Durham Constabulary. The draft SPD provides a comprehensive, robust policy framework to ensure designing out crime can be integrated into new development at an early stage whilst recognising the features of the locality.

25. It is important to create a balance between community safety and good, distinctive design. As such, the draft SPD proposes the use of high quality crime prevention techniques and security measures which do not result in a loss of architectural style or amenity. The document expects developers to create buildings and spaces that are well lit, with good natural surveillance that encourages the community to have more perceived ownership of the area. The use of shutters, gates and window bars as well as the use of CCTV alongside secure doors, windows and locks may be incorporated where appropriate in new development.
26. The document also sets out good design principles to encourage the safe use of the Borough's roads and streets. For example, shared surfaces can encourage more use by pedestrians and cyclists, increasing the presence of people on the streets, which can create greater natural surveillance. In addition, to reduce the potential for accidents, the speed of traffic should be slowed through good design and not through overly engineered measures. To reinforce all these measures, the draft Design SPD requires developers to incorporate the principles of the UK Police Initiative; Secured by Design in all new developments.

Achieving Sustainability

27. Achieving sustainability is a significant element of the new Design SPD and will help Darlington become a 'low carbon Borough' by 2016. Well located, high quality design with efficient operation can reduce consumption and emissions of CO₂; thus promoting sustainable development with a low environmental impact, and maximum economic and social gains.
28. Following the mandatory requirement for all new residential development to meet the requirements of the Government's Code for Sustainable Homes, and the RSS requirement for non residential development to meet the BREEAM 2008 Standards, the draft Design SPD sets out the sustainable building standards required from new development:
 - A. Residential development for 2010-2016 as:
 - 2010-2013: Code for Sustainable Homes rating 3-4
 - 2014-2015: Code for Sustainable Homes rating 5-6
 - 2016: Code for Sustainable Homes rating 6
 - B. Non residential development:
 - 2010-2016: BREEAM 2008 standards 'very good-outstanding'

In addition, all major developments should aim to provide at least 10% of energy from on site renewable sources, consistent with the RSS.

29. To achieve these standards, the draft Design SPD encourages developers to incorporate integrated sustainable design, using a combination of design approaches, such as passive solar design, sustainable drainage systems and waste minimisation alongside renewable energy generation. The document sets out a flexible approach to renewable energy, recognising that technologies should be appropriate to the size, scale and density of the development. It is anticipated that, with an increased demand, over time, technologies will become more cost efficient and pay for themselves.

30. Developers may argue that these standards are not achievable or cost effective. But in reality many energy efficient principles such as passive solar design and renewable energy technologies can be incorporated from the inception stage of a scheme, at little extra cost. This integrated approach will generate a variety of sustainability benefits and will increase the adaptive capacity of the development, whilst ensuring associated maximum social and economic benefits are generated for the occupier of the development and in the long term the wider community.
31. To reinforce this approach, the document requires all developers to submit a Sustainability Statement as part of a planning application. This will show how the developer has achieved the appropriate sustainable building standards and renewable energy targets.

Integrating Green Infrastructure and Public Space

32. Green infrastructure and public spaces that are designed to a high standard and have a function are more likely to be well used safely and make a positive contribution to the environment, enhancing biodiversity and sustainability. Whilst the Borough has a wide range of green and public spaces, not all are high quality or accessible to the whole community. The draft Design SPD provides an opportunity to positively address deficiencies in the quality and accessibility of the network, as well as reinforcing links with the existing network.
33. In those circumstances where there is an identified need for additional green infrastructure or public space, for example to improve access to the existing network or to serve a major development, or where developers are required to contribute to improvements to open space in the locality, the draft Design SPD sets out guidance to provide safe, inclusive, functional spaces, that are accessible by sustainable transport. In particular, good practice principles for children's play areas and spaces for young people's recreation are incorporated to ensure all children and young people have access to safe spaces for enjoyment and active recreation. This approach will not only enhance the environment but will generate health benefits for the whole community.
34. The design of green infrastructure and public space should also promote biodiversity through trees, planting and natural features, which can help promote mental well being for the community as well as additional sustainability benefits. Minimum standards for habitat creation are specified for each zone. Whilst these may seem prescriptive, these do not necessarily have to be large scale; developers are encouraged to creatively use the space in a development and incorporate features like bird boxes and bat roosts, at little extra cost. Other measures, such as green roofs and sustainable drainage systems will also provide sustainability benefits and could be incorporated to meet the requirements of the sustainable building standards or as part of open space provision for the development.

Reflecting Heritage and Local Distinctiveness

35. Darlington has a rich and varied architectural townscape and landscape heritage which helps to create its distinctive character. Its local distinctiveness arises from its varied features, within its different neighbourhoods and villages, such as intensity of development and specific building materials and details.

36. The draft Design SPD promotes the reuse and/or adaptation of existing locally historic buildings, where practicable. It is important that these buildings, regardless of their status are preserved and reused to help reinforce local distinctiveness and the character of a neighbourhood or village. For example, the beneficial and appropriate use of a large period property set in its own grounds would override its use as previously developed land for new residential development. This approach reflects the strong community views made as part of the consultation for the Core Strategy: Issues and Options and One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, that local distinctiveness, particularly in the older parts of the urban area and in the villages, should be conserved.
37. Developers are expected to reflect distinctiveness in new design, for traditional as well as for contemporary buildings. Creative and innovative design is not discouraged; the design code can deliver successful high quality, innovative and contemporary development as well as traditional design. The detailed guidance will set out key design characteristics that are vital to get right in a particular neighbourhood or village, encouraging designers to creatively and positively address those elements identified as crucial to that place. This should discourage designers from producing a standard design that has been used elsewhere.
38. However, under exceptional circumstances, where a design response is not appropriate to a zone and its design code, it will be considered where the developer can demonstrate that an alternative design would provide a higher quality, safe, sustainable design.
39. The draft Design SPD also provides guidance for development on the edge of the built up areas, the villages and in the countryside. Where this is appropriate, the design must be of an exceptionally high standard reflecting not only the character of the built environment but also its landscape setting, which it should enhance.

A Zoned Approach to Detailed Design Guidance

40. The zoned approach to detailed design guidance is based on the characteristics identified as being important to that place and the findings of the design workshops. Using townscape patterns, detailed design characteristics and built features, the Borough has been split into seven zones on the Darlington Zone Map (see **Appendix 1**):

- Zone 1: Town Centre
- Zone 2: Town Centre Fringe
- Zone 3: Inner Suburban
- Zone 4: Outer Suburbs
- Zone 5: Rural Area
- Zone 6: Employment Zone
- Zone 7: Transport Node and Local Services

41. For each zone, design codes containing detailed design guidance have been produced for:
 - a. Summary
 - b. Safety and Security
 - c. Corners
 - d. Frontage Treatment
 - e. Entrances
 - f. Openings

- g. Rooflines
- h. Details and Decoration
- i. Sustainable Drainage
- j. Energy Efficiency and Microgeneration
- k. Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure
- l. Landscaping
- m. Open Space
- n. Materials, Roof Materials and Landscape Materials
- o. Numerical Standards
- p. Village Design Standards

42. Developers are expected to apply the appropriate design solution(s) from the detailed guidance, according to the type of development and its location. Some solutions are requirements, but most are a series of appropriate options. This will produce a consistent approach to high quality design across the Borough, for the full range of detailed design issues, which may have been lacking previously. This will ensure that the design is distinctive and appropriate to Darlington.

Darlington Design Review Panel

43. Consistent with Government Guidance, the draft SPD proposes investigating the establishment of an independent Design Review Panel. This could help raise the awareness of the importance of good quality design in the Borough. To maximise its influence, the Panel would discuss the design implications of major or innovative development proposals at pre-application stage, prior to consideration by Planning Applications Committee. It would not have the formal status of a Council committee, but comments made would be reported to the Council's Planning Applications Committee. This may help the developer resolve design issues of concern prior to Committee.

The Requirements for Consultation

44. A programme of public and other consultations will be planned to take place on the Design SPD over a six week period during the spring. This will include public and stakeholder events, as well as the publication of all relevant technical documents and more easy to read summaries and leaflets. The consultation programme will be designed and carried out in accordance with the guiding principles set out in the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement in Planning.

Next Steps

45. Subject to Cabinet's agreement of the recommendations, public and other consultations will take place on the LDF Design SPD from early January to mid February. After that, the consultation responses will be considered and the SPD will be revised accordingly. Following that it is anticipated that the Council will be able to adopt the SPD by mid 2009.