

### 3. ACHIEVING A MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

#### 3.1 DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE

##### Context

3.1.1 In the adopted Core Strategy<sup>3.1</sup>, Darlington Town Centre, as defined on the Policies Map, is the first priority for development and regeneration activity in the Borough<sup>3.2</sup> and appears as the first centre in the hierarchy of centres<sup>3.3</sup>. It continues to be the primary retail centre in the borough and as such, a key location for other main town centre uses<sup>3.4</sup>, in line with national planning policy<sup>3.5</sup>.

3.1.2 To help realise the core strategy vision and objectives<sup>3.6</sup> a Draft Town Centre Development Strategy and Vision has recently been agreed<sup>3.7</sup>, and account also needs to be taken of the provisions in national policy<sup>3.8</sup>.

##### Issues

3.1.3 The main issues considered in developing proposals for the town centre were:

- how to continue the programme of town centre regeneration to meet modern day needs;
- establishing the scale and type of new development needs;
- considering suitable sites to meet the retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential needs identified within the town centre and at edge of centre (where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available);
- how Council owned land and premises in and around the town centre could be used to help unlock development, increase footfall and deliver public goods;
- how to retain and enhance the existing markets in Darlington<sup>3.9</sup>;
- making the most of town centre frontages onto the River Skerne;
- key pieces of evidence, including Darlington Retail Study (2008 and 2010 update), retail advice to Darlington Borough Council on potential supermarket developments in Darlington, the draft Town Centre Development Strategy and the outcome of consultation and engagement.

##### Identified needs

3.1.4 Capacity for a food supermarket of some 4,000m<sup>2</sup> gross, between 2016 and 2021 has been identified<sup>3.10</sup>, or by 2023 there may be sufficient capacity for a supermarket of some 6,000m<sup>2</sup> (mostly for food, but including some comparison goods). A qualitative need for another food supermarket in Darlington has also been identified. Taking into account the current vitality and viability of the town centre, this could be accommodated without any significant adverse impacts on the town centre or any other centres within Darlington, as a new supermarket would be likely to attract expenditure back into Darlington that currently goes to stores outside of the catchment area, e.g. in Bishop Auckland and Northallerton.

3.1.5 There is still demand for larger footprint fashion and other non-food retail units within Darlington Town Centre<sup>3.11</sup>, and work is continuing with the preferred developer of the Oval scheme at Commercial Street on how this can be delivered.

3.1.6 There is also a latent demand for about 3000m<sup>2</sup> of office use in the town centre, but not enough to fully occupy/pre-let a larger facility<sup>3.12</sup>. There is the possibility of public sector collaboration and this will require further work to be undertaken.

##### Options considered

3.1.7 The options considered are shown on **Figure 3.1.1**.

<sup>3.1</sup> Darlington Core Strategy (Adopted May 2011)

<sup>3.2</sup> Policy CS7 and CS8 of the Core Strategy

<sup>3.3</sup> Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy

<sup>3.4</sup> Main town centre uses are defined in the National Planning Policy Framework Annex 2, CLG 2012

<sup>3.5</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012

<sup>3.6</sup> Darlington Core Strategy, CS7 and strategic objectives in its Section 2

<sup>3.7</sup> Cabinet 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012 Minute C84(1)

<sup>3.8</sup> NPPF, paras 23-27

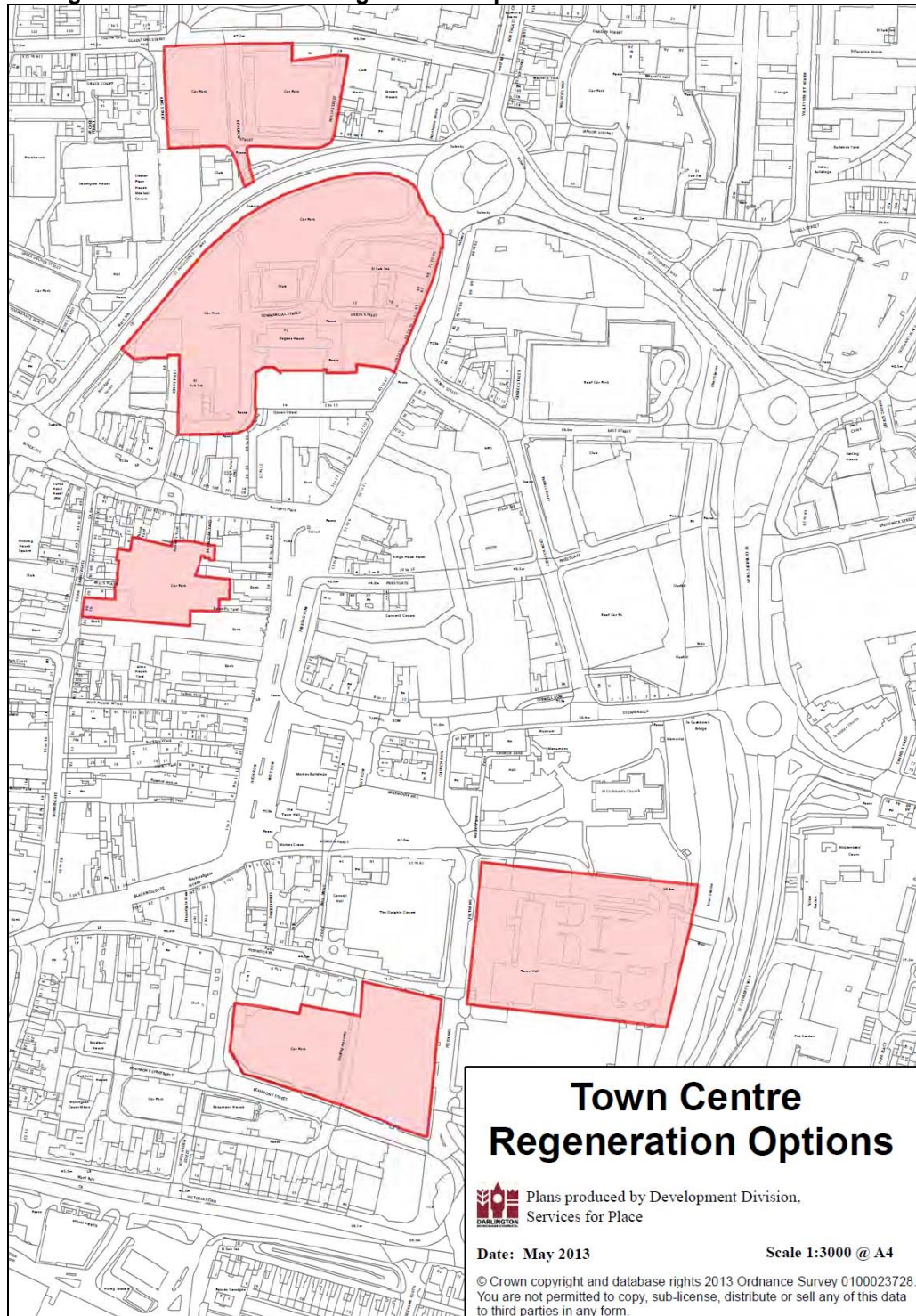
<sup>3.9</sup> The NPPF requires local planning authorities to retain existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones, ensuring that markets remain attractive and competitive.

<sup>3.10</sup> Retail Advice to Darlington Borough Council on Potential Supermarket Developments in Darlington (England & Lyle, Oct. 2012)

<sup>3.11</sup> Industry intelligence from liaison with developers

<sup>3.12</sup> Business Engagement Intelligence 2012

**Figure 3.1.1: Town Centre Regeneration Options**



3.13 Feethams  
Planning &  
Development Brief  
(DBC, 2008)

- 3.1.8 The Council owned land options considered were:
- a) *Feethams and Beaumont Street*: this is the residual land in this area<sup>3.13</sup> that is currently surface car parks, and is not included in the land required for the cinema, hotel and leisure development, which is due to open in 2014. Part of the land benefits from a riverside location and it is well connected to the main shopping areas. There are opportunities to add value to and change the image of the area, including improving access to it, improving its amenity and mitigating flood risk;
  - b) *Town Hall site*: this land is currently unavailable, but opportunities to release it may arise if shared accommodation with other public sector agencies can be

<sup>3.14</sup> Planning application ref. no. 06/00953/FULE and 10/00042/FUL

achieved for a reduced Council workforce.

- c) *Commercial Street*: the Oval development that was to occupy this site<sup>3.14</sup> has stalled due to the recent economic downturn, although the Council is still working with potential developers to realise a scheme in this area. It still has many advantages, being close to the larger floorspace comparison retail of the Cornmill Centre and Northgate, and with good access, straddling the inner ring road. The Core Strategy identifies the Commercial Street area as the first priority for a major, multi-unit, retail-led scheme, physically and functionally integrated with the primary shopping area, to be occupied mainly by comparison goods retailers, with a mix of uses to be encouraged as part of the scheme.
- d) *Abbots Yard*: this site is currently a surface car park, lying between High Row and Skinnergate.

3.1.9 Also considered were entirely or partly privately owned sites that could accommodate town centre uses:

- e) *Garden Street area*: the surface car park and neighbouring land and building. This has been subject to recent developer interest for a 4000m<sup>2</sup> food store. As it is outside the town centre, within the Town Centre Fringe, it is considered in Policy MGP4.
- f) *East Street*: building and associated car park (Sports Direct), whose river frontage and accessibility suggest greater potential, particularly for implementing a strategic green corridor running along the River Skerne<sup>3.15</sup>, to add value to and change the image of the area, including improving access to it, improving its amenity and mitigating flood risk.

<sup>3.15</sup> See Draft Policy MGP 24 Green Infrastructure

### **Preparing a Draft Policy – the Preferred Option**

3.1.10 Significant feedback was received on development options for the town centre, during a series of workshops and other consultation events in the town centre in Summer 2012. It was used to develop core principles to guide the future regeneration of the town centre and emerging policy. The headline principle is that 'a thriving town centre is a key priority, and maintaining a balance between different geographical areas is an important part of this'. Other principles to emerge were:

- *It is important to focus development in and around the town centre;*
- *any development proposal will have to have a range of uses;*
- *It is important to maintain and provide office accommodation in the town centre;*
- *Darlington's distinctive character must be protected and enhanced;*
- *The balance between different parts of the town centre needs to be considered when development takes place;*
- *It is important to support the markets as a key asset in terms of Darlington's heritage and future vitality;*
- *Transport policy and strategy must help Darlington thrive;*
- *The River Skerne is an important feature and is an opportunity for new public realm improvements.*

3.1.11 Engagement was also undertaken with the development industry, considering the public feedback and the development opportunities presented. This revealed that:

- *there may be potential for further leisure development in the town centre depending on the nature of any proposal;*
- *housing remains a depressed market although student accommodation and elderly residential housing may be viable;*
- *a supermarket or food store that has a positive impact on the town centre could help to realise the value required to deliver regeneration aspirations;*
- *multi-storey car parking could be funded commercially;*
- *there may be incentives for the low carbon refurbishment of the Town Hall and potential links with the Dolphin Centre;*

- *delivering some key infrastructure could release more council land and widen the scope of any development package;*
- *land values other than for retail remain depressed, and so may not generate enough direct receipts to fund the relocation of the Town Hall.*

<sup>3.16</sup>Darlington Town Centre Regeneration Strategy Part 1: Developing the Vision, Cherishing the assets (Dec. 2012)

- 3.1.12 The background work for the town centre development strategy<sup>3.16</sup>, the consultation responses<sup>3.17</sup> and the resultant core development principles underpin the identification in this policy of what type of development interventions are planned, and broadly where and when. Other studies, such as Darlington Retail Study 2008 and 2010, and Darlington Borough Council Retail Database have also been relied upon<sup>3.18</sup>.

<sup>3.17</sup>Cabinet report 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012: Town Centre Regeneration.

#### **Commercial Street: Non-food retail development**

- 3.1.13 There is still evidence of demand for larger footprint fashion and other non-food retail units that would have been the key offer of the Oval Shopping Centre, and the Council is currently in a Development Agreement to deliver such units on the site. The Oval site is one of the three regeneration focus points in the Council's Town Centre Vision. Although the permitted scheme is unlikely to be viable under current economic conditions, other ways of delivering a scheme there that allows linked trips with the existing town centre offer are being explored, potentially accommodating a realignment of the inner ring road. There are considered to be no other options for delivering major non-food retail development in the town centre.

<sup>3.18</sup>Darlington Retail Study 2008 and update 2010 (Martin Tonks) and 'Retail advice to DBC on potential supermarket developments in Darlington' (Oct. 2012, England & Lyle)

#### **Food Retail development**

- 3.1.14 The town centre development options work also established that there is no site currently available within the town centre that could accommodate a food store of the size likely to satisfy qualitative needs, and to clawback trade currently leaking outside of the borough. Areas outside of, but on the edge of the town centre, are therefore being investigated for this provision (see Policy MGP 4).

#### **Beaumont Street area: Office and leisure development**

- 3.1.15 The Core Strategy identifies the town centre as one of the first priority locations for office development<sup>3.19</sup>, recognising that this use can help boost pedestrian flows and retail trade, and can help make workplaces as accessible as possible. It indicates that after the Oval site, the first priority location for the development of major non-retail town centre uses in the borough will be other parts of the present town centre, including the Feethams / Beaumont Street area.

<sup>3.19</sup>See Darlington Core Strategy Policy CS7 (The Town Centre)

- 3.1.16 The Beaumont Street area is therefore the preferred location for further office development. Office and leisure development could be promoted there, capitalising on the cinema development and should be designed to allow linked trips with the existing town centre offer.

#### **Abbots Yard**

- 3.1.17 Abbots Yard could support a range of uses, but is currently a popular car park for people with disabilities, serving both the Skinnergate and High Row areas. It is not therefore being promoted for development at the current time, and while the Parking Strategy sets out how it will continue to operate as a car park, it also recognises that the site is a potential future development site.

#### **Markets**

- 3.1.18 Improvements and investment in the covered market are part of the agreed vision for the town centre. Work being led by Darlington Partnership is ongoing to bring forward a refurbishment project for the Covered Market that refreshes the vision and aspirations for this key town centre building; subject to a funded business plan, it could be delivered in the initial years of the plan period.

#### **Car Parking**

- 3.1.19 The conclusions above, regarding Beaumont Street and Abbots Yard are subject to

findings of complementary work on a Parking Strategy, to be consulted on alongside this document.

### **Other elements of the town centre vision**

- 3.1.20 The vision for the town centre, also established from the consultation work undertaken, includes continued support for the independent retail sector to the south and west of the town centre, including Grange Road and Coniscliffe Road. This will be achieved through continued working with the businesses in this part of the town to try to increase footfall and promote the offer of this sector. In conjunction with this, the Council will also work with the traders within Skinnergate and Duke Street to investigate the possibility of re-opening Skinnergate to vehicular traffic and integrating short stay on street parking, identified as significant issues by traders during the consultation.
- 3.1.21 Rationalisation / improvement of bus and coach facilities will also be undertaken, to improve access and further enhance the public realm in the pedestrian heart. This will initially involve investigating the needs of coach and bus users, the routes taken and facilities that could be required.
- 3.1.22 The town centre vision also aims to develop and encourage the evening economy and the cultural life of the town within the town centre. The implementation of the cinema and hotel development at Feethams should provide a kick start to this, boosting the evening economy in other parts of the town centre, for pubs, clubs, restaurants and cafes.

<sup>3.20</sup>Plan for Growth, Budget 2011, HM Treasury

<sup>3.21</sup>Allowable solutions are small, medium or large scale carbon-saving projects on or off site required to deliver carbon compliance.

<sup>3.21</sup>Revised Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document (DBC July 2011)

<sup>3.22</sup>Making and Growing Places Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal Report, DBC, April 2013

### **Renewable energy and high quality sustainable design**

- 3.1.23 All non residential development should achieve BREEAM 2011 standards 'very good-outstanding', from 2019 all development should be zero carbon. A combination of highly energy efficient design and development and renewable or low carbon technologies (see draft Policy MGP 33) is expected to deliver the majority of carbon savings on site, with 'allowable solutions'<sup>3.21</sup> being used to deliver any outstanding requirements.
- 3.1.24 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 guidance<sup>3.21</sup>.

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

- 3.1.25 The Sustainability Appraisal<sup>3.22</sup> generally found land options A and C to be the most sustainable, having positive economic, social and environmental impacts. It was considered that impacts such as increased traffic generation were outweighed by the accessibility of other forms of transport and the central locations of the sites. On the whole, no significant differences between the impacts of the two options were identified, as the areas they cover have similar characteristics in that they are in locations within or adjoining the town centre.
- 3.1.26 Taking into account all the matters outlined above, the findings of other background studies underpinning this document and the 'planning for real' exercises undertaken, the preferred option, comprising land options A and C, is expressed in draft Policy MGP2. It also reflects on-going work, indicates the initiatives the Council will develop and support to sustain town centre vitality and viability.

## **Draft Policy MGP 2: Darlington Town Centre**

*Development and regeneration of Darlington town centre will be promoted through the plan period to deliver the following:*

### **TC1 – Commercial Street**

*a) the Commercial Street area identified on the Policies Map, will be reserved for new comparison-led shopping development in the period 2016-2021, and to accommodate realigning of the inner ring road (see Policy MGP27). Development of the site will be required to achieve:*

- i) a range of larger footprint (300m<sup>2</sup> or above) comparison shopping units;*
- ii) design that takes account of the wider area, not just the site itself; and*
- iv) car parking provision at a level specified in the Parking Strategy.*

### **TC2 - Feethams**

*b) the Feethams area (2.15ha) as defined on the Policies Map, will be reserved for office and leisure development, and parking provision indicated in the Parking Strategy to be delivered in the period 2014-16. The development will be required to accord with an agreed planning brief for the site. Development of the site will be required to help complete part of the strategic green corridor along the River Skerne, creating new biodiverse greenspace, flood mitigation measures and cycling / walking routes (in accordance with the vision for the town centre fringe)*

*Development of both sites TC1 and TC2 will be required to be of a high quality design appropriate for a prominent town centre site, including public realm and a street frontage that allows good pedestrian access as a continuation of the existing primary shopping area. They should also achieve BREEAM 2011 standards 'very good-outstanding' or any successor; BREEAM Zero Carbon from 2019.*

*Development in the town centre should achieve at least 10% of predicted energy supply through on site provision of decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources of energy, including micro-generation, unless it can be shown that it is not feasible or viable.*

*The redevelopment of any sites adjacent to the River Skerne will be required to include the re-engineering of the River Skerne to a more natural form within a wider green corridor.*

*The Council will also undertake projects to:*

- a) improve and invest in the covered market and further develop the offer of the markets in general;*
- b) enhance the Skerne riverside at Feethams, in conjunction with any redevelopment of land at East Street;*
- c) provide continued support to the independent retail sector to the south and west of the town centre;*
- d) rationalise/ improve bus and coach facilities;*
- e) improve the accessibility, convenience and quality of car parking facilities;*
- f) develop the evening economy and the cultural life of the town, focussed on the town centre.*

## **Making it Happen**

- 3.1.27 Land use and planning actions will complement a programme of other actions to ensure that the town centre fulfils its potential. Specific projects include traffic management arrangements on Skinnergate and Duke Street, town centre car

parking and considering the relationship between the town centre and Town Centre Fringe, particularly the proposed green corridor along the River Skerne and alterations to the inner ring road. Specific proposals to address these matters will be included in this policy if the conclusions of ongoing work indicate a town centre land use/planning element is required.

- 3.1.28 The 'Darlington Town Centre Regeneration Strategy; Part 1: Developing the Vision', and accompanying report to Cabinet in December 2012 sets out how the Council and its partners will be supporting the development and regeneration of the town centre. It includes reinvesting capital receipts, producing action plans, strategies and business plans that will attract other funding sources, preparing planning briefs and other non-statutory plans, as necessary to guide the development of privately owned sites, and continuing public and other stakeholder engagement.

## 3.2 TOWN CENTRE FRINGE

### Context

- 3.2.1 The Core Strategy<sup>3.23</sup> identifies the Town Centre Fringe (the Fringe) as the third priority location for development and regeneration within the Borough (after the town centre and Central Park), with most development activity expected from 2016. The Fringe is an extensive area: over 70 hectares of land, buildings and roads, much of which is underused. It contains a mix of employment, residential, retail, leisure, car parking and sui-generis uses<sup>3.24</sup>, and much of area's housing is occupied by deprived households. The Town Centre Fringe is identified on the Policies Map<sup>3.25</sup>.

<sup>3.23</sup>Darlington Core Strategy, 2011, Policy CS1

<sup>3.24</sup> Uses outside of any use class, e.g. theatres, shops selling motor vehicles, retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, taxi businesses, amusement centres and casinos.

<sup>3.26</sup> A more limited area than the wider masterplan area –see darlington.gov.uk

<sup>3.26</sup>Policies CS1, CS5, CS7 and CS10

- 3.2.2 The Fringe has great potential - easy to get to by several modes of transport, close to the town centre, containing key buildings like the Civic Theatre and Bank Top Railway Station and other heritage assets, and with the River Skerne flowing through it. It is also very visible, from local roads and the East Coast Main Line. The Core Strategy recognised the potential of the area<sup>3.26</sup>, identifying it for 650 new homes, 17 hectares of general and mixed use employment, and an extension to Darlington Town Centre when it is needed. The River Skerne was also identified as a strategic green infrastructure corridor.

- 3.2.3 Before the area is able to contribute much more to the growth, prosperity and quality of life of Darlington, there are significant issues to overcome. These include managing flood risk, improving the highway network, changing the image of the area, tackling contamination and hazards, and improving connectivity across the inner ring road; considering the area comprehensively provides the best way to ensure that both public and private investment is made effectively and in a timely and co-ordinated manner.

<sup>3.27</sup>Town Centre Fringe Masterplan, DBC/EA/HCA, April 2013

- 3.2.4 A Town Centre Fringe masterplan<sup>3.27</sup> has recently been agreed by the Council, to be implemented during and beyond this plan period. More of the detail on the issues and options for this area have been developed and consulted upon during preparation of the masterplan. The purpose of this policy is to embed key elements of the masterplan in the statutory development plan, providing more certainty about how much and what type of development and interventions are planned, and broadly where and when.

### Developing the Preferred Options: Issues and Options Considered

- 3.2.5 Consultation feedback and analysis of technical reports allowed several key issues to be identified that need to be addressed to achieve successful development and regeneration across the Fringe as a whole. These are set out below, together with a summary of the options that were considered to address each, which option for each issue has been selected, and why.

<sup>3.28</sup>Flood Zone 3: areas of higher flood risk- see1Darlington Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2, JBA, 2010

### **Flood Risk**

3.2.6 Much of the Town Centre Fringe lies within Flood Risk Zone 3<sup>3.28</sup>, making it unsuitable for built development unless there are overriding sustainability reasons to do so, and appropriate flood management measures are put in place to reduce the risk to people and property. Some parts of the Fringe also have a high susceptibility to surface water flood risk<sup>3.28</sup>.

<sup>3.29</sup>Darlington Town Centre Fringe Flood Mitigation Strategy, JBA,

3.2.7 A number of different flood management measures have been modelled<sup>3.29</sup>. The preferred option, is the only acceptable option that allows the amount and locations for development proposed for the Fringe in this draft policy. It has several elements which would significantly reduce the flood risk to development sites and to existing properties including the emergency services, a highly vulnerable use<sup>3.30</sup>. All the elements outlined below will have to take place in the appropriate locations and at the right time, to satisfy the Environment Agency:

<sup>3.30</sup>As identified by the Technical Guidance to the NPPF, DCLG, 2012

1. create a widened green corridor, of about 9 hectares, either side of the River Skerne, to create additional flood storage and flatten the peak flood flow;
2. raise land required for new development and some roads either side of the Skerne;
3. provide a small flood wall or bund parallel to Chestnut Street and small sections of flood defences in other appropriate locations;
4. remove Russell Street Weir, to significantly reduce the flood risk from the Skerne;
5. incorporate appropriate sustainable drainage systems to reduce the risk of surface water flooding;
6. raise floor levels within some new development.

3.2.8 The southern part of the Fringe near the Town Centre is likely to be developed first. The flood management measures for this area can stand alone; some are likely to be integrated with modifications to the inner ring road (see paragraph 3.2.14), but most, including the green corridor, will need to be in place before development north of St. Cuthberts Way can take place.

3.2.9 Work is still ongoing to agree the detailed phasing and associated flood management works for specific sites, so that complementary objectives for the area can also be achieved.

### **Green Infrastructure**

<sup>3.31</sup>As identified by the emerging Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy, DBC, 2013

3.2.10 The existing river is within a heavily modified channel; buildings generally turn their back on it, access to and along it for people and wildlife is limited, and in places, it has been culverted. The river corridor is vital to enhancing the environment and image of the area, and could be the focus for greening the town centre fringe as a whole, contributing to the liveability and biodiversity of the area<sup>3.31</sup>.

3.2.11 Within the Fringe, there is only about 2.25ha of accessible quality open space for recreation, play and amenity. There are few opportunities for wildlife to establish itself between the more wildlife friendly areas of Rockwell Meadows and Victoria Embankment, to the north and south respectively. The creation of 9ha of accessible green space as part of flood management will improve access to quality open space, but another 0.4ha will need to be provided away from the river, to meet the needs of future residents.

3.2.12 The options considered were:

- (a) create a new green corridor to deliver flood management measures and undertake limited restoration work. This is the lowest cost option, but would miss the opportunity to realise the potential that a more attractive, green riverside environment could have on the image of the Town Centre Fringe as a whole;
- (b) create a new green corridor to deliver flood management measures, the priority



objectives of the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy and draft Policy MGP 24. This would recognise the importance of the river as a key green infrastructure asset, and use its presence to add value to the development of the area;

- (c) In addition to b), provide and improve appropriate accessible open space away from the river for informal recreation and play, and to improve connectivity for wildlife.

3.2.13 With low levels of open space overall, option c was considered to be the most appropriate, providing, retaining and improving as much open space as possible, and to enhance and connect spaces so that they become an important green infrastructure asset, linking Victoria Embankment and Rockwell for sustainable transport, recreation, play and biodiversity.

#### ***Transport, Connections and Movement***

3.2.14 The inner ring road and accesses to, from and through the Town Centre Fringe can suffer from peak hour congestion, which without change, could be made worse by the significant additional new development proposed in this plan. At the same time, the scale and form of the inner ring road cuts off the Fringe from the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists, reducing the attractiveness of the area and preventing expansion of town centre uses there<sup>3.32</sup>. The current road also has few frontages or street activity, but its alignment beside the River Skerne and the space it occupies means that any changes to that alignment are opportunities to improve local amenity and mitigate flood risk, e.g. by improving the green corridor along it.

<sup>3.32</sup>Darlington Core Strategy Policies CS7, CS19 and Darlington Connections Study, Urban Initiatives 2009

3.2.15 The proximity of the Fringe to the town centre means that the area lends itself to walking and cycling use, as well as public transport use, but the scale of development proposed will also require improvements to the local road network.

3.2.16 The options considered to address these issues were:

- (a) do nothing, which would result in further congestion and unaltered pedestrian movements, stifling development and continuing to present the Fringe in a poor light; or
- (b) signalise several existing roundabout junctions and modify the route of the inner ring road alongside other strategic interventions to support this. Also, develop a web of local routes through the Fringe, including routes for pedestrians and cyclists, focussed on a new linear riverside park. This would minimize delay, help achieve consistent journey times through the area, provide more attractive, convenient and direct pedestrian/cycle accesses across the ring road, and achieve more travel into the heart of the Fringe, increasing the visibility of the investment opportunity; or
- (c) modify the path of the inner ring road and/or bury it to create new public realm and development opportunities. This option would be very costly, due to flood risk and groundwater in the area, and would only address movement issues in part of the Fringe.

3.2.17 Option b) is therefore the preferred option. Further detail on what this could entail for particular junctions and areas is set out in the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan<sup>3.33</sup>. Options for car parking to meet the needs of new development and some of the strategic needs of the town centre are being developed through the Council's emerging Car Parking Strategy, a draft of which will be consulted upon later this summer.

<sup>3.33</sup> DBC/HCA/EA April 2013.

#### ***Historic Environment and Heritage***

3.2.18 The area contains a wealth of historic buildings, including the listed Civic Theatre and Bank Top Station. On the area's northern boundary is the scheduled Skerne Bridge, the oldest working railway bridge in the world, and the Head of Steam railway museum is nearby, just outside the Town Centre Fringe. The area also includes parts of the Northgate Conservation Area and a potential new

Conservation Area at Parkgate, whilst masterplanning provides an opportunity to repair, retain and reconnect historic street patterns.

3.2.19 Given that local heritage and the historic environment contribute so much to Darlington's distinctiveness, the only option considered was to recognise and value the important historic assets of the area. Projects to address transport and movement issues will, where possible, preserve the historic street pattern, whilst the linear park proposed will provide the setting for part of a walking and cycling route from which to enjoy and celebrate Darlington's heritage. The designation of a Parkgate Conservation Area and associated projects to improve shop fronts, bring upper floors into use and improve the public realm around the railway station are also proposed.

#### **Existing Housing**

3.2.20 There are several distinct areas of existing housing within the Town Centre Fringe. It is mostly older traditional two storey terraced stock in private ownership, and some is in a poor state of repair and needs modernising. There are also pockets of long term vacancy and areas with concentrations of houses in multiple occupation, contributing to a poor residential environment.

3.2.21 The options considered were:

- (a) focus on building new housing in the area, in the belief that over time, this will improve the image of the area and increase the value and desirability of the existing stock, providing people with the access to finance and motivation to improve their property;
- (b) improve the existing stock to modern standards, by providing grants or loans to existing homeowners and undertaking environmental improvement schemes; or
- (c) demolish some existing housing to allow for redevelopment. Whilst this may create new development opportunities, it would displace the existing community. Also building new homes without addressing the issues faced by existing residents would make integration of old and new more difficult.

3.2.22 The preferred option is therefore a combination of option a) and option b). Projects to improve the energy efficiency of existing housing and the environment of residential areas are proposed, to help address fuel poverty and anti-social behaviour.

#### **Gas Infrastructure and Contaminated Land**

3.2.23 The potential hazard presented by the gasholder on Valley Street North constrains the amount and type of new development that can take place nearby. The options considered were:

- (a) do nothing and accept that development options in this northern part of the Town Centre Fringe will continue to be limited;
- (b) decommission and remove it, enabling the site and its environs to be redeveloped for a range of residential, employment and commercial uses; or
- (c) find an alternative use for it, compatible with the vision for the wider area. However, no suitable or feasible alternative uses have been identified, and its retention could detract from efforts to change the image of the area and secure enough development there.

<sup>3.34</sup> Remediation – the removal of pollution or contamination from a brownfield site intended for development

3.2.24 Option b) to remove the gasholder is therefore the preferred option.

3.2.25 Contaminated land is another hazard constraining the potential development of many sites across the Town Centre Fringe, but the level of contamination varies from site to site. Remediation is likely to be required in many instances<sup>3.34</sup>.

3.2.26 Three options were considered:

- (a) avoid redeveloping or disturbing those sites likely to be most heavily contaminated. This could produce a disjointed urban form, but could help to

identify areas suitable for open space, for which clean up costs are significantly lower.

- (b) tackle contamination on a site by site basis, bringing in public sector funding to support this as necessary;
- (c) develop a comprehensive contamination 'clean-up' strategy, that recognises the different costs of remediating land for different uses, and the need to tackle pathways for, as well as sources of, contamination.

3.2.27 Option c) is the preferred option.

### ***District Heating and Fuel Poverty***

<sup>3.35</sup>Policy CS3.

3.2.28 The Core Strategy<sup>3.35</sup> required at least 20% of the predicted energy supply of the Fringe to come from on site renewable and low carbon technologies, with each development contributing pro rata to reflect its energy use. As the Government has changed its approach to achieving viable sustainable development (see MGP33), and most of the Fringe is expected to be delivered from 2016, zero carbon residential development will be required (for non residential development from 2019). A 70% reduction in carbon emissions<sup>3.36</sup> will be required from carbon compliance<sup>3.37</sup> (60% from energy efficiency and 10% from renewable and low carbon technologies on site, unless a specific opportunity is identified for connection to a district heating network from regulated energy emissions. The remaining 30% should be delivered through allowable solutions<sup>3.38</sup>

<sup>3.36</sup>against the 2010 Building Regulations

<sup>3.37</sup> & <sup>3.38</sup> See section 10.2 for an explanation of these technical terms.

3.2.29 This is the only option considered, as it will provide a high level of sustainable development as part of a viable development in accordance with the national approach. It has in-built flexibility, which is important in areas like the Fringe where development will be phased over at least 10 years, and could take place in a range of market and economic conditions.

### ***Arts and Cultural Facilities***

3.2.30 The Civic Theatre and Forum Music Centre are key cultural venues in the Borough Road/Parkgate area, and the former could be an important anchor for future development. Cultural and arts venues and activities in the Fringe are complementary to the cinema development that is soon to get underway at Feethams, and the continued use of the Dolphin Centre, market square and pedestrianised streets of the town centre for such things. Transport improvements to the inner ring road (see paragraph 3.2.14 above) should help to link the two areas.

3.2.31 The options considered were:

- (a) create a new Cultural Quarter, building on the existing facilities; or
- (b) ensure proposals for adjacent sites are for compatible or complementary uses.

<sup>3.39</sup>see Cultural Quarter Feasibility Study, 2011, Globe Consultants Ltd

3.2.32 Further work<sup>3.39</sup> has indicated that the ambition behind Option a) is more likely to be achieved organically than through a specific development plan. To achieve a cluster and diversity of arts/cultural venues and activities, publicly funded interventions and promotions will be required, rather than restricting uses through the planning process.

3.2.33 Therefore, neither Option a) or b) will be pursued, as progress to tackle arts and cultural issues will be through other non-planning activities.

### ***Shops and Services***

3.2.34 The area has its own population with its own local needs, but could also accommodate developments serving a wider area. Indeed, within the area, there are three Fringe Shopping Areas (see draft Policy MGP14) – Northgate, Parkgate and Victoria Road. These are streets that radiate out from the town centre, providing local shops and services as well as containing some businesses that serve the town as a whole, benefitting from a relatively central location without the higher rents of the town centre.

3.2.35 Significant new housing is likely to support the provision of new local shops, services and primary school places. Local food shop(s) of up to 400m<sup>2</sup> could be appropriate if a geographical deficiency of food shopping can be demonstrated, and the northern-most part of the area is most likely to experience this; otherwise each shop would be limited to 100 m<sup>2</sup> gross (see Core Strategy Policy CS9). Additional primary school places may also be needed and this could be provided by either a new single form entry primary school or the expansion of other schools in the area.

<sup>3.40</sup> DBC Cabinet 4<sup>th</sup>  
December 2012

3.2.36 Potentially serving wider needs, a site in the Garden Street area of the Fringe is being explored to accommodate a proposed food store of around 4000m<sup>2</sup> (gross), subject to specific design requirements and provision of better street level pedestrian links to the town centre. This reflects the agreed Town Centre Vision<sup>3.40</sup>, which identifies areas adjoining the ring road to the north of the town centre as one of three major regeneration focus points, and would complement proposals for the town centre (see draft Policy MGP 2).

3.2.37 Because of uncertainty about the need for a larger than local foodstore and for a new school, the only option considered was to support their provision if the need is established, but not to allocate land, as this could lock up land indefinitely which could otherwise come forward for other uses.

#### ***Delivering New Housing and Employment Development Opportunities***

3.2.38 To achieve the overall vision for the area, consideration has been given to what kind and how much development would be most suitable and could be accommodated in different parts of the Fringe, and what might affect when it could come forward. In doing so, account has been taken of any site specific constraints, market information and dialogue with landowners<sup>3.41</sup>. For example, the business sites and premises review indicated that the most viable proposition for the Borough Road area would be a residential led mixed use development, for proposals for the south west Fringe area to be developed through a site specific masterplan, and for the northern part of the Town Centre fringe to be regenerated with a high proportion of residential accommodation.

<sup>3.41</sup> e.g. through the Darlington Business Sites and Premises Review, May 2013, Local Brownfield Study, 2012 and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

3.2.39 Account has also been taken of land ownerships and its effect on viability and deliverability. The Fringe contains some significant landholdings along the inner ring road and in the John Street/Eastmount Road area, but elsewhere, there are multiple land ownerships and existing viable businesses; land assembly and business relocations may therefore be required to achieve sensible development sites. Currently, low land values in the area are also a barrier to investment, but as the overall vision for the area is realised, an uplift in value is expected, which can be captured and reinvested to further develop and improve the area.

3.2.40 Up front investment will also be required to address many of the constraints, e.g. removing the gasholder and mitigating flood risk, identified above. The options considered were:

- (a) where there is sufficient viability in proposed developments, seeking contributions for key upfront infrastructure from proposed developments, alongside programmed public sector funding. This would help ensure that the costs of improving the area as a whole are shared equally by all those who stand to benefit from them; or
- (b) seeking contributions towards infrastructure on a site by site basis. Whilst this would allow development to proceed as quickly as the market dictates, it could prevent the strategic issues identified above being tackled in the most cost effective comprehensive manner, and could constrain development of some sites further down the line.

3.2.41 The only option being considered for the distribution and type of uses in the Town

Centre Fringe has been dictated by issues of viability and deliverability. It is an overall approach that ensures that areas closer to the town centre and main roads are primarily developed for higher value uses, such as commercial and office development, and the more remote areas for lower value uses such as community uses, open space and new housing, with a more residential feel. For all types of development, maximum use will be made of the sites that are brought forward for development. An indication of what is envisaged, where and when is set out in Table 3.2.1. The sub-areas are identified on Figure 3.2.1.

**Table 3.2.1: Town Centre Fringe Sub Areas – proposed mix of uses and phasing**

Sub Area	Employment Uses	New Homes (H)	Other uses	Timing of delivery		
				2011-2016	2016-2021	2021-2026
Area 1: St. Cuthberts Way South	12,000sqm (B1) office space	0	Green infrastructure Leisure/cultural Car parking?			
Area 2: Bank Top Station West	2,000sqm office/workshop/atelier (B1/B2)	80	Car parking?		H	H
Area 3: Borough Road	6,000sqm office/workshop/atelier (B1/B2)	30	Green infrastructure			H
Area 4: Valley Street South	6,000sqm office/workshop/atelier (B1/B2)	130	Green Infrastructure Retail Leisure/cultural		H	H
Area 5: Valley Street North		200			H	H
Area 6: John St/ Eastmount Rd		300			H	H
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26,000sqm</b>	<b>740</b>				

H – indicates new housing delivery

3.2.42 The preferred option for funding infrastructure is option (a). Funding will be sought through the Environment Agency, Regional Growth Fund and other Government funding programmes, alongside a £20 million HCA loan, and Council investment. As the regeneration progresses, income is expected from the enhancement of land values, business rates uplift, New Homes Bonus and developer contributions<sup>3.42</sup>. Tools that may be used to help bring about the changes required include local development orders and compulsory purchase orders, preparing more detailed planning briefs or masterplans for specific opportunity areas, using HCA funding and a programme of strategic property acquisitions. A Town Centre Fringe Development Procurement Strategy is being prepared to identify how and when the infrastructure required will come forward and how bringing forward land for development will be facilitated. Work done so far<sup>3.43</sup> indicates that initial activity will be in St. Cuthberts Way South (area 1), and Valley Street North (area 6), as well as programmes across several sub-areas, to deliver improvements to the inner ring road and to address flood risk.

<sup>3.42</sup>Section 106 contributions and /or Community Infrastructure Levy.

<sup>3.43</sup>see Opportunity Darlington, via the planning policy pages of www.darlington.gov.uk

**Comments Received and Sustainability Appraisal Findings**

3.2.43 During consultations, issues raised included the need for better links to the town centre and railway station, improving the amenity of the River Skerne, better access to services and cultural opportunities, opportunities for small scale business accommodation and new housing, improving the environment at points of arrival in Darlington, redeveloping empty and derelict sites, more greenspaces and trees, and fears over land contamination.

<sup>3.44</sup> Making and Growing Places Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal, DBC, 2013.

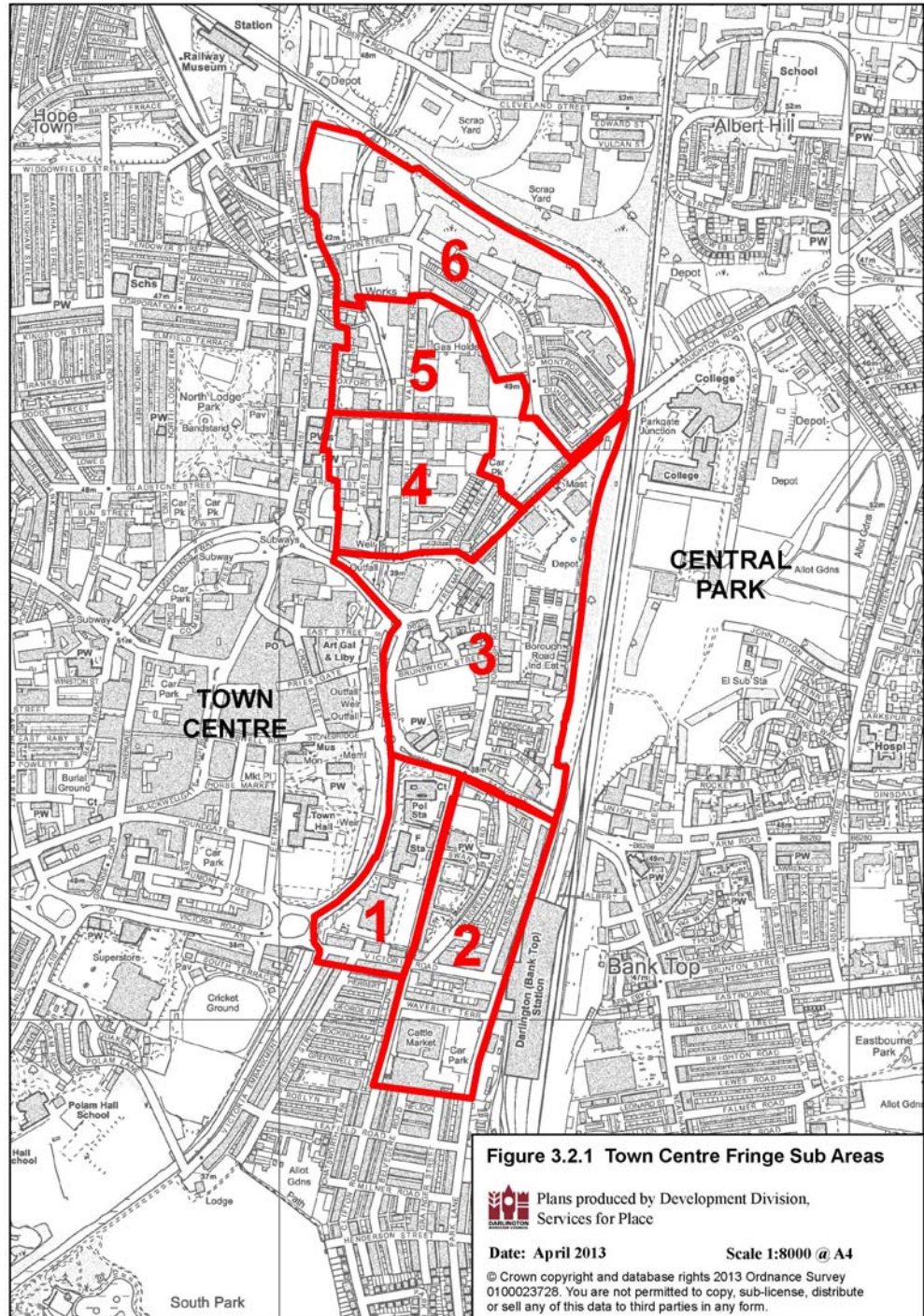
3.2.44 The sustainability appraisal<sup>3.44</sup> generally found the preferred options selected to be the most sustainable, rating highly or very highly against a range of sustainability objectives, and taking into account mitigation that could be secured in the design and layout of new development. The exceptions were the issue of transport, connections and movement, where option (c) performed best, and arts and cultural facilities, where option (a) performed best. These are not being pursued because

the Council does not have enough resources to do so. The economic sustainability of several options could be improved by doing more to ensure that any business that need to be relocated are retained within the Borough, and social sustainability could be maximised if open spaces are 'secured by design'.

### Preparing a Draft Policy

- 3.2.45 Taking into account all the above, the draft policy proposed will comprehensively plan for the development and regeneration of the area, and reflect the preferred options identified above. More detail on the policy approach for specific themes within this policy can be found elsewhere in this document, e.g. draft Policies MGP16 (new housing), MGP27 (transport), and MGP 24 (green infrastructure).

Figure 3.2.1: Town Centre Fringe Sub Areas and Main Proposals



### **Draft Policy MGP3: Town Centre Fringe**

*Development and regeneration of the Town Centre Fringe will be promoted throughout the plan period, so as to deliver the following:*

- a) about 650 new dwellings, including at least 10% affordable housing in the period to 2021 and 10-15 % thereafter;*
- b) about 26,000m<sup>2</sup> of office, light industry, workshop and ancillary retailing space;*
- c) a green corridor of at least 9 ha to accommodate an approved comprehensive flood management scheme*
- d) realignment and re-engineered traffic management measures, focussed on the inner ring road, but including Parkgate and Borough Road;*
- e) a linear park (about 9ha) as part of a strategic green corridor along the River Skerne, including new biodiverse greenspace, flood mitigation measures and linear cycling/walking routes, as part of a wider local heritage trail;*
- f) additional locally important open space (about 0.4ha) for informal recreation, play and wildlife within the Fringe area (see draft Policy MGP24)*
- g) removal of the gas holder on Valley Street North;*
- h) a new conservation area at Parkgate (see draft Policy MGP21);*
- i) retention, enhancement and new links in the open space network in the Fringe area;*
- j) local shops of up to 400m<sup>2</sup> to meet local needs;*
- k) energy efficiency and residential environment improvements to existing housing;*
- l) where it does not conflict with other objectives for the area, retaining, repairing and reconnecting historic street patterns and retaining and repairing other local heritage;*
- m) facilitating the delivery of a site on the edge of the town centre that is capable of accommodating a 4000m<sup>2</sup> foodstore, should the capacity for this additional provision be demonstrated;*
- n) reserve land for and facilitate the delivery of a suitable site for a single form entry primary school, such land to be reserved for educational use until at least 400 new homes have been completed or the site is no longer required, whichever is the earlier*
- o) strategic car parking to meet some of the town centre needs, as well as provision to meet the needs of new Town Centre Fringe development.*

### **Making it Happen**

- 3.2.46 Through implementation of the Town Centre Fringe masterplan, the associated Town Centre fringe Development Procurement Strategy and its supporting plans, strategies and funding programmes.

## **3.3 EXISTING STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS: CENTRAL PARK, LINGFIELD POINT AND WEST PARK**

### **Context**

- 3.3.1 Within the Borough, there are three strategic development locations where development must continue to come forward if the local plan's locational strategy<sup>3.45</sup> is to be achieved. These are Central Park, Lingfield Point and West Park, as shown on the Policies Map. Central Park is identified in Core Strategy (Policy CS1) as a strategic development and regeneration site second only to the town centre for mixed use development, principally housing and employment. Lingfield Point and West Park (in addition to Central Park) are identified in the Council's adopted Core

<sup>3.45</sup> Darlington Core Strategy, 2011, Policy CS1.

Strategy as being key growth areas for housing (CS10) and mixed employment uses (CS5 – Lingfield Point only).

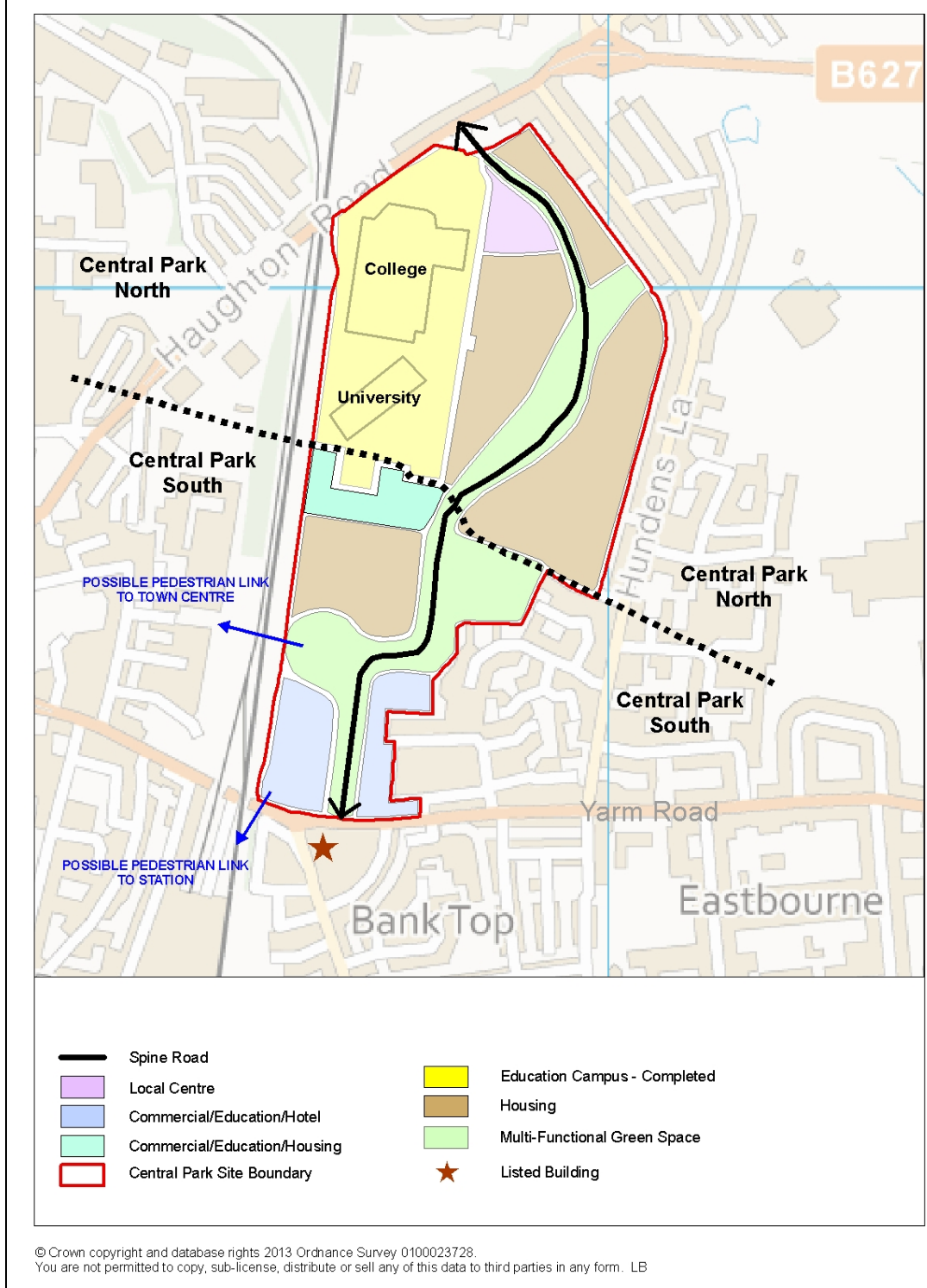
- 3.3.2 For each site, the current position and any specific issues for each are outlined below, followed by a policy to reaffirm the Council's commitment to their delivery during the plan period.

**Central Park: Issues**

- 3.3.3 The site is a flagship regeneration scheme within the Tees Valley, whose development is being supported by over £20 million of public sector investment. It is a mostly previously developed site close to the town centre and to Bank Top station on the East Coast Main Line, making it well placed to attract inward investment to Darlington. A further and higher education campus has already been delivered on part of the site, and significant site preparation works on the remainder have been carried out.
- 3.3.4 The site now benefits from a hybrid planning permission (for the next 15 years) and accompanying masterplan (see Figure 3.2.1). It includes detailed planning permission for 324 residential units and significant new green space within Central Park North, outline planning permission for new local shops off Haughton Road, a further 180 dwellings in Central Park North, and a commercial development of up to 26,000m<sup>2</sup> in Central Park south, including offices, a hotel and potential additional education facilities.



Figure 3.3.1: Central Park Masterplan Summary Diagram



3.3.5 The current plans are for Central Park North to be delivered in the period up to 2019, and Central Park South (see Figure 3.3.1) to be delivered in the period from 2014 to 2021. Part of the southern area already benefits from Local Enterprise Zone Status<sup>3.46</sup>.

3.3.6 The main issues for this site are:

- ensuring appropriate infrastructure linking the site to the town centre and Town Centre fringe (see Policy MGP4) is brought forward;

<sup>3.46</sup>Local Enterprise Zone status removes barriers to private sector business growth, particularly lower tax levels, planning and other regulatory and administrative burdens.

- ensuring that high quality buildings, a rich urban form and significant and effective public open space is delivered; and
- considering whether there are any other appropriate uses that could come forward if elements of the current scheme cannot be delivered.

3.3.7 These issues are likely to be more significant in the southern part of the site, where a new road junction to Yarm Road and better pedestrian access to the station, town centre and town centre fringe is required, and land assembly still need to be completed. The continuation of the linear park through this part of the site is also a key element.

#### **Lingfield Point: Issues**

3.3.8 Lingfield Point is a former manufacturing site extending to 43ha on the eastern edge of the urban area. Mostly previously developed land and buildings, the southern portion already houses a thriving office and industrial development.

<sup>3.47</sup>Darlington  
Business Sites and  
Premises review,  
NLP/DTZ, 2013

3.3.9 It is a priority area for promoting further employment generating uses throughout the plan period<sup>3.47</sup>, and is also a key site for new significant housing. As a former manufacturing site, its reuse and redevelopment will improve the appearance of one of the main eastern gateways of the town, including refurbishing the most prominent landmark factory buildings.

3.3.10 In 2010, the remainder of the site was granted outline planning permission (valid until 2024) for 1220 residential units and 2900m<sup>2</sup> of B1 office space, as well as various facilities and open space to serve the needs of the development. The western portion was recently granted detailed permission for 273 dwellings and associated open space, and development is due to commence this year.

3.3.11 Key to developing this site sustainably will be:

- encouraging alternatives to the private car, such as providing financial support for the provision and operation and/or maintenance of routes for cycling, walking and public transport;
- building new homes at zero carbon standards;
- implementing on site renewable/low carbon energy generation,
- providing community facilities and services to meet local needs, particularly as new housing comes forward, and
- integrating the development with neighbouring Red Hall, through attractive and safe access across the Eastern Transport Corridor.

3.3.12 Highway improvements will also be required to nearby junctions to mitigate the traffic impact, and consideration should be given to the heritage value of the existing buildings on site, prior to demolishing or converting them, so that archives for the Paton and Baldwin company are preserved. The site is considered a heritage asset of regional significance.

#### **West Park**

3.3.13 The West Park site received outline planning permission in 2002 for a major development of predominantly residential character, and is still being built out. Almost 500 new dwellings, a new hospital, a major urban park, a new primary school, and a cluster of shops, children's day nursery and a public house have already been completed. This redevelopment of former manufacturing land and adjoining greenfield land has already transformed the appearance of one of the main gateways to the town and created a thriving neighbourhood. Continued housebuilding at West Park is needed to support housing delivery in the early and middle parts of the plan period. About 400 remain to be delivered on the site as part of existing planning permissions, of which at least 10 should be affordable housing and at least 42 low cost housing.

- 3.3.14 There are no major issues remaining at the West Park development, though an extension to the existing West Park Local Centre is planned. This is considered vital to meet the needs of further housing now proposed beyond West Park (see Policy MGP 16), as well as existing needs arising from both within West Park and the neighbouring High Grange estate.

#### **Options Considered**

- 3.3.15 The three sites have been identified by the Council as key strategic development locations for some time and most benefit from planning permission in some form or another. The purpose of any policy would be to reaffirm the Council's commitment to bringing forward these sites and to highlight key matters that any new proposals should address to deliver the overall aims for the site, should the schemes that currently have planning permission not come forward as envisaged.
- 3.3.16 The only other option considered is to have no policy covering these sites, allowing their future development to be determined by market forces and the application of non-site specific national and local planning policies.

#### **Preparing a Draft Policy: the Preferred Option**

- 3.3.17 Taken together, these sites will make a significant overall contribution to the delivery of the Core Strategy objectives and vision, and as such, the 'no policy' option was rejected as it does not highlight sufficiently the importance of specific aspects of development on each of the sites that are regarded as critical to delivering sustainable developments and the Core Strategy overall.

#### *Central Park*

- 3.3.18 The principles behind the masterplan's locational strategy (Figure 3.3.1) would be the starting point for the consideration of any alternatives/alterations to the scheme at Central Park. Central Park South could accommodate office, hotel and additional further and higher educational space if required, in addition to small scale retail or café and restaurant type uses at ground floor level to create active frontages along the spine road and open spaces.

#### *Lingfield Point*

- 3.3.19 Any further planning applications on the site will have to comply with the principles covering highways, transport, sustainable design, renewables, community facilities and retail aspects that are set out in the existing outline permission. The provisions set out in paragraph 3.3.11 above will form the baseline starting point for any further planning applications or variations on this site.

#### *West Park*

- 3.3.20 Further applications will be encouraged that complement the development that has taken place so far. Development will have to relate well to West Auckland Road and Edward Pease Way and include high quality walking and cycling access along those routes.
- 3.3.21 The area of land identified on the Policies Map is the undeveloped part of the site to which planning permission relates.

#### **Draft Policy MGP4: Existing Strategic Commitments**

##### ***Central Park***

*The remainder of 32ha of land at Central Park is identified for a mix of uses, primarily residential and up to 26,000 m<sup>2</sup> of commercial development, to deliver the following:*

##### *Central Park North*

- a) up to 350 residential units of an appropriate mix, including at least 15% affordable housing unless this can be demonstrated to be unviable;
- b) new local shopping to a maximum of one A1 use unit of up to 400m<sup>2</sup> and three A1 use units up to 100m<sup>2</sup>, appropriate A3/A4 uses with potential for B1a uses above ground floor; and
- c) the northern section of the spine road and possible need for additional junction improvements to Haughton Road.

#### **Central Park South**

- a) B1 and A2 uses within up to 26,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space
- b) potential for C1(hotels) and D1(non-residential institutions) uses;
- c) about 150 dwellings of an appropriate mix for the locality, including at least 15% affordable housing unless this can be demonstrated to be unviable;
- d) the southern section of the spine road and junction to Yarm Road, as set out in Policy MGP27);
- e) improved pedestrian links to Bank Top Station;.
- f) adequately mitigate any impact on the setting of the nearby listed building (St John's Church) and upon the distinctive character of the central area skyline as identified in Core Strategy Policy CS14.

#### **Overall**

In addition to the area specific requirements identified above, the following are required across the whole site:

- a) a layout that is in general conformity with the types and locations of uses indicated on the masterplan;
- b) linear multi-functional greenspace that enhances biodiversity, is accessible and connected, and provides sustainable drainage (SUDS) and quality amenity space for all age groups;
- c) active frontages along the spine road and overlooking of open space;
- d) appropriate linkages to, from and within the site for pedestrian and cycle routes;.
- e) subject to viability, conformity with the existing quality aspirations for the site, including as a minimum, the requirements of Core Strategy Policy CS4 and a BREEAM rating of Very Good.

#### **Lingfield Point**

43ha of land at Lingfield Point is identified for a mix of uses, including:

- a) up to about 1200 new dwellings;
- b) up to 41000m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace in use classes B1-B3;
- c) up to 2700m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace in use classes A1-A5, of which 80% to be in a single location and no retail unit on the site to be larger than 1000m<sup>2</sup>;
- d) new community and sports facilities to serve the needs arising from the development;
- e) at least 12ha of multifunctional public open space;
- f) adequate improvements to highways to mitigate the effect of traffic generation on the local highway network;
- g) support for sustainable transport, including a high frequency bus service into the site;
- h) zero carbon housing to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 6 and up to 10% reduction in carbon emissions from on site renewable or low carbon technologies on site, with up to 30% being provided through allowable solutions;
- i) due regard to be paid to the heritage value of the site, with the Paton and Baldwin's archives to be conserved on site or transferred to Durham County Record Office;
- j) on-site renewable or low carbon energy generation to provide 10% of the energy consumed by the site.

#### **West Park**

*46ha of land is identified for the provision of a mainly residential development including:*

- a) about 400 dwellings;*
- b) around 10 dwellings to be affordable and 40 to be low cost; and*
- c) an expansion of community facilities to meet local needs on land to the north of the existing local centre (see draft Policy MGP16).*

### **Making it Happen**

- 3.3.22 Planning permissions are currently in place at all of the above sites, but some required further details to be submitted in reserved matters applications. Should development at any of these sites not come forward in line with existing consents, the Council would still require these sites to come forward to deliver a similar scheme, as all are critical to delivering the wider vision for supporting growth in the Borough.

## **3.4 NORTH WEST URBAN FRINGE**

### **Context**

<sup>3.48</sup>Darlington LDF Core Strategy, DBC, May 2011: policies CS1, CS5 and CS10

- 3.4.1 The North West Urban Fringe is identified as a strategic location for new housing and employment development in the Darlington Core Strategy<sup>3.48</sup>. 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). This section is concerned with the area to the south of the A68, which extends to about 85 hectares, and encompasses Mount Pleasant Farm and Stag House Farm. The area to the north, known as Faverdale, is considered in Section 4.

- 3.4.2 The Core Strategy plans for about 700 new dwellings to be provided at the North West Urban Fringe in the 10 year period 2016-2026. It assumed that about 400 dwellings were still to be completed as part of the current planning permission for West Park.

<sup>3.49</sup>Review of Darlington Business Sites and Premises, NLP/DTZ for DBC, March 2013.

- 3.4.3 The scale of planned provision provides an opportunity to bring forward a wide range and choice of new housing as part of a comprehensively planned and sustainable residential neighbourhood, with associated community uses, greenspace and physical infrastructure. It could also support facilities that meet wider community needs, and the potential of the northernmost part of the land to accommodate a high quality business park has also been considered<sup>3.49</sup>.

- 3.4.4 The amount of suitable and available development land in this area means that development of this new neighbourhood will continue beyond 2026, the end date of this plan.

### **Issues**

- 3.4.5 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:

- 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;
- providing an appropriate amount of affordable housing<sup>3.50</sup> and/or other housing to meet specific needs or demand, to create a mixed and balanced community;
- providing appropriate new community infrastructure, such as local shops, school places and health services to meet the needs arising from the new development;
- including other uses, e.g. employment, sports club provision;
- delivering at least 20% of the predicted energy supply on site from

<sup>3.50</sup>defined in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework, CLG, 2012

- decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources of energy;
- 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;
- ensuring that travel on foot, by bike or by public transport to, from and within any new development is an attractive choice;
- 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);
- 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.

### Options Considered

3.4.6 Three options for locating new housing at the North West Urban Fringe were considered and consulted on previously<sup>3.51</sup>:

<sup>3.51</sup>Accommodating Growth Issues and Options Report, DBC, Nov. 2010

- (a) Stag House Farm and the south-easternmost part of Mount Pleasant Farm;
- (b) the southern half of Mount Pleasant Farm; and
- (c) the southern part of Mount Pleasant Farm and an area of land north of Rotary Way/east of West Auckland Road

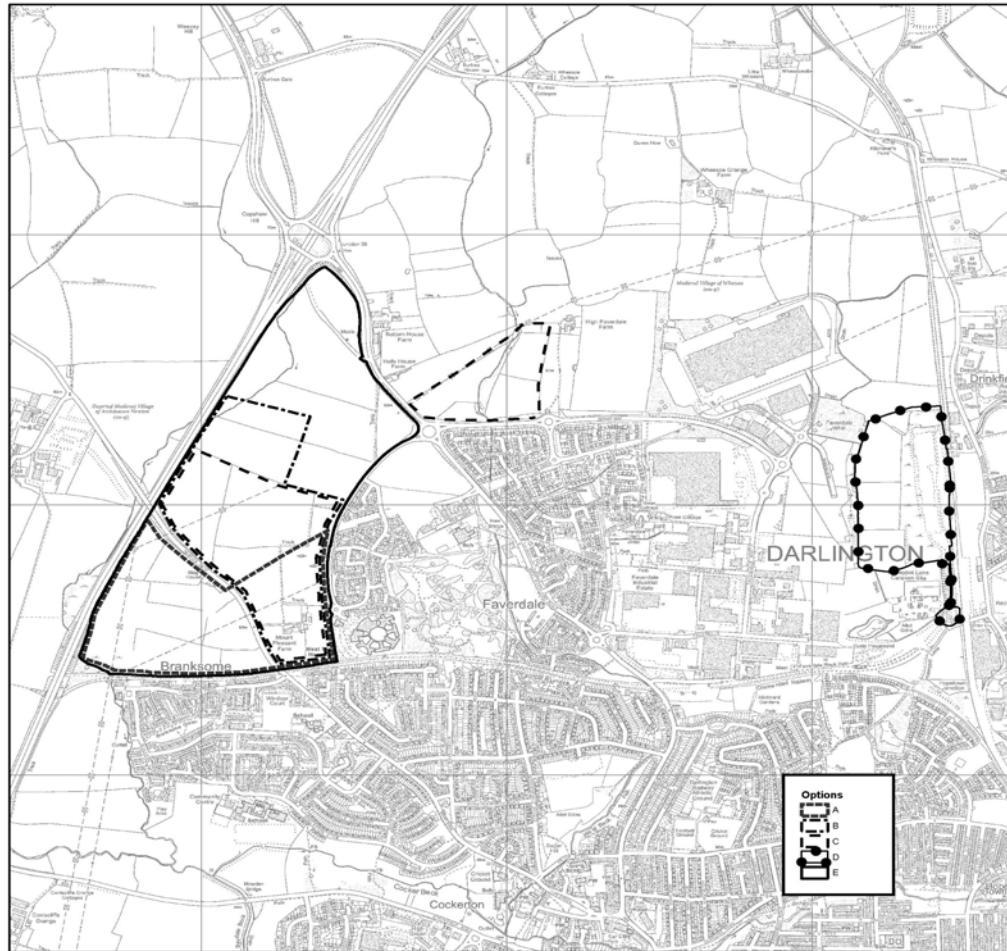
3.4.7 Taking account of responses to this consultation<sup>3.52</sup> two more options were considered:

<sup>3.52</sup>Accommodating Growth Issues and Options Report Consultation Responses

- (d) making use of former Corus land currently allocated for employment beyond the eastern end of Rotary Way;
- (e) encompassing all the land at Mount Pleasant Farm (about 63ha) and Stag House Farm (about 22ha).

3.4.8 These options are shown on the Figure 3.4.1

**Figure 3.4.1: North West Urban Fringe Options**



- 3.4.9 More recent information has also been taken into account, particularly:
- (i) anticipated rates of housebuilding are not now expected to be as high, so not all of the 700 homes originally envisaged here in the plan period are likely to be delivered;
  - (ii) land north of Rotary Way is part of a wider area that now has in principle planning permission for a data centre (subject to signing a Section 106 agreement), and a recent study<sup>3.53</sup> recommends it be reserved for employment uses beyond the plan period;
  - (iii) land off Edward Pease Way with planning permission for a rugby club will not be implemented, as the intended occupants have relocated elsewhere;
  - (iv) should funding become available, Darlington School of Mathematics and Science would consider a proposal to relocate to a new site in the Newton Lane area. There will also be a need for additional primary places arising from the new housing; it may be possible to accommodate some or all of this by extending the existing Mount Pleasant Primary School nearby, but land can also be safeguarded within the development area for new primary provision;
  - (v) a recent study<sup>3.53</sup> recommended removing the employment allocation from the former Corus land, and identifying land for a high quality business park at the northern end of the Mount Pleasant Farm site.
  - (vi) there will be a shortfall of 19.5 playing pitches in the Borough (see policy MGP 26), which could partially be met within a development of this size;
  - (vii) there will be a shortfall of primary care facilities in this part of Darlington

<sup>3.53</sup>Review of Darlington Business Sites and Premises, NLP/DTZ for DBC, May 2013

- compared to the planned population, which could be met by providing a new GP surgery within the development, or as part of the proposed extension to West Park local centre (see draft Policy MGP 31);
- (viii) Tees and Esk Mental Health Trust, the operators of West Park Hospital on Edward Pease Way, would like to extend their site for more car parking;
  - (ix) slower than expected progress in the development of cost effective and viable renewable energy technologies, and an increased focus on energy efficiency as a means of reducing carbon emissions from new developments means that a revised approach to delivering the renewable energy targets is required;
  - (x) to meet aspirations, high speed broadband should be provided throughout the development;
  - (xi) a recent study<sup>3.53</sup> indicated that office use in the northern part of this site could help to address the shortfall in high quality office accommodation in Darlington, for small and medium sized enterprises, and could accommodate telecare or high value elements of the subsea sector.

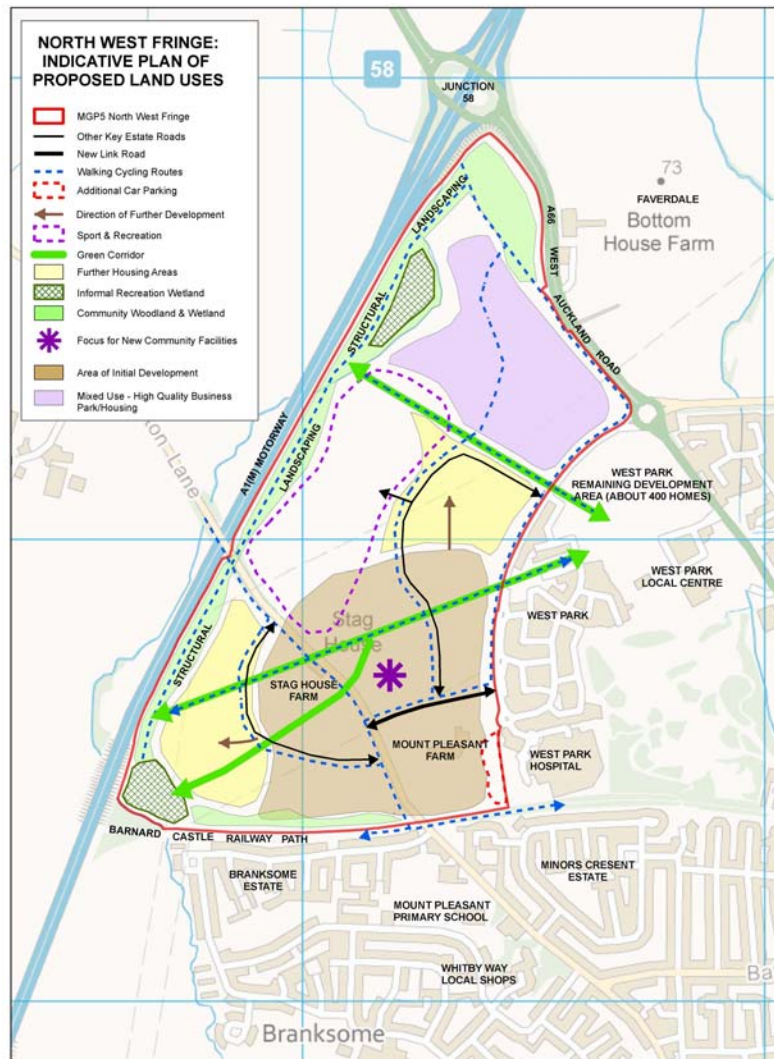
### **Preparing a Draft Policy: the Preferred Option**

- 3.4.10 Of the five options considered, a sustainability appraisal found that option (e), making use of land at Stag House Farm and Mount Pleasant Farm, to be the most sustainable. It scored comparably with options (a) and (b) on things like proximity to services and surface water flood risks, but scored better by virtue of its larger area providing more scope to integrate the necessary green infrastructure into the design of the development while still delivering the required number of houses. Option (e) also allows well located land previously earmarked for a rugby club to be considered for development. By taking account of the full development potential of this land now, any on-site or off-site infrastructure can be designed with capacity to accommodate further development beyond 2026, and things like transport, landscape and green infrastructure networks can be planned comprehensively from the outset. The elements of this will need to be identified in a comprehensive masterplan agreed with the Council to guide the development of this area within the plan period and beyond.
- 3.4.11 In earlier consultations<sup>3.54</sup>, issues identified regarding the development of land south of Newton Lane included loss of open land and nature conservation, flooding and loss of open space. However, the land is currently in agricultural use with no formal public access and any surface water flooding can be addressed through on-site flood water storage through the creation of wetlands and use of sustainable urban drainage schemes (see also Policy MGP 34) .
- 3.4.12 Figure 3.4.2 indicates how the proposed land uses could be accommodated within the proposed allocation area, and how development of the site could progress. The matters outlined below are considered essential for the proper planning of the area, to create a neighbourhood where people will aspire to live, and to ensure that the impacts on the existing local community and businesses are, on balance, positive.

<sup>3.54</sup>Responses to Potential Gypsy and Traveller Sites Consultation, 2012



Figure 3.4.2: North West Urban Fringe Proposed Development



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3.4.13 Because of slower rates of housebuilding, this policy envisages that about 650 new homes will be delivered here by 2026, but with the expectation that development will continue on this site well beyond 2026. To ensure that development can be readily integrated with existing and proposed community facilities, and that key infrastructure (such as a road link between Newton Lane and Edward Pease Way to mitigate traffic impact) is put in at the outset, residential development should be phased from the area adjacent to the southern end of Edward Pease Way first, and progressing from there both westwards onto Stag House Farm and northwards.

3.4.14 Because of uncertainties around the availability of funding to support new community infrastructure such as schools, local shops and health provision, the preferred option encourages and allows for the possibility of new provision, but is not prescriptive about this. In addition, so that land at the heart of the new neighbourhood is not sterilised indefinitely, the draft policy allows for its use for other purposes if there is no prospect of the intended development being realised once development is well advanced.

3.4.15 The development will be expected to include a range of house types and sizes. The area is particularly suitable for detached 4+ bedrooomed housing, addressing a

<sup>3.55</sup> Darlington Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Arc4 for DBC, 2012

shortfall in the stock compared to demand<sup>3.55</sup> whilst land closest to community facilities, shops and services would be suitable for housing for older people and for those with disabilities; this should amount to about 5% of all new housing. The development will also be expected to meet the Core Strategy 30% affordable housing requirement in full, with provision to be at about this level for each phase of development.

3.4.16 The local centre at West Park (see draft Policy MGP15) could meet most of the day to day needs of people living in and visiting this area, but some of the most southern parts of it are relatively remote from the local centre, with the nearest alternative shops being a local shopping parade over 800m away at Whitby Way, Branksome, and local shops on Nickstream Lane. Through the masterplan, consideration must be given to providing additional shop(s) to meet local needs, ideally in conjunction with other community facilities, in the Newton Lane/southern end of Edward Pease Way area, where accessibility is potentially greatest to the local people it is intended to serve, and from which sustainable travel routes should radiate, linking it to both existing and proposed new housing areas and other local community facilities.

3.4.17 Significant new playing field provision (about 8ha, see draft Policy MPG 26) is also proposed, to meet both local and town wide needs. To ensure the efficient use of land, the opportunity for some of this to be multi purpose should be explored through masterplan preparation.

3.4.18 Whilst recent work indicates that land at the northern end of the North West Fringe would be suitable for high quality office accommodation, this is also being promoted elsewhere in the town, including in more sustainable locations like the Town Centre Fringe, and through some re-use of existing buildings at Lingfield Point. Any new office development in this location will need to complement rather than compete with existing and planned provision elsewhere in the Borough, and will be expected to do so through the high quality of the design and environment provided.

3.4.19 As new housing is not scheduled in this location until 2016, it will all need to be zero carbon to comply with Government policy<sup>3.56</sup>; all other development should achieve this standard from 2019. A combination of highly energy efficient design and development and renewable or low carbon technologies (see draft Policy MGP 33) is expected to deliver the majority of carbon savings on site, with 'allowable solutions'<sup>3.57</sup> being used to deliver any outstanding requirements.

<sup>3.56</sup> Plan for Growth, Budget 2011, HM Treasury

<sup>3.57</sup> Allowable solutions are small, medium or large scale carbon-saving projects on or off site required to deliver carbon compliance.

3.4.20 The relationship of the site to features around its boundaries, and the need for development to avoid the corridors of the existing infrastructure that cross the site are the starting point for planning open spaces and green infrastructure. Green infrastructure is also the means by which other development needs, such as sustainable urban drainage systems, enhancing biodiversity and ecological networks, and noise attenuation can be achieved, and is a key element of creating an attractive and liveable residential environment that supports healthy living. Green space provision will need to include specific types of provision, such as children's play areas and allotments.

3.4.21 Wherever possible, existing hedgelines and trees should be incorporated into new areas of green infrastructure. At its boundaries, the new development must include significant structural landscaping, with mixed woodland and species rich planting. This should be provided along the A1(M) boundary from A68 southwards, along West Auckland Road and along the northern side of the Barnard Castle railway path. Green corridors from the existing neighbouring housing and West Park Local Centre to the urban fringe, and linking across Newton Lane to the Barnard Castle Railway Path, will also be required. Both should provide access for walkers and cyclists through the development, and form the locations for specific outdoor recreation and greenspace provision, such as kickabout areas, adventurous and

natural childrens' play, community orchard planting, dedicated fitness areas and outdoor gyms, activity trails of various lengths for walkers, joggers and cyclists and semi-natural greenspace. The south-western corner of the site is expected to be the focus for informal recreation and wetland habitat creation/ enhancement, including the balancing ponds needed as part of the sustainable drainage scheme for the Stag House Farm area, where some surface water flooding has occurred. Balancing ponds will also be required to the north of Newton Lane, which could be accommodated in the structural landscaping area along the A1(M) boundary. To support ongoing management and maintenance of high quality spaces, a green infrastructure management levy on all new housing would be applied.

<sup>3.58</sup> Darlington Local Development Framework Transport Area Action Plans, ARUP for DBC, 2010 .

3.4.22 Specialist advice<sup>3.58</sup> indicates that to avoid severe impacts on the local highway network, the proposed development will need to include an internal road network that includes a link between Edward Pease Way and Newton Lane, and bus stops within the development that are no more than 300m from any home. High frequency bus penetration, together with new high quality walking and cycling routes that link to the existing sustainable transport routes along West Auckland Road and Barnard Castle Railway Path, will provide travel choice, whilst the link road will help to disperse any other vehicular traffic across the network, rather than concentrate it on West Auckland Road/Woodland Road. Contributions will also be required towards signalling roundabouts on Woodland Road/West Auckland Road and Newton Lane, and high frequency bus services will need to be provided from the area to the Town Centre. Contributions may also be required for works to mitigate the traffic impact at Junction 59 of the A1(M).

3.4.23 33kV and 132kV power lines cross the site. Some in the vicinity of Edward Pease Way have already been undergrounded. In drawing up the masterplan for the area, the expectation will be that the remaining power lines will be rerouted or undergrounded, the appropriate solution to be agreed in consultation with Northern Powergrid.

#### **Draft Policy MGP5: North West Urban Fringe**

*85ha of land at Stag House Farm and Mount Pleasant Farm is allocated for a mix of uses, primarily residential, and will be developed according to a masterplan for the area agreed with the Council, so as to deliver the following:*

- (i) about 150 new dwellings by 2021, about 450 by 2026, and further development thereafter, as part of a new neighbourhood at the north west urban fringe.*
- (ii) 30% affordable housing provided within each phase of development, each phase to include both social rented and intermediate tenures;*
- (iii) the overall housing mix to include housing capable of being readily adapted to meet a range of needs and/or housing to meet specific needs, the level and type of such provision to be agreed with the Council, and not less than 5% of the overall new housing;*
- (iii) a small, high quality office development within the northern end of the site,*
- (iv) zero carbon housing to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 6 and up to 10% reduction in carbon emissions from on site renewable or low carbon technologies on site, with up to 30% being provided through allowable solutions;*
- (v) At least 7.13ha of open space to include :*
  - a. significant structural landscaping belts along the outside boundaries of the development area;*
  - b. green corridors linking West Park Local Centre and the existing neighbouring housing to the urban fringe and to the Barnard Castle Railway Path;*

- c. *a significant area in the south-western corner of the site to be a focus for informal recreation and wetland habitat creation/enhancement; and*
- d. *childrens play areas; and*
- e. *allotment provision.*
- (vi) *at least 8ha of playing field provision*
- (vii) *a network of linked streets, including a new road link between Edward Pease Way and Newton Lane;*
- (viii) *a road network enabling the ready penetration of buses to serve stops within 300m of every home;*
- (x) *new high quality walking and cycling access along main routes and green corridors to link in with the existing footpath/cycle routes along West Auckland Road/Woodland Road, Newton Lane, and along the Barnard Castle Railway Path;*
- (xi) *high speed broadband to every home.*

*The following off-site provision and contributions will be also required as part of the development to mitigate its impact:*

- (xii) *signalising roundabouts on Woodland Road/West Auckland Road and Newton Lane;*
- (xiii) *support for a high frequency bus service from the North West Urban Fringe to Darlington Town Centre*
- (xvi) *enhancement/provision of walking and cycling routes along West Auckland Road and Newton Lane in the direction of Cockeron village and to/from local schools;*
- (xvii) *funding to support smarter travel initiatives.*

*In addition, the masterplan should reserve land as follows:*

- (a) *about 10.3ha land in the vicinity of Newton Lane for secondary and primary educational use, such land to be reserved until at least 400 new dwellings are completed. If there are no firm plans for the school(s) at that time, the land may be made available for alternative community uses. If none of these can be delivered within a reasonable time, the land may be released for additional new housing.*
- (b) *land of appropriate configuration in the area around the southern end of Edward Pease Way/Newton Lane, capable of accommodating at least local shop(s) and the potential development of a new GP surgery.*

### **Making it Happen**

- 3.4.24 By preparing a masterplan to guide use and development of the area, disposing of Council owned Stag House Farm, and establishing a project delivery team.

## **3.5 EASTERN URBAN FRINGE**

### **Context**

- 3.5.1 The Eastern Urban Fringe is identified as a strategic location for new housing and employment development in the Darlington Core Strategy<sup>3.59</sup>. It is split by the Eastern Transport Corridor; the northern section is greenfield land identified for housing extending to about 88ha, adjacent to the existing Red Hall housing area, extending east to the A66 (T) and is contained to the north west by the River Skerne and to the north by Great Burdon and Stockton Road.

- 3.5.2 The scale of planned residential provision is an opportunity to bring forward a wide range and choice of new housing as part of a comprehensively planned and sustainable residential neighbourhood, with associated community facilities, green and physical infrastructure. The overall amount of suitable and available development land in this area means that development of the new neighbourhood will continue beyond 2026, the

<sup>3.59</sup> Darlington Core Strategy, DBC 2011 Policies CS1, CS6, CS10

end date of this plan, so the phasing of development and infrastructure will be important.

<sup>3.60</sup>Darlington Business Sites and Premises Review, NLP, 2013

3.5.3 The area to the south of the Eastern Transport Corridor, extends to about 78.77ha<sup>3.60</sup>. It is greenfield land for employment uses, and wraps around existing and emerging employment areas known as Lingfield Park, Link 66<sup>3.61</sup>, Yarm Road South and Morton Palms (see Policy MGP11). This scale of highly accessible land provides an opportunity to bring forward a mix of prestige office space and general employment uses on sites of different sizes as part of a balanced portfolio to meet existing and emerging business needs.

<sup>3.61</sup>with outline planning permission for B1, B2, B8 uses, a hotel and pub/restaurant

**Issues**

<sup>3.62</sup>Affordable housing: defined by the National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG, 2012

3.5.4 The main issues considered in identifying land allocations and the mix of uses for development at the Eastern Urban Fringe were:

<sup>3.63</sup>Zero carbon: over a year, a development achieves no net carbon dioxide emissions from energy use on site. There may still be emissions but these are balanced by savings in emissions elsewhere in the Borough.

- promoting and re-establishing the area as a vibrant, attractive neighbourhood where people aspire to live and work;
- making sure that new housing can be readily integrated with existing and planned areas of new housing at Red Hall (see Policy MGP16) and Lingfield Point (see Policy MGP3), and is as close as possible to shops and services;
- providing an appropriate amount of affordable housing<sup>3.62</sup> and/or other housing to meet specific needs and demand, to create a mixed and balanced community;
- providing appropriate new community infrastructure, such as local shops, school places, health services and sports facilities to meet the needs arising from the new development;
- making sure that new employment uses complement existing provision, have the right supporting infrastructure and broadband available at the right time to meet demand;
- delivering zero carbon<sup>3.63</sup> housing development and the appropriate BREEAM sustainability standard (see draft Policy MGP33) for non residential development<sup>3.64</sup>;
- providing appropriate river and surface water flood management and sewerage to protect future residents and properties from the risk of flooding;
- providing an appropriate amount and mix of green infrastructure to meet the needs of the new development and to provide an attractive setting for it;
- ensuring that travel on foot, by bike or by public transport to, from and within any new development is an attractive choice;
- ensuring that the extra traffic generated by the development does not have adverse impact on the local highway network, or affect the efficient functioning of the strategic highway network, particularly at junctions with the A66 (T);
- ensuring that sufficient car and cycle parking is available to meet the needs of employees working in the new development;
- ensuring, through a masterplan, that only appropriate non residential development is situated within the exclusion zone for the high pressure underground gas pipeline running along part of the location's eastern boundary.

<sup>3.64</sup>Darlington Core Strategy, Policies CS2, CS3

**Options Considered.**

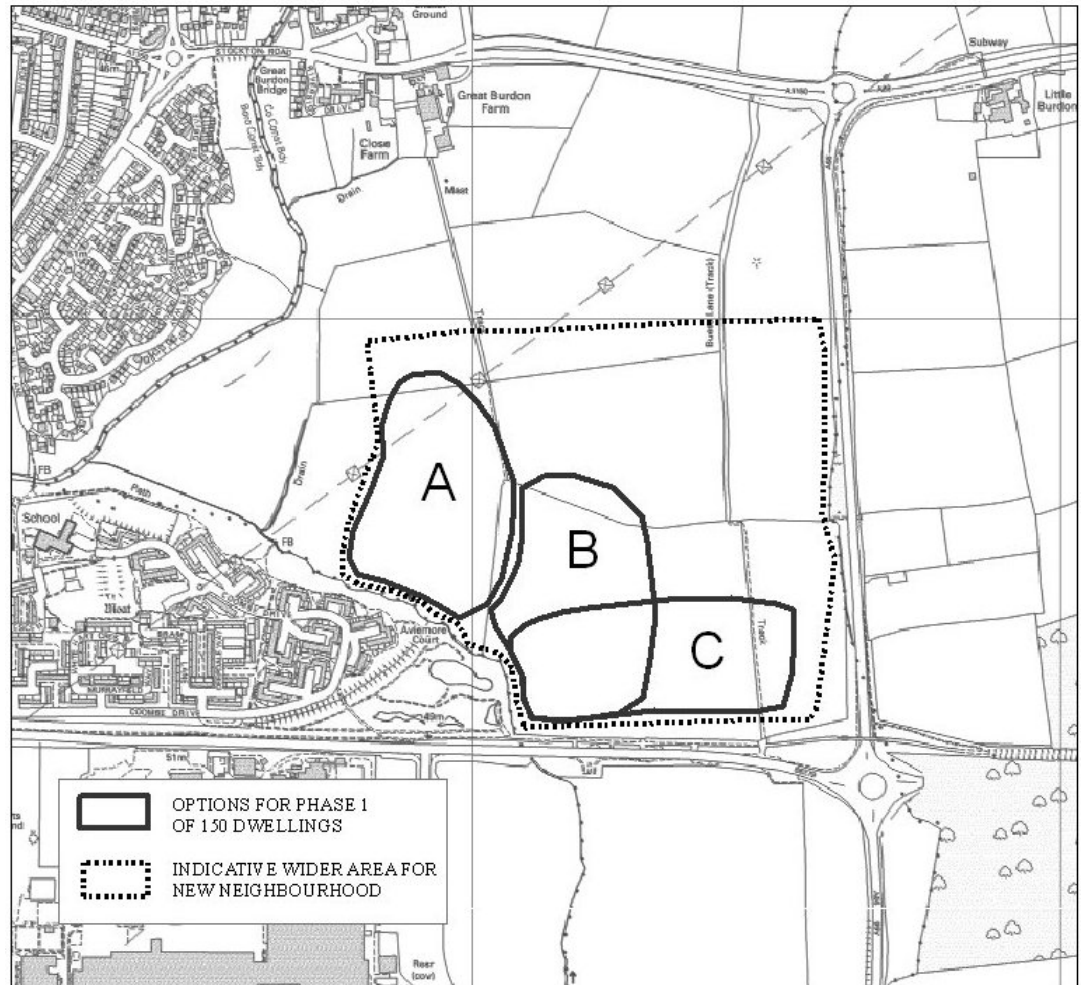
<sup>3.65</sup>Accommodating Growth Issues & Options, DBC, 2010

3.5.5 Three options for locating the initial amount of new housing at the Eastern Urban Fringe were considered and consulted on previously<sup>3.65</sup>:

- Land to the north of the eastern end of Coombe Drive;
- Land north of the Eastern Transport Corridor; and
- Land extending along the northern side of the Eastern Transport Corridor.

These options are shown on Figure 3.5.1 below.

**Figure 3.5.1: Options for locating initial housing at the Eastern Urban Fringe**



3.5.6 Two options for identifying employment uses were considered and consulted on previously<sup>3.65</sup>:

Option (a) to promote employment uses on a range of sites including Lingfield Park, Yarm Road South, Link 66 (all for B1/B2 and B8 uses) and Morton Palms (for B1a uses) or

Option (b) to include other suitable sites suggested for employment uses as well.

3.5.7 More recent information has also been taken into account, particularly:

- (i) recent housebuilding rates ( see 3.5.2 above);
- (ii) a recent business sites and premises review<sup>3.49</sup> that recommends that Lingfield Park, Yarm Road South and Link 66 be allocated for B1/B2 and B8 uses and Morton Palms for high quality B1 uses (see Policy MGP11);
- (iii) proposals to regenerate the adjoining Red Hall housing area (see Policy MGP16) should complement the masterplan of the new housing area, particularly to provide linkages between existing and new development;
- (iv) should funding become available, a 3-11 year school could be provided in later phases of the housing development. The required additional primary places arising from this development could also be accommodated at the existing Red Hall Primary School nearby (see draft Policy MGP16);
- (v) to meet the increasing demands for pitch sports there will be a shortfall of 19.5 playing pitches in the Borough (see draft Policy MGP 26), which could be partially met within a development of this size;
- (vi) there will be a shortfall of primary care facilities in this part of Darlington compared to the planned population, which could be met by providing a new

<sup>3.66</sup>A66(T)  
Darlington Bypass  
Capacity  
Enhancement  
Scheme

<sup>3.67</sup> Section 106  
agreement: a legal  
agreement  
negotiated  
between the  
Council and  
developers,  
landowners as a  
result of a planning  
application to  
secure  
infrastructure  
required to help  
mitigate the impact  
of new  
development

<sup>3.68</sup>Emerging  
Darlington Green  
Infrastructure  
Strategy, DBC,  
2013

<sup>3.69</sup>Accommodating  
Growth: Issues  
and Options,  
Consultation  
Responses DBC,  
2011

<sup>3.70</sup>Making and  
Growing Places  
Preferred Options:  
Sustainability  
Appraisal, DBC,  
2013

- GP surgery within the development (see draft Policy MGP31);
- (vii) a recent study<sup>3.66</sup> recognised that all five junctions on the A66 (T) will need capacity improvements in the future, as well as eventual dualling of the road itself (see draft Policy MGP27);
  - (viii) it is a requirement of the outline planning permission for Link 66<sup>3.67</sup> that a sustainable balancing pond to manage surface water run off (approximately 4ha) should be accommodated to the north of the Eastern Transport Corridor before development begins in the south western corner of the housing area;
  - (ix) the s106 agreement for Link 66<sup>3.67</sup> and Lingfield Point (see draft Policy MGP3) requires financial contributions to be made, to deliver highways improvements at the McMullen Road/Eastern Transport Corridor junction and at all junctions on the A66(T) on a pro rata basis, reflecting the amount and type of development delivered. Any other development that generates an impact on these roads and junctions will be expected to provide mitigation in the same way;
  - (x) slower than expected progress in the development of cost effective and viable renewable energy technologies, and an increased focus on energy efficiency as a means of reducing carbon emissions from new developments means that a revised approach to delivering sustainable buildings is required;
  - (xi) to meet aspirations, high speed broadband should be provided throughout the area, particularly to the employment development areas;
  - (xii) a recent emerging strategy<sup>3.68</sup> seeks to designate two new Local Nature Reserves at Red Hall Wetland and Mill Lane adjacent to the south west and north west of the housing area (see draft Policy MGP25). Four green corridors cross the area connecting the Eastern Urban Fringe to the rest of the green infrastructure network; within their buffer zones (see draft Policy MGP24) highly green wildlife friendly development should take place.

**Comments Received and Sustainability Appraisal Findings**

3.5.8 In earlier consultations<sup>3.69</sup> issues identified included loss of agricultural land and biodiversity, river and surface water flooding and increasing the number of houses identified to ensure deliverability. However, the loss of agricultural land was agreed at the Core Strategy Examination land, the natural flood plain will be kept and any surface water flooding can be addressed through on-site storage through the use of sustainable urban drainage schemes (see also draft Policy MGP 34) .

3.5.9 The sustainability appraisal<sup>3.70</sup> indicates that ??

**Preparing a Draft Policy: the Preferred Housing Option**

3.5.11 Of three options considered for housing, a combination of option (b) and (c) that made use of land in the south western corner of the site first was considered the most sustainable. It allows the sustainable drainage scheme for the Link 66 development to be integrated into the approach for the housing area, alongside landscape and green infrastructure networks. Also, it provides the most opportunity for links to Red Hall to be realised within this plan period. On-site or off-site infrastructure should also be designed with capacity to accommodate further development beyond 2026. The matters outlined below are considered essential for the proper planning of the area, to create a neighbourhood where people will aspire to live and to ensure that the new community integrates positively with the existing residents. The details will need to be identified in a comprehensive masterplan agreed with the Council, to guide the development of this area within the plan period and beyond.

3.5.12 Whilst about 230 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 to create a new neighbourhood will continue on this site well beyond 2026. To ensure that development can be readily integrated with the existing and proposed community at Red Hall, and that key infrastructure (such as a road link from the Eastern Transport Corridor to provide safe access and egress) is

put in at the outset, residential development should be phased for build out from the south western corner adjacent to the Eastern Transport Corridor and Red Hall first, and progressing from there both eastwards and northwards. To deliver sustainable growth and quality of life benefits, it is important that the new residential area is not a 'bolt-on' to Red Hall; links between the two are important to ensure that the existing homes and new ones integrate over time, and that the services within each can be shared.

<sup>3.71</sup>Darlington Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Arc4 for DBC, 2012

3.5.13 The development will be expected to include a range of house types and sizes. The area is particularly suitable for three and four bedroom houses, addressing a shortfall in the stock compared to demand<sup>3.71</sup>, whilst land closest to community facilities, shops and services would be suitable for housing for older people and for those with disabilities; this should amount to about 5% of all new housing. The development will also be expected to meet the Core Strategy affordable housing requirement in full<sup>3.72</sup>, with provision to be at about 30% for each phase of development.

<sup>3.72</sup>Darlington Core Strategy, Policy CS11

3.5.14 The local shops proposed at Lingfield Point and existing at Red Hall could meet most of the day to day needs of people living in the new housing, but the wider area is relatively remote from local shops, with the nearest alternatives being at Haughton Village and the Whinfield District Centre and Morton Palms, over 1.5km away. Through the masterplan, consideration must be given to providing additional shops to meet local needs<sup>3.73</sup>, ideally in conjunction with other community facilities, in the central part of the site, and from which sustainable travel routes should radiate, linking provision to both existing and proposed new housing areas and other local community facilities.

<sup>3.73</sup>defined in policy CS9 Darlington Core Strategy, DBC 2012

3.5.15 Because of uncertainties around the availability of funding to support new community infrastructure such as schools and health provision, the preferred option encourages and allows for the possibility of provision, but is not prescriptive about this. In addition, so that land identified for these uses is not sterilised in the long term, the draft policy allows for its use for other purposes if there is no prospect of the intended facilities being realised.

<sup>3.74</sup>Flood Zone 3b: land where water has to flow or be stored in times of flood

3.5.16 A large part of the north western area close to the River Skerne is a natural flood plain and lies within Flood Zone 3b<sup>3.74</sup> rendering it unsuitable for built development. It is important that this large area is fully integrated into the overall masterplan; floodplains can be a valuable green infrastructure resource, particularly for wildlife and sport. Opportunities to promote this land efficiently by using about 8ha as playing fields to meet the needs of local teams should be explored.

3.5.17 Housing development should have a positive, vibrant green interface with the strategic Darlington-Stockton green corridor, and a much softer, wildlife-rich interface with the strategic River Skerne corridor<sup>3.68</sup>. The relationship to other existing green infrastructure, particularly the Local Nature Reserves (see draft Policy MGP 25), the need for development to avoid areas of flood risk, the requirement to protect and provide access to the Scheduled World War II bombing decoy control shelter in the north eastern part of the area and the desire for development to be buffered from roads and railway lines are the starting point for planning an attractive, well connected network of green infrastructure for sport, recreation, adventurous and natural play, local food and wildlife.

**Preparing a Draft Policy: the Preferred Employment Land Option**

3.5.18 Of the two options considered for employment land, Option (a) which makes use of Lingfield Park, Link 66 and Yarm Road South for B1/B2 and B8 uses and Morton Palms for B1a uses was considered the most sustainable (see draft Policy MGP 11). It allows sites to come forward in locations that have previously been successful in attracting those types of occupiers. Morton Palms provides significant



opportunities for the expansion of high value office development, while Lingfield Park and Link 66 should be promoted as a priority location for employment uses over the plan period. Yarm Road South provides for complementary B1/B2 and B8 uses to meet identified needs. These uses are also being promoted elsewhere in the town, including more sustainable locations like the Town Centre Fringe and at the nearby Lingfield Point. Any new employment development in this location will need to complement existing and planned provision elsewhere, and will be expected to do so through the high quality of the design and environment provided, including the provision of high speed broadband and appropriate car and cycle parking.

- 3.5.19 Wildlife friendly greenspace should be incorporated, to enliven the employment development, including through the creative use of sustainable drainage<sup>3.68</sup>. Quality landscaping and tree planting will provide space for nature, places for employees to relax and an attractive setting. The relationship to other existing green infrastructure, particularly the green corridors, existing balancing ponds at Morton Palms and the Maidendale Local Nature Reserve (see draft Policy MGP 25), and the desire for development to have a high level of landscape amenity space should be considered in the planning of green infrastructure for informal recreation, walking, cycling and wildlife.
- 3.5.20 A high pressure gas main runs along the eastern boundary of the A66 (T) (see draft Policy MGP 30) just outside this location. But the outer limits of its exclusion zone cross into the eastern area of Link 66 and Morton Palms. The impacts on employment land are negligible but where appropriate, solutions should be agreed in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive.

**Preparing a Draft Policy: General Issues**

<sup>3.75</sup>Sustainable drainage systems: cover the range of sustainable approaches to surface drainage management, including SuDS and mimic natural drainage, managing surface water runoff as close to where it falls as possible.

- 3.5.21 Parts of the Eastern Urban Fringe are at high risk of surface water flooding, meaning that sustainable drainage<sup>3.75</sup> (see draft Policy MGP 34) needs to be planned and put in place before development begins. The south western part of the housing site is expected to be the focus for a network of highly biodiverse balancing ponds to manage surface water run off from the housing area and the Link 66 site. They should be an integral part of the green infrastructure network and provide for informal recreation and education to complement the existing, adjacent Red Hall Wetland. Elsewhere appropriate surface water management should be incorporated into the design of development.

<sup>3.76</sup>Plan for Growth, Budget 2011, HM Treasury

- 3.5.22 As new housing is not scheduled in this location until 2016, it will all need to be zero carbon to comply with Government policy<sup>3.76</sup>; all other development should achieve this standard from 2019. A combination of highly energy efficient design and development and renewable or low carbon technologies (see draft Policy MGP 33) is expected to deliver the majority of carbon savings on site, with ‘allowable solutions’<sup>3.77</sup> being used to deliver any outstanding requirements.

<sup>3.77</sup>Allowable solutions are small, medium or large scale carbon-saving projects on or off site required to deliver carbon compliance.

- 3.5.23 At its boundaries, all new development must include significant structural landscaping, with mixed native woodland and species rich planting along the A66(T) boundary. Wherever possible, existing hedgerows, roadside verges and native mature trees should be retained and integrated into the green infrastructure network, particularly along the Eastern Transport Corridor, the A66 (T), Stockton Road and along the northern side of the Bishop Auckland to Saltburn railway line to enhance landscape and environmental quality, and promote an attractive and distinctive area. To support ongoing management and maintenance of high quality spaces, a green infrastructure management levy on all new development will be applied.

- 3.5.24 Links to, along and between the green corridors should be provided or improved particularly to the existing sustainable transport routes along Stockton Road, the A66(T) and Eastern Transport Corridor to provide access for walkers and cyclists

between different neighbourhoods and for home, work, school and leisure. Public rights of way connecting Red Hall to Great Burdon, and Yarm Road to the southern urban fringe, should be integrated into the green infrastructure network.

3.5.25 High frequency bus penetration within the housing area should ensure that bus stops are no more than 300m from the majority of homes. Bus services should also be provided from different parts of the wider area to the Town Centre which together with new high quality walking and cycling routes, will provide travel choice.

3.5.26 The A66(T) currently experiences a high volume of traffic, particularly at peak times, as people travel to and from employment areas in the Eastern Urban Fringe and elsewhere in Darlington, and others travel into the Tees Valley and North Yorkshire. The Great Burdon roundabout and the Yarm Road roundabout are earmarked for improvement by 2015, but this is dependent on securing funding. In the long term, to avoid severe impacts on the strategic and local highway network, all proposed developments will need to mitigate their overall impact by contributing to highways improvements along the A66 (T) on a pro rata basis reflecting the amount and type of development proposed. Each site must also include roads to an appropriate standard to link areas of new development to the existing highway network.

### 3.5.27 Sustainability appraisal

#### **Draft Policy MGP6: Eastern Urban Fringe**

*130.5 ha of land at the Eastern Urban Fringe is allocated for a mix of uses according to a masterplan for the northern or southern area agreed with the Council, so as to deliver the following:*

#### **A. Housing development:**

- i) about 250 new dwellings (2021-2026), and further significant new housing and associated development thereafter, to create a new neighbourhood in the Eastern Urban Fringe;*
- ii) 30% affordable housing provided within each phase of development, each phase to include both social rented and intermediate tenures;*
- iii) an overall housing mix that include housing capable of being readily adapted to meet a range of needs and/or housing to meet specific needs, the level and type of such provision to be agreed with the Council, and to be not less than 5% of the overall new housing;*
- iv) up to 400m<sup>2</sup> gross floorspace for local shops to meet everyday convenience needs;*
- v) zero carbon housing to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 6 and up to 10% reduction in carbon emissions from on site renewable or low carbon technologies on site, with up to 30% being provided through allowable solutions;*
- vi) at least 2.74ha of publicly accessible green infrastructure to include:
  - f. significant structural landscaping belts along the boundaries with the Eastern Transport Corridor, the A66 (T) and Stockton Road;*
  - g. green corridors linking the Eastern Transport Corridor to the River Skerne and to Stockton Road, to shops and community facilities and Red Hall;*
  - h. wildflower meadows, wetlands and woodland within the River Skerne buffer zone;*
  - i. a significant area in the central part of the site to be a focus for informal recreation and children's play;*
  - j. an allotment site.**
- vii) a flood management scheme for fluvial and surface water run off, to include at least 4ha for balancing ponds;*
- viii) 8ha of playing fields in the western part of the housing site;*
- ix) a network of linked streets, including a new road link from the Eastern Transport Corridor;*

- x) a road network enabling the ready penetration of buses to serve stops within 300m of every home;
- xi) new high quality walking and cycling access along main routes and green corridors to link in with the existing footpath/cycle routes and public rights of way along the River Skerne, Eastern Transport Corridor and along the A66 (T); and
- xii) high speed broadband to every home.

*In addition, the masterplan should reserve land as follows:*

- a) *in the housing area, about 2ha land in the central part of the site for primary education, such land to be reserved until at least 400 new dwellings are completed. If there are no firm plans for the school at that time, the land may be made available for alternative community uses. If none of these can be delivered within a reasonable time, the land may be released for additional new housing;*
- b) *land of appropriate configuration capable of accommodating a potential new GP surgery.*

**B. Employment development:**

- i) *A mix of employment land at:*
  - a. *Morton Palms (8.18ha) for B1a use;*
  - b. *Lingfield Park (7.52ha) for B1, B2 and B8 use;*
  - c. *Link 66 (30.56ha) for B1, B2 and B8 use;*
  - d. *Yarm Road south (32.51ha) for B1, B2 and B8 use.*
- ii) *sustainability standards:*
  - a. *BREEAM 2011 'very good–outstanding' 2013-2018;*
  - b. *Zero carbon development from 2019 onwards;*
  - c. *To include 10% from renewable and low carbon sources.*
- iii) *at least 4.28ha of wildlife friendly green infrastructure to include:*
  - a. *significant structural landscaping belts along the boundaries with the Eastern Transport Corridor, the A66 (T), Yarm Road, Salters Lane and the Bishop Auckland- Saltburn railway line;*
  - b. *creation of a green corridor adjacent to the A66 (T);*
  - c. *connections from Yarm Road South to Maidendale Local Nature Reserve.*
- iv) *appropriate surface water management to meet the needs of each development;*
- v) *a network of linked streets, including a new road link from each site to the local highway network;*
- vi) *a road network enabling the ready penetration of buses;*
- vii) *new high quality walking and cycling access along main routes and green corridors to link in with the existing footpath/cycle routes and public rights of way along the Eastern Transport Corridor, Yarm Road and along the A66 (T);*
- viii) *high speed broadband to every employment unit.*

*The following off-site provision and contributions will be also required as part of the development of each site within the location to mitigate its impact:*

- a) *signalising roundabouts on Eastern Transport Corridor/A66 (T), Yarm Road/A66 (T) and Stockton Road/A66 (T);*
- b) *support for a high frequency bus service from the Eastern Urban Fringe to Darlington Town Centre;*
- c) *enhancement/provision of walking and cycling routes to neighbouring areas and to/from local schools;*
- d) *funding to support smarter travel initiatives.*

**Making it Happen**

- 3.5.28 By preparing a masterplan to guide use and development of the area, and establishing a project delivery team.

## 3.6 DURHAM TEES VALLEY AIRPORT

### Context

- 3.6.1 The Government's new Aviation Policy Framework (March 2013) highlights the importance of aviation infrastructure to economic growth, at the national and regional level, and suggests there are also social and cultural benefits arising from greater national and international connectivity. The Darlington Core Strategy<sup>3.78</sup> recognises the role of Durham Tees Valley Airport as an economic driver, and acknowledges its contribution to economic growth. The airport currently accommodates passenger flights, business and general aviation, but at a much reduced level than was achieved during the mid 2000s. The wider site is also home to other uses, both airport related (e.g. a hotel, fire training school and an aircraft recycling facility) and non airport related, e.g. Priory Healthcare, and includes a significant amount of unused and underused land. The area is served by a rail halt at its north-eastern boundary, but there is currently only a once a week service. A bus service links the airport to Middleton St. George and Darlington Town Centre.
- 3.6.2 Maintaining a viable and thriving regional airport will help to deliver one of the Core Strategy objectives, improving links between the Borough and further afield, affirming the role of the Borough as a gateway to the wider Tees Valley sub-region. To help create the conditions for a thriving airport, the Core Strategy<sup>3.79</sup> supports about 20ha of airport related development<sup>3.80</sup> and about 5ha of general employment development there throughout the plan period. There is also provision in Core Strategy Policy CS5 for employment sites with special attributes to be safeguarded for employment uses or for mixed uses, unless an alternative mix of uses offers greater potential benefits to the community in meeting local needs for business and employment, or has other regeneration benefits. Airport related employment land is considered to be employment land with special attributes.
- 3.6.3 A recent study<sup>3.81</sup> suggests that 57.90ha of land on three sites at the airport, should be restricted for airport-related uses only, as it offers the potential to serve a unique function within the Tees Valley economy for sectors or end users that have distinctive scale, location or site attribute requirements. The study also notes that proposals to open up the land south of the runway as part of a package of measures to sustain the airport are currently being worked up, but does not conclude on how the latter would be supported by the recommendation.

### Issues

- 3.6.4 Continuing poor economic conditions since the Core Strategy was adopted mean that some of the plans for the future growth of the airport<sup>3.82</sup>, for which planning permissions were granted in February 2007, are no longer being actively pursued by the airport's operators. Instead, with both Stockton and Darlington Borough Councils (the site straddles the two boroughs), they are investigating the options for sustaining a viable airport, including the preparation of a masterplan, as a clear statement of intent regarding future development of the airport.
- 3.6.5 Many reasons for the declining use of the airport are related to the wider economic situation and national airports policy. These can only be addressed through a proactive business plan that includes business development, lobbying and marketing to achieve higher levels of air traffic, and achieving more intensive and active use for airport related business at the airport site. The Airport has sought funding to support new infrastructure and development that would help to achieve this. This would include rerouting the access road to land south of the runway to open up that land for development, rail freight improvements, and potentially, new rail facilities for passengers<sup>3.83</sup>. On its own, this may not be sufficient to sustain the airport until economic conditions improve; further development of the airport site, making better use of land to the north of the runway may, as a subsidiary element

<sup>3.78</sup>Darlington Local Development Framework Core Strategy, DBC May 2011

<sup>3.79</sup>Policies CS1 and CS5 of the Core Strategy

<sup>3.80</sup> Airport related uses may include terminal facilities, aircraft/airport maintenance, car facilities, ancillary offices, air freight warehousing and distribution, hotels and airport related training centres.

<sup>3.81</sup>Review of Darlington Business Sites and Premises, NLP for DBC, May 2013

<sup>3.82</sup>3.1.12 of the Core Strategy refers

<sup>3.83</sup>Policy CS19(d) of the Core Strategy refers

of an overall business plan, be required to complement this.

### **Options Considered**

3.6.6 The options considered regarding the content of the policy were as follows:

- (a) a policy that supports and facilitates restoring a viable and thriving airport in the short-medium term that will meet in full the needs of the wider Tees Valley sub-region for business and leisure flights, or;
- (b) a policy that supports and facilitates sustaining a viable airport in the short to medium term, meeting the minimum required to ensure that businesses in the Tees Valley can continue to be connected by air to locations remote from the sub-region, and supports and facilitates restoring a viable and thriving airport over the longer term that will meet in full the needs of the wider Tees Valley sub-region for business and leisure flights; or
- (c) do nothing, and rely on the existing strategic policy content of the Core Strategy.

### **Preparing a Draft Policy: the Preferred Option**

- 3.6.7 Option (b) is the preferred option. It is aspirational over the longer term, but recognises that until the middle part of the plan period, the forecast poor economic conditions are unlikely to deliver significant additional passenger growth. Option (a) is unlikely to be deliverable in the ongoing poor economic conditions, and the scale of any enabling development required to deliver it could significantly adversely affect the Council's ability to deliver its other planning and regeneration objectives. Option (c) may not provide sufficient policy guidance on the amount and type of development that could be acceptable at the airport, and may not acknowledge enough the wider benefits of a viable airport to the sub-region.
- 3.6.8 The sustainability appraisal found the preferred option to be the most sustainable, but it scored badly against environmental objectives because increasing flights would result in more air/noise pollution and carbon emissions. It also found that a pro-active policy, rather than relying on existing Core Strategy policies, was an opportunity to secure environmental mitigations as part of any new development.
- 3.6.9 The unimplemented planning permission on land to the north of the airport runway for the extension of the airport to create a business park, hotel and associated facilities and improvements to the airport was conceived in more buoyant market conditions, and in the current economic climate, is unlikely to be delivered. However, proposals with planning permission to the south of the runway are still being pursued. Also, as part of a wider Tees Valley Metro project, there are proposals to replace the existing Airport railway station with a new station closer to the terminal building, on the eastern side of the access road to the airport. However, no funding has been identified for this element of the Metro project yet.
- 3.6.10 The extent and type of development that could be permitted at the airport is not open ended. To safeguard the achievement of the overall Core Strategy vision, its locational strategy and regeneration objectives, any planning application for non airport related uses, and for general employment uses on more than about 5ha land, will need to be accompanied by a statement setting out why the applicants consider the proposed development will not adversely affect the likelihood of development of the same type as the proposed uses on other more sustainably located sites within the Borough, identified elsewhere in this document.
- 3.6.11 The objective of any development beyond that envisaged in the Core Strategy must be to support a viable airport over the much longer term; most development can be expected to last at least a generation, so it must be demonstrated that development additional to that envisaged by the Core Strategy should sustain an operational airport contributing to the economic needs of Tees Valley over the long term.

- 3.6.12 Any justification of amounts and types of development beyond that indicated in the Core Strategy would also need to set out clearly the extent to which each element is required to fund or part fund other tangible project(s) that will demonstrably sustain the viability of the airport over the long term. In doing so, it must be clear the per unit contribution that would be made by each type of proposed development to the proposed linked project(s).
- 3.6.13 Types and amounts of development for which adequate provision is made elsewhere in the Local Plan will only be permitted if credible evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that it is the minimum needed to enable tangible projects, that it can be demonstrated that the projects proposed will contribute significantly to efforts to sustain a viable airport over the longer term, and the impact on the deliverability of the Core Strategy as a whole can be shown not to be significant. It will also need to be demonstrated that the funding for such projects is not available from any other source.

**Draft Policy MGP7: Durham Tees Valley Airport**

*225 ha of land at Durham Tees Valley Airport is safeguarded for the continued unfettered operation of a thriving regional airport, and for a mix of airport related uses and other uses that may be required to sustain it.*

*About 20ha of airport related development and about 5ha of general employment development will be permitted within the site.*

*Where it can be demonstrated that this will not be sufficient to sustain a viable operational airport, additional amounts of airport related and/or general employment uses, and then other non airport related uses which would not undermine the achievement of Core Strategy objectives nor constrain existing or future aviation and airport related activity may be permitted, where it can be robustly demonstrated that:*

- (a) the amount and type of development will not adversely impact on the Council's ability to deliver the locational strategy and key development sites of the Local Plan and its wider strategic objectives, and*
- (b) the proposed development is the minimum necessary to enable tangible projects that will demonstrably help to sustain the airport over the longer term to be delivered; and*
- (c) any projects proposed under (b) above must be clearly identified in a credible long term business plan, to be submitted to the Council with any planning application; and*
- (d) that best endeavours have been exercised in making best use of existing land, buildings and facilities to support a viable airport; and*
- (e) funding to sustain the airport or deliver the tangible projects in (b) above is not available from another source.*

**Making it Happen**

- 3.6.14 Land use and development proposals to sustain a viable airport and improve airport infrastructure will be included in a plan for the airport, to be progressed jointly by Stockton and Darlington Borough Councils with the support of Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, and then through bids for funding and planning applications.

**3.7 LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT**

**Context**

- 3.7.1 Limits to development are an established policy tool in the Local Plan, which will help to achieve the locational strategy for new development<sup>3.84</sup>. Generally, the Darlington Core Strategy

<sup>3.84</sup>Policy CS1, Darlington LDF Core Strategy, DBC, May 2011

indicates that new development should take place within the limits to development, unless there are specific justifications otherwise. The limits to development also help preserve the distinctive identities of existing settlements, and protect the open countryside between settlements.

- 3.7.2 The limits to development currently depicted on the Local Plan Proposals Map were drawn up in the 1990s and need to be brought up to date, to reflect new development that has happened since then, and to accommodate any new edge of settlement land allocations that are required for this plan period. The revised limits, defined through the policy below, will provide more certainty as to where development will generally be permitted or not permitted<sup>3.85</sup> (National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 154), and highlight the exceptions to it.

<sup>3.85</sup> National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 154

#### **Options Considered**

- 3.7.3 The approach above is considered to be the only option to achieve the objectives outlined above. Within this general approach, options were considered for the treatment of specific areas:
- where new development may call into question the validity of retaining separate limits to development for neighbouring built up areas. Examples are the land separating two of the larger villages of Middleton St. George and Middleton One Row and also Hurworth and Hurworth Place.
  - where development has taken place since the current Local Plan was adopted that have changed the character of the area. Examples are West Park and some smaller scale development around the fringes of the Borough's villages.
  - where inconsistencies in application of existing limits were identified, e.g. Summerhouse.

#### **Preparing a Draft Policy**

- 3.7.4 The criteria and approach to reviewing the limits to development have been drawn up in consultation with interested parties, for example the Darlington Association of Parish Councils, and received broad support<sup>3.86</sup>. Representations received so far regarding limits to development have also been taken into account, e.g. Sadberge Parish Council requested that limits to development for Sadberge remain unaltered.

<sup>3.86</sup> Darlington Association of Parish Councils Briefing Note, 25 September 2012.

#### **3.7.5 Sustainability appraisal findings**

- 3.7.6 In order to provide more certainty about where specific plan policies apply, assessment criteria have been used to identify where the edge of the built up area ends and the countryside begins. This has taken into account factors such as the nature of the land use or building and whether it would be typically located within the urban area or the countryside, and following clearly defined permanent features, such as a walls, fences or roads wherever possible. Where separate limits to development are close to one another, e.g. between Middleton St. George and Middleton One Row, the role that any land in these gaps plays in the characterising the area was considered.

- 3.7.6 The limits to development have been drawn to include areas identified for future planned growth of housing and employment adjoining the urban area including North East Urban Fringe, North West Urban Fringe, housing sites in the Harrowgate Hill/Beaumont Hill area and employment sites at Faverdale.

- 3.7.7 The results of this work are the development limits identified around the main urban area of Darlington and around rural settlements, as shown on the Policies Map. The draft policy also expands on the 'rural needs' clause of Core Strategy Policy CS1.

**Draft Policy MGP8: Development Limits**

*Development within the limits identified on the Policies Map will be acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant national and local policies.*

**Making it Happen**

3.7.8 Through the development management process.

**3.8 DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

**Context**

3.8.1 The countryside or rural area is the entire Borough outside the development limits of the main Darlington urban area (draft Policy MGP 8). It includes open countryside and rural settlements, and Durham Tees Valley Airport. National planning policy<sup>3.87</sup> indicates that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised and the thriving rural communities within it supported.

<sup>3.87</sup>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), CLG 2012

3.8.2 The Darlington Core Strategy<sup>3.88</sup> identifies the main urban area and existing villages as the most suitable locations for future development, and that outside the limits to development, it should only be to meet identified rural needs. However, it does not explain what rural needs are.

<sup>3.88</sup>Core Strategy Policy CS1

3.8.3 National Policy<sup>3.89</sup> also indicates that plans should support economic growth in rural areas, including the development and diversification of agriculture, and rural tourism and leisure which respects the character of the countryside. The Core Strategy also seeks to strengthen the character, function, intrinsic quality and distinctiveness of the countryside<sup>3.90</sup>, also addressed in draft Policy MGP 22 later in this document.

<sup>3.89</sup>NPPF, paragraph 28

<sup>3.90</sup>Core Strategy objective 7

**Issues**

3.8.4 The Core Strategy indicates that the preferred location for new development in the rural area should be within the limits to development of villages. It is envisaged that development in these areas should be capable of accommodating most of the social and economic needs of rural areas, but it is also recognises that there will be instances where this is not possible, and development outside of development limits may be needed, or could be appropriate. Achieving the right balance between supporting economic growth, vital and viable communities and protecting the character of the countryside could require local policy on detailed matters. The matters considered were:

1. what form and type of development would be acceptable within the development limits of villages and other rural settlements<sup>3.91</sup>;
2. what types of economic development may be sustainable in the open countryside;
3. what controls are needed on the conversion of existing buildings in open countryside, and on residential extensions and replacement dwellings in the open countryside;

<sup>3.91</sup>see draft Policy MGP 7 for Durham Tees Valley Airport

**Options Considered**

3.8.5 The two options considered were:

- a) to rely on national policy to guide the location, nature and extent of development within the open countryside; or
- b) set locally distinct and detailed policies that support appropriate new sustainable developments and enable existing rural developments and enterprises to grow within the open countryside areas of the Borough.

3.8.6 The main matters (b) above would need to include are:

- rural employment, including tourist accommodation and equestrian uses;
- reuse, conversion, replacement and extension of existing buildings in the open countryside, both residential and non residential; and



- new buildings in the open countryside, both residential and non residential.

3.8.7 There is sufficient planning policy to guide the form and type of development within development limits in the Core Strategy and the Revised Design of New Development SPD<sup>3.92</sup>, so this aspect is not taken forward here.

<sup>3.92</sup>Core Strategy  
Policy CS1

3.8.8 Option b) was selected, because the Borough's rural areas have experienced significant development pressure in recent years, and sustaining the character and appearance of the countryside around the main urban area and villages is an important strand of the adopted Core Strategy<sup>3.93</sup>. This option will also introduce more clarity and certainty into the planning process for the rural parts of the borough, helping to speed up decisions on planning applications.

<sup>3.93</sup>Core Strategy  
Policies CS1 and  
CS14

### **Preparing a Draft Policy: the Preferred Option**

#### *Rural Employment*

3.8.9 Supporting economic growth in the countryside can mean accommodating acceptable farm diversification schemes, including things like equestrian centres or livery yards, tourist accommodation (including static caravans, touring caravans and chalet-type accommodation – see Core Strategy Policy CS6), office space elements of storage, restoration or arts and crafts businesses in the open countryside. To safeguard the intrinsic character of the countryside, development associated with such uses should be appropriate in a rural setting, and minimise its impact on its surroundings. For caravan sites and tourist accommodation, this means compact and unobtrusive sites, making use of natural or enhanced screening wherever possible, provided by trees and landscaping, and making use of any existing buildings where possible. Touring caravan and camping sites, although mainly involving temporary structures, should also be screened as much as possible by existing or enhanced landscaping, with any associated facilities and new buildings kept to a minimum, by making use of existing buildings where practicable (see draft Policy MGP 22).

3.8.10 Developments in the open countryside also need to be sited to get the benefit of their open countryside location, and should not adversely affect existing agricultural operations. Equestrian developments, for example should be located where there is or could be ready and safe access to the bridleway network, and any developments should not limit the future viability or sever any existing farm holding.

3.8.11 There can be instances where new economic activity in the open countryside requires associated residential accommodation. Where this is so, evidence will need to be submitted demonstrating that suitable alternative accommodation is not available within the existing local housing stock within a reasonable distance, and that the need for on-site accommodation cannot be dealt with by other means, such as CCTV surveillance.

#### *Re-use and conversion of existing buildings*

3.8.12 This is the most common development pressure in the open countryside, but not all buildings are suitable. For example, some may be too big or may require significant alteration, some may not be structurally sound enough and would require significant reconstruction, and others may not be in keeping with their surroundings, or the works required could pose a threat to a protected species<sup>3.94</sup>.

<sup>3.94</sup>Wildlife and  
Countryside Act  
1981

3.8.13 As existing buildings in the open countryside are a limited resource, these should be considered for economic or community use, prior to conversion for residential use<sup>3.95</sup>, the Council will require evidence of this as part of any planning application. Residential conversions can, due to their domestic requirements, have a greater impact on the character of a building and its setting.

<sup>3.95</sup>NPPF  
paragraph 28

3.8.14 Similarly, replacement dwellings and extensions to existing dwellings can, individually and cumulatively, have a significant adverse impact on the character of

individual properties and their surroundings. Extensions should appear subsidiary to the existing dwelling and should not attempt to compete with or dominate the original dwelling, as first built. Any altered or extended building should still respect and reflect the character, scale and proportions of the host dwelling (which should remain predominant), as well as the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It should fit with the existing context, make use of the existing footprint, and be sited at or behind any existing building line, unless an alternative provides a better design solution, in terms of highway safety amenity or other reasons. More details on appropriate design and materials are provided in the Design SPD<sup>3.96</sup>.

3.8.15 The replacement of rural dwellings will be carefully controlled to avoid the loss of buildings that are worthy of retention, (e.g. those identified on the Borough's Local List that are attractive or are valuable historic features within the landscape and make a positive contribution to the character of the area), and to ensure that they do not have a significantly greater built impact on the countryside character and appearance than the dwelling it is proposed to replace. Where buildings are worthy of retention, applicants will have to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council that they are not capable of renovation. Replacement dwellings should be comparable in size with the original building.

<sup>3.97</sup> NPPF  
paragraph 55.

3.8.16 Isolated new dwellings in the countryside will only be permitted in the circumstances outlined in national policy<sup>3.97</sup>. One such circumstance where new residential dwellings may be justified in the countryside is if it can be demonstrated there is a specific need for a rural worker(s), and the draft policy and **Appendix 4** sets out the tests that will be applied to establish such a need.

<sup>3.98</sup> NPPF  
paragraph 54.

3.8.17 Affordable housing proposals would be considered against Policy CS11 and national policy<sup>3.98</sup>; it was not considered necessary to include a rural exceptions site policy in this document. Accommodating Gypsies and Travellers is dealt with in policies elsewhere in the Local Plan<sup>3.99</sup>.

<sup>3.99</sup> Core Strategy  
Policy CS13.

3.8.18 Note that as this document was being prepared, revised permitted development rights for rural buildings are expected to be published by the Government during Spring 2013. The draft policies below may need to be reviewed in the light of this.

### 3.8.19 Sustainability appraisal...

#### **Draft Policy MGP 9: Economic Development in the Open Countryside**

*Rural enterprises will normally be permitted, provided it can be shown that an open countryside location for such a development will not harm, or it is subsidiary to or related to a main agricultural use and necessary to sustain the agricultural holding as a whole.*

*Where proposals are for a farm shop then, in addition, it must be demonstrated that the functional need for a shop cannot be met within nearby town or district centres (defined in Policy MGP 14) or within existing vacant premises in village locations. Proposals that would undermine an existing village shop will not be supported.*

*Where possible, proposals should reuse existing buildings and any necessary new buildings must be well-related to existing buildings. The character, scale and design of the proposal should be appropriate to its open countryside surroundings, and there should be satisfactory access from the road network. Consideration must be given to economic and community uses before residential use is proposed.*

*Proposals for the conversion and re-use of buildings in the open countryside should be:*

- a) largely accommodated within the existing building, without significant demolition or rebuilding and should make use of retained features where practicable;
- b) for a building that is large enough to be converted without the need for additional buildings, substantial new extensions will not be permitted. Any extensions that are required are subordinate in scale and proportion to the original dwelling;
- c) capable of conversion without significant alteration, and not prejudice any viable agricultural operations on an active farm unit;
- d) for a building of visual, architectural or historic importance, and
- e) in keeping with its surroundings; and
- f) structurally sound and capable of re-use without fundamental rebuilding (as demonstrated by a structural survey submitted at the time of making an application); and
- g) reasonable in terms of using domestic features, such as new window or door openings, chimneys, porches, dormers, external garaging and garden area. They should not be excessively used and may not be acceptable at all in rural locations.

*Where the re-use or conversion of existing rural buildings is not practicable or viable, replacement buildings for non-residential use may be permitted if it would result in a more acceptable and sustainable form of development and it would be appropriate in scale and design to its setting and any neighbouring buildings; If the proposals are for equestrian related development then, in addition:*

- a) there must be adequate land and, for commercial uses, adequate off-road riding facilities available safely nearby for the number of horses to be kept on the land;
- b) any buildings required should be commensurate in size with the number of horses to be kept on the land and the amount of land available for use by those horses;
- c) an agreed comprehensive scheme of management for any ancillary development including hard standing, access roads, parking, fencing, lighting, storage, waste disposal, ménages and sub division of fields will be required; and
- d) the proposal, either on its own or cumulatively, taking account of any other horse related uses in the area, is compatible with its surroundings and adequately protects water courses, groundwater and the safety of all road users.

*If the proposals are for tourist accommodation then, in addition:*

- e) new static caravan and chalet type accommodation must be sited within a mature landscape containing established woodland that screens the site from roads, viewpoints and other public places, and will be subject to conditions to prevent occupancy all year; and/or
- f) new camping and touring caravan sites should be sited and landscaped so as to minimise its visual impact, should have good access to the road and footpath network, and will be subject to conditions to prevent the permanent occupation of the site.

*Proposals for extensive outdoor leisure uses will also be supported in appropriate locations, provided that their impact on the open countryside is minimised, and they provide satisfactory access arrangements and protect amenity.*

**Draft Policy MGP10: Residential Uses in the Open Countryside**

*The replacement and extension of residential buildings in the open countryside will only be permitted if there is no detrimental effect on the character, appearance and amenities of the site and surroundings.*

*Extensions of residential buildings must satisfy criteria a) to f) in draft Policy MGP8.*

*Replacement dwellings will only be permitted if:*

- a) the existing dwelling has a lawful use, has not been abandoned, and is not a caravan, mobile home or other temporary structure;*
- b) the size of the new replacement dwelling is not significantly larger than the original house volume or footprint;*
- c) the number of new dwellings is no more than the number of dwellings to be demolished and replaced; and*
- d) they are positioned on the footprint of the existing dwelling, unless a more appropriate location is indicated for landscape, highway safety, neighbouring residential amenity, or other environmental reasons.*

*New permanent dwellings will only be permitted if they are required to support existing agricultural activities on well-established agricultural units, and provided that:*

- a) there is a clearly established existing functional need (see Appendix 4);*
- b) the need relates to a full-time worker, or one who is primarily employed in agriculture and does not relate to a part-time requirement;*
- c) the unit and the agricultural activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so (see Appendix 4);*
- d) the functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned; and*
- e) other planning requirements, e.g. in relation to access, or impact on the countryside, are satisfied.*

**Making it Happen**

3.8.20 Primarily through the Council's development management function.