

7. A DISTINCTIVE, GREENER, CLEANER ENVIRONMENT

7.1 SAFEGUARDING THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Context

^{7.1}Chapter 12, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), DCLG, 2012

7.1.1 National planning policy^{7.1} requires local planning authorities to set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. It emphasises the importance of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and acknowledges the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring. The Council's adopted Core Strategy^{7.2} also seeks to protect, enhance and promote the quality and integrity of the Borough's distinctive built heritage and archaeology. This includes locally significant railway and Quaker heritage as well as nationally significant assets.

^{7.2}Darlington Core Strategy, DBC 2011, Policy CS14

^{7.3}see draft Policies MGP 22-24

7.1.2 The historic environment includes areas and buildings, archaeological sites, historic streets and 'strategic historic routes'^{7.3}, historic landscapes, parks and other green spaces. It is a non-renewable, shared resource, and any loss or harm to it is often irreversible. Understanding the significance of the historic environment and the contribution that the setting of historic assets makes to their significance is essential in guiding good decisions about land use change and development affecting them.

^{7.4}identified on Durham County's Historic Environment Record (HER), a computerised inventory of all aspects of our surrounding environment that have been built, formed or influenced by human activity, including known heritage assets, sites without statutory protection and the find-spots of archaeological objects

7.1.3 As a group, Darlington's archaeology and historic buildings are of considerable significance. The Borough's designated heritage assets^{7.4} include:

- Over 500 Listed Buildings;
- 20 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's);
- 16 Conservation Areas; and
- 2 Registered Parks and Gardens

7.1.4 The Borough also contains a wealth of non designated heritage and archaeological assets, recorded locally^{7.4}, which can sometimes be as significant as designated assets.

Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments

7.1.5 The Council has a statutory duty to protect listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. This is supported by a national planning policy presumption in favour of their conservation^{7.5}, and informed by survey information about the condition of and risk to them^{7.6} and any potential improvements required.

^{7.5} Paragraphs 132 to 134 of the NPPF

Conservation Areas

7.1.6 A conservation area is designated by the Council under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and is defined as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Once designated, particular attention must be given in all planning decisions to the desirability of conserving and enhancing its character and appearance. It is a duty of the council to designate new Conservation Areas and currently, consideration is being given to the designation of a Parkgate Conservation Area.

^{7.6} Listed buildings list and Scheduled Ancient Monument 2009 work

7.1.7 Where the Council considers there to be a planning threat to the character, appearance and significance of any conservation area and that protection is required to prevent harm to such significance, the permitted development rights will be withdrawn under Article IV of the Town and Country Planning Act (General Permitted Development Order) 1995 as amended.

Historic Parks and Gardens

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

Archaeology (Designated and Non-Designated)

- 7.1.9 Significant archaeological finds in the Borough include those from the Iron Age, Roman and Medieval periods. New investigations and finds mean the record^{7.4} is always being updated. Survey and recording prior to development is an important way of adding to the record, particularly in areas of known local historical interest, such as within designated Conservation Areas, and non-designated Areas of Special Archaeological Significance^{7.7}, where archaeological finds are more likely.

^{7.7} definition – predicting where unidentified heritage assets may be identified in the future

Designated and Non- Designated Heritage Assets of significance to Railway and Quaker Heritage

- 7.1.10 Darlington has particularly strong railway and Quaker heritage. Opened in 1825, the Stockton and Darlington railway was the world's first publicly financed passenger railway. Its route through the Borough (shown on the Policies Map) is mostly intact, serving some transport functions. The route includes several important structures, but only some, such as the scheduled Skerne Bridge, have statutory protection. The area around North Road Railway Station and within the Northgate Conservation Area has a particular concentration of railway heritage interest, e.g. the Head of Steam Museum, the lime cells, a goods shed and associated Victorian residential terraces. In addition to designated assets, Westbrook Villas, off North Road, the Coal Drops to the rear of Westbrook Villas, the Railway Tavern Public House on Northgate and the Black Swan Public House on Parkgate are examples of non-designated assets to be found in the Borough with strong links to the town's railway heritage.
- 7.1.11 Darlington Quakers played an active part in government, industry, commerce and development in the town during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were responsible for many of Darlington's Victorian public buildings and manor houses, parks and cemeteries, including the listed South Park and the indoor market/clock tower and the Grade II* Listed Friends Meeting House. The value and significance of these assets within the borough is recognised, for their contribution to the unique identity of the borough and their potential contribution to tourism. Non-designated heritage associated the Quaker movement includes Elm Ridge Methodist Church and Carmel School (formerly Hummersknott).

Issues

- 7.1.12 As national planning policy provides a strong basis for protecting designated heritage assets from inappropriate development, the key issues arising from the above for local policy development are:
- how to ensure that non designated heritage assets and archaeology are recognised and afforded appropriate protection;
 - how to indicate where unidentified assets are most likely to be discovered; and
 - how to encourage proposals that help conserve heritage assets; and
 - how to ensure the wider contribution of locally distinctive heritage is recognised in new development and regeneration projects.
- 7.1.13 Where there are heritage constraints relating to specific sites, these will be covered in future detail on specific site allocations.

Options Considered

- 7.1.14 The only option that would deliver local plan objectives, particularly to safeguard local distinctiveness and identity, was to prepare a positive policy which seeks to enhance key heritage themes within the Borough, outlines the additional measures that will be in place to safeguard them, and identifies areas where development will be encouraged to enhance the interpretation of assets. More detail is also considered necessary to guide potential developers on how to define the significance of heritage and archaeological assets and assess the impact of development upon them.

Darlington's Approach to Safeguarding the Historic Environment

- 7.1.15 Non-designated historic assets, including those of railway or Quaker origin, will be identified through conservation area character appraisals and the preparation of a list of heritage assets of local interest, and where appropriate will be protected through other policies, e.g. ornamental gardens detailed in draft Policy MGP 22. Developers may also be alerted to non-designated assets through pre-application enquiries by reference to the 'local list' and any updates to it.
- 7.1.16 The route of the former Stockton and Darlington Railway through the Borough is identified on the Policies Map to alert potential developers that this is an area where there is a higher likelihood of undiscovered heritage assets, and to help safeguard it from inappropriate development. Proposals that encourage the creation of a 'heritage campus' to enhance the historic interest of the North Road Railway Station and surrounding area (including lime cells and railway shed) are currently being prepared by the Railway Heritage Enquiry Group, and will be reflected in this document when firm proposals emerge.
- 7.1.17 For buildings within conservation areas, the objective is to secure the optimum viable use. Keeping a building in its original use is preferred, as it generally has least impact on its character or appearance. If this cannot be achieved viably, an applicant may be able to justify converting it to a new use, if it can be demonstrated that, on balance, it will be compatible with the significance and the setting of the historic building, and not detract from other evidential, historic, aesthetic or communal heritage values.

^{7.8} drawn up by Durham County Council's Archaeology Service and include Scheduled Monuments (including 50 m buffer zone), undesignated deserted or shrunken medieval villages, Conservation areas, the 'historic cores' of settlements (defined in the County Durham and Darlington Historic Landscape Characterisation Project), Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, areas identified from existing research, areas previously only marked with a point rather than a spatial indication of their true extent.

- 7.1.18 In Areas of Special Archaeological Significance^{7.8} (as identified on the Policies Map), development proposals involving ground disturbance will need to be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report. This report should set out a mitigation strategy to either preserve in situ, or to excavate, analyse and report, or a combination of the two, if archaeology is present, and conditions will be attached to any grant of planning permission to ensure an acceptable mitigation strategy is implemented. Any archaeological evaluation report required should be provided at the same time as the planning application is submitted.
- 7.1.19 'Heritage at Risk' includes buildings, structures and sites whose preservation is threatened, often by vacancy or lack of regular repair and maintenance. English Heritage compiles regional Heritage at Risk Registers, which include grade I and II* Listed Buildings, Listed places of worship, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Conservation Areas known to be at risk as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. Darlington Council maintains a register of Grade II Listed Buildings at Risk (available online and on request). The ultimate responsibility for a historic building lies with its owner; however the Council has the authority to issue a Section 125 Notice, a Repairs Notice or an Urgent Works notice to ensure the building is repaired and no longer at risk. These powers are used reluctantly and it is in the best interests of all parties for work to be carried out voluntarily and before emergency work is required. Proposals that either secure the future of heritage at risk or prevent

Darlington Local Plan: Making and Growing Places Preferred Options, June 2013
assets from becoming 'at risk' in the first place will be encouraged where the significance of the asset can be adequately protected.

^{7.9} NPPF, paragraph 128

7.1.20 National planning policy^{7.9} requires applicants to assess the significance of specific heritage assets and the impact of development on them. In order to assist applicants with this, a Borough wide context has been prepared as a starting point (**see Appendix 5**). Such assessments^{7.10} will be required alongside submission of those planning applications that the Council considers may affect heritage assets. Potential developers should visit the Council's website^{7.11} and if required contact the Council in advance to find out what level of detail will be required, as this will vary for the type and size of proposal, and the number and significance of heritage assets likely to be affected.

^{7.10} could be heritage statement or in a Design and Access Statement

^{7.11} www.darlington.gov.uk

^{7.12} English Heritage defines the significance of a heritage asset as "The sum of the cultural and natural heritage values of a place, often set out in a statement of significance".

7.1.21 The assessment of heritage significance^{7.12} should include:

- an understanding of the fabric and evolution of the place;
- identifying who values the place, and why they do so;
- relating identified heritage values (see below) to the fabric of the place;
- considering the relative importance of those identified values;
- considering the contribution of associated objects and collections;
- considering the contribution made by setting^{7.13} and context;
- comparing the place with other places sharing similar values; and
- defining the significance of the place.

^{7.13} English Heritage defines the setting of a heritage asset as "The surroundings in which a place is experienced, its local context, embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape".
* A list of these assets is included at **Annex 1**

7.1.22 When assessing the impact of proposals, four aspects of heritage asset value and their relative importance should be considered. The wider significance of Darlington's heritage assets are set out in Appendix 4 and in brief, the values are as follows:

- evidential: the potential of a place to provide evidence about past human activity;
- historical: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present.
- aesthetic value: the way people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place
- communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory

7.1.23 The Council will assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset and offer sufficient benefits in heritage terms outweigh departing from those planning policies. Any assessment will be based upon sound evidence that demonstrates that enabling development is the only way to secure the long term future of the heritage assets.

7.1.24 Sustainability appraisal... (to follow).

Draft Policy MGP21: Protecting Darlington's Heritage Assets

A) Conservation areas

Development in a conservation area, involving the alteration, extension or change of use of a building or construction of any structure must respect:

- a) existing architectural and historic character and associations by having regard to the positioning and grouping, form, scale, detailing of development and the use of materials in its construction; and*
- b) existing hard and soft landscaping features including areas of open space, trees, hedges, walls, fences, watercourses and surfacing and the special character created by them; and*
- c) historic plot boundaries and layouts.*

Built development will not normally be permitted on public and private open spaces within or adjacent to conservation areas where they are important to the landscape or townscape qualities of the conservation area or provide views or vistas into, from or within the conservation area, unless it can be demonstrated that the wider public benefit demonstrably outweighs the harm to the heritage asset.

The demolition of buildings or structures in a conservation area will not normally be permitted if:

- d) the building makes a positive contribution to the architectural or historic character of the conservation area; and*
- e) the structural condition of the building is repairable; and/or*
- f) there are no approved detailed plans for the redevelopment of the site and a contract has not been entered into for the implementation of that redevelopment; and*
- g) there has been insufficient consideration of other options to re-use the building in its current form.*

The Council will prepare and keep up to date Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans for each conservation area, including any proposed new or extended areas, as the basis for determining proposals within or where it would affect the setting of conservation areas.

B) Listed Buildings

Development involving the alteration, extension or change of use of a listed building or construction of any structure within its curtilage must:

- a) protect its significance as a listed building;*
- b) protect existing historic hard and soft landscaping features including trees, hedges, walls, fences and surfaces;*
- c) protect historic plot boundaries and layouts; and*
- d) ensure the optimum viable use of the building.*

Any development affecting the setting of a listed building will be permitted if the proposal conserves or enhances either its significance as a listed building and/or the contribution its setting makes to its significance.

Proposals involving the demolition of a listed building or structure within the curtilage of a listed building will not be permitted, except in exceptional circumstances as detailed in national policy.

C) Archaeological Sites and Monuments

Development proposals involving ground disturbance in Areas of Special Archaeological Significance (as identified on the Policies Map), must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report, except for all householder development and extensions, and for alterations to existing commercial premises of 40m² or less, unless the proposed development directly affects or is within 50m of a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

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

D) Historic Parks and Gardens

Development will only be permitted in Parks and Gardens of National Interest where it can not be accommodated elsewhere, is directly related to the conservation management of the park or garden, and does not detract from its significance.

E) Heritage assets of local interest

The conservation or enhancement of heritage assets of local interest will be promoted by preparing a Local List and undertaking Conservation Area Character Appraisals. Ornamental Parks and Gardens as identified in Policy MGP21 will also be included on a local list.

The significance, character and setting of heritage assets of local interest, including those on a local list, will be protected by:

- i) using the above criteria (under B Listed Buildings) when assessing the demolition of a non-designated heritage asset;*
- ii) requiring alterations and extensions to be based on an accurate understanding of the significance of the asset including the structure, and respect the architectural character, and detailing of the original building. The structure, features, and materials of the building which contribute to its architectural and historic interest should be retained or restored with appropriate traditional materials and techniques;*
- iii) requiring any proposals to protect and enhance the setting of non-designated heritage assets;*

F) Darlington's Railway and Quaker Heritage

The Council will encourage developments promoting the educational, recreational and/or tourism potential of the industrial and cultural heritage of the borough through sensitive management, enhancement and interpretation of railway and Quaker heritage assets.

Particular support will be given to schemes that preserve and significantly enhance the heritage assets settings and archaeological remains most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, including the line of the Stockton and Darlington Railway of 1825 (as indicated on the Policies Map) and associated structures. Any proposal for development on or adjacent to the line must include measures that preserve any physical remains along the route, aid their interpretation on site and reinstate a legible route where those remains no longer exist.

G) Enabling development

Proposals for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies (the development plan and national policies) but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset may be permitted if it :

- i. secures the long-term future of an asset and, where applicable, its continued use for an appropriate purpose; and*
- ii. is necessary to resolve problems arising from the inherent needs of the asset, rather than the circumstances of the present owner, or the purchase price paid; and*
- iii. sufficient funding is not available from any other source to support the heritage asset; and*
- iv. the amount of enabling development is the minimum necessary to secure the future of the asset and that its form minimizes harm to public interests; and*
- v. the public benefit of securing the future of the asset significantly outweighs the disbenefits of not being in accordance with other policies.*

Making it Happen

7.1.24 Through the development management process, preparing and keeping up to date conservation area appraisals and management plans, preparing a Local List, and maintaining the Historic Environment Record.

7.2 LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Context

7.2.1 The Darlington Core Strategy^{7.14} protects and seeks to appropriately enhance the distinctive character of the Borough’s natural and historic townscapes and landscapes, including unique features like rural gaps, green wedges, green corridors, strategic historic routes and parklands. However, there are some parts of the inner urban area where landscape or townscape quality could be improved^{7.15}, in particular to better promote Darlington’s railway heritage (see draft policy MGP 21).

^{7.14} Darlington LDF Core Strategy, DBC, May 2011, Policies CS14, CS15, CS17

^{7.15} Emerging Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy, DBC, 2013

Issues and Options Considered

7.2.2 The issues associated with protecting and enhancing landscape quality in the Borough have been considered, and are set out below, together with a summary of the options that were considered to address each.

7.2.3 The role and function of rural gaps, green wedges and local green spaces are quite similar; all protect the Borough’s settlement pattern, maintaining openness between different neighbourhoods, so that each keeps their unique identity. But rural gaps, e.g. between Middleton One Row and Middleton St George are also predominantly agricultural land in the rural area, whereas green wedges, e.g. between Red Hall and Haughton, provide a continuous link between the inner urban area and the countryside, and provide space for recreation and wildlife within easy reach of urban residents. Local green spaces can be any type of green space but must have a special significance to the local community. As the Borough continues to grow rural gaps, green wedges and local green spaces will safeguard the identity of communities, particularly in areas that face growth pressures.

Rural gaps

7.2.4 Rural gaps are wide, open areas of green infrastructure that provide a clear and distinct division between villages. The rural gaps between the settlements of Middleton One Row and Middleton St George, Middleton St George and Oak Tree, and Hurworth on Tees and Hurworth Place have existed for many years. Today these relatively small gaps remain important to the rural settlement pattern, to the character of the rural area and to its residents. But the edges of these villages continue to be under pressure from development, this policy together with draft policy MGP 10, will continue to protect the rural gaps as a way to conserve the character and openness of the wider landscape, and its mix of urban and rural development.

- 7.2.5 Given the local importance of rural gaps, the only option considered was to identify and protect rural gaps in locations where more than one village has existed historically, but developed separately over time.

Green wedges

- 7.2.6 Green wedges are open areas of green infrastructure that penetrate the urban area, linking to the rural area and providing a clear and distinct division between two neighbourhoods. The green wedges at Blackwell/Skerne Park, Cocker Beck/Mowden and Haughton/Red Hall maintain a continuous link between town and country for people and wildlife. As such their length will extend to the proposed development limit of the main urban area (see draft policy MGP 10). Each green wedge is different^{7.16} but equally important, on account of their land uses, landscape components, openness, topography, nature of their urban edges and their relationship and importance to the character of Darlington. All also fulfil (or can potentially provide) a mix of sport and recreation, sustainable transport, biodiversity, heritage, amenity, flood and air quality management functions. The width of each reflects the extent to which the space can appropriately perform or will need to perform these landscape and green infrastructure functions in the future.

^{7.16}Local
Landscape
Character
Assessment, DBC,

- 7.2.7 The identification and designation of green wedges will help ensure that new development within a green wedge makes a positive contribution to it, e.g. by improving habitat value or travel routes. Only high quality development ancillary to green infrastructure function(s), limited infilling or reuse of previously developed land will be permitted that would not have any impact on the openness of the landscape.

- 7.2.8 The only option considered for defining the extent of green wedges was to base it on the findings of a landscape character assessment, completed in 2013^{7.16}.

- 7.2.9 The options considered to manage development within green wedges were:
- a) set out criteria for development within the green wedge, to include a range of different types of low density, high quality green built development which could deliver distinctive development but which would reduce openness of the wedges and could also impact upon the other functions e.g. flood management that these spaces perform; or
 - b) only permit built development within green wedges that is ancillary to a green infrastructure function, or is for limited infilling on previously developed land which would not have greater impact on the openness of the landscape than the existing development, and set out criteria against which proposals will be considered. This will ensure that only a limited amount of appropriate quality development is permitted, while retaining urban sprawl.

Local Green Spaces

- 7.2.10 Local Green Spaces are close to the community it serves, which has local significance and is local in character and is not an extensive size. National planning policy^{7.17} indicates a Local Green Space may have special importance to a local community because of its attractiveness, heritage, recreational or biodiversity value. But their primary role is to maintain the openness and permanence of the landscape.

^{7.17}National
Planning Policy
Framework,

- 7.2.11 Local Green Spaces are relatively new; as such there are none in the Borough at the moment. The only option considered was to protect any Local Green Spaces, where identified in the future.

Green Corridors and Strategic Historic Routes

^{7.18}identified in the emerging Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy, DBC,

7.2.12 Strategic and local green corridors^{7.18}, such as the River Tees and the former Darlington and Stockton Railway corridor, have a unique character that contributes to the identity and setting of adjoining neighbourhoods, and as a result, their length, distinctiveness and buffer zones vary (see draft policy MGP 24). Five are also strategic historic routes^{7.19}, which have historically connected nearby towns, villages, hamlets and scattered farms to the market town of Darlington, and provide insights into the past. Some, like Cemetery Lane, have kept much of their original width and features including walls and gateposts, others like Salters Lane have original hedgerows, ditches and banks in places.

^{7.19}strategic historic route: route with local historical associations, currently used as a green corridor

7.2.13 The unique landscape character of each should be reflected in the design of development along their route. This could be within the buildings themselves, the design of open space or through public art^{7.20} and interpretation features. Mature trees, hedgerows, banks, ditches, walls, gateposts and verges which contribute to character should be retained where possible (see draft policy MGP 21).

^{7.20}Public art: permanent or temporary works of art visible to the public, either part of a building or free standing, includes sculpture, lighting, street furniture, paving, railings

7.2.14 Given that green corridors and strategic historic routes contribute so much to Darlington's distinctiveness, and that this is a key objective of the Core Strategy^{7.21}, the only option considered was to protect and improve their landscape qualities.

^{7.21}Objective 7, Darlington LDF Core Strategy, DBC. Mav 2011

Parklands

7.2.15 Parklands are planned and designed gardens which have evolved over a long period of time for informal leisure. In the rural area they often provide the setting for a country house, whilst in the urban area, they are laid out with a network of footpaths connecting features like a bandstand and a lake. The Borough has eleven ornamental parklands dating from the 15th to the early 19th centuries. All have clearly defined boundaries; walls, woodlands, hedgerows and iron railings separate them from the surrounding rural or urban area, reinforcing their unique character. Many are covered by other national and local designations, and all contain a range of listed or locally important heritage features (see draft policy MGP 21).

^{7.22}Seven rural parklands: Walworth Castle, Rockcliffe Hall, Neasham Hall, Hall Garth, Redworth Hall, Middleton Hall, Newbus Grange

7.2.16 The focal point for the seven rural parks^{7.22} is a large country house and related buildings, such as Walworth Castle. They comprise extensive landscaped grounds, created over a long period of time, and can include original features like ornate gateways and lodges (Rockcliffe Hall), long tree lined driveways (Neasham Hall) and areas of original ridge and furrow (e.g. at Walworth Castle). Many continue to be actively managed today.

^{7.23}Blackwell Grange Golf Club Statement of Significance, Archaeo-Environment, August 2012

7.2.17 In the urban area South Park, North Lodge Park, Blackwell Grange and West Cemetery have very different characteristics reflecting their urban location and different intended uses. Dating from the Victorian period the parks are characterised by a network of paths connecting bandstands, fountains and formal gardens to be enjoyed for informal recreation, while at West Cemetery, paths link the burial grounds and the crematorium. Blackwell Grange, whilst urban in location, has the character of a rural park^{7.23}.

7.2.18 Given that each parkland contributes so much to Darlington's character and landscape quality, the only option considered was to protect and improve all parklands, where appropriate.

Rural landscape

^{7.24}Village green: an area usually in the centre of a village, consisting of a plot of grassy

7.2.19 The rural landscape is characterised by a mix of unique landforms, ditches and cuts, for example Bishopton Motte (draft policy MGP 21), village greens^{7.24} and in places traditional field patterns, hedgerows and wetlands. All help distinguish the

rural area from the rest of the Borough, and so will be protected through this draft policy.

Areas of landscape improvement

7.2.20 There are landscapes and townscapes in the Borough which detract from or do little to positively contribute to the Borough's attractive and distinctive character. This can be the case with derelict land in the inner urban area, and with sterile land along rail, river and road corridors^{7.18}, and in parts of the rural area^{7.25}. Taken together and if not addressed, these areas can adversely affect the image of the Borough and its attractiveness to businesses and investors.

^{7.25}Green Food Conclusions, DEFRA, 2012

7.2.21 Proposals for the Town Centre Fringe (draft policy MGP 3) which include restoring a more natural river course, will help to address this. Elsewhere in the urban area, the Darlington Characterisation Study^{7.26} and the Design of New Development SPD^{7.27} will be used to inform the environmental quality improvements that will be sought in the design of new development and regeneration, focussing on elements like density, height, massing, heritage, biodiversity, materials and detailing to restore or enhance the local landscape or townscape. Within the rural area, provision should be made to recreate hedgerows, field margins and wetlands lost, complemented by the use of agri-environment schemes, where appropriate.

^{7.26}Darlington Characterisation Study, DBC, 2009

^{7.27}Revised Design of New Development SPD, DBC, 2011

Comments Received and Sustainability Appraisal Findings

7.2.22 No specific consultations have been carried out on this issue previously, but responses by residents to planning applications submitted in the last two years that have an impact on areas of landscape quality identified above have all outlined the desire to protect and improve their qualities where appropriate.

Preparing a Draft Policy: the Preferred Option

7.2.23 Protecting and improving local character, heritage and distinctiveness is a key local plan objective, supported by people responding to consultations. This is why only limited options are being proposed; to do other than that would not achieve a key local plan objective. The options for each issue being pursued are:

- *Rural gaps*: to protect and enhance their landscape quality;
- *Green wedges*: option b): identify three green wedges but exclude any built development unless ancillary to green infrastructure. Provide criteria to guide decisions on applications for new development adjacent to green wedges;
- *Local Green Spaces*: the draft policy encompasses all the issues identified in paragraph 7.2.10;
- *Green corridors and strategic historic routes*: the draft policy encompasses all the aspects outlined above in paragraphs 7.2.12-13;
- *Parklands*: continue to protect the landscape qualities of parklands, ensuring their key features are retained while allowing some development consistent with other policies in this document, where appropriate;
- *Areas of landscape improvement*: secure through new development significant improvements to areas of limited landscape quality, incorporating areas of high biodiversity value in the design of any proposal.

7.2.24 Sustainability appraisal... (to follow).

Draft Policy MGP 22: Local Landscape Character

The character and local distinctiveness of the urban area, villages and rural area will be protected and improved by:

- A. *Retaining the openness and green infrastructure functions of:*
- i) *the rural gaps, between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row, Middleton St George and Oak Tree, and Hurworth on Tees and Hurworth Place;*
 - ii) *the green wedges of Cocker Beck/Mowden, Blackwell/Skerne Park and Haughton/Red Hall; and*
 - iii) *Local Green Spaces.*
- Within these areas, development will only be permitted if it :*
- a) *protects and enhances the landscape character, setting and identity of the area as identified in the Local Landscape Character Assessment^{7.16};*
 - b) *enhances biodiversity value by promoting protected and priority habitats and species;*
 - c) *retains connectivity within the green infrastructure network;*
 - d) *is ancillary to a green infrastructure use; and*
 - e) *is for limited infilling on previously developed land, which would not have greater impact on the openness of the landscape than the existing development.*
- B. *Retaining and enhancing the length, continuity, biodiversity, amenity and heritage value of:*
- i) *The strategic and local green corridors identified in the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy^{7.15} and their buffer zones;*
 - ii) *The strategic historic routes of the Darlington/Middleton St George/A66/A67/ Stockton Corridor, the Former Barnard Castle Trackbed, Salters Lane, Nunnery Lane and Cemetery Lane;*
- Development that adjoins these designations should:*
- a) *positively respond to the landscape setting;*
 - b) *conserve and enhance traditional landscape features including ancient and semi-natural woodland and hedgerows;*
 - c) *retain connectivity for people and wildlife;*
 - d) *protect and enhance their ecological and heritage value in accordance with draft policies MGP 21 and MGP 25; and*
 - e) *incorporate appropriate interpretation for ecological and heritage features.*
- C. *Retaining and improving the special landscape, heritage and ecological qualities of urban and rural parklands at South Park, North Lodge Park, West Cemetery, Blackwell Grange, Rockcliffe Park, Middleton Hall, Walworth Castle, Redworth Hall, Hall Garth, Newbus Grange and Neasham Hall in accordance with draft policies MGP 21 and MGP 25.*
- D. *Protecting and enhancing the natural landscape quality of the rural landscape, where appropriate, reinstating traditional natural and built features in accordance with draft policies MGP 21 and MGP 25.*
- E. *Seeking high quality design in areas of low landscape quality in the urban area, to strengthen local character and distinctiveness, in accordance with the Darlington Characterisation Study^{7.26} and the Design of New Development SPD^{7.27}.*

All features are identified on the draft Policies Map.

7.2.25 Making it Happen

- Operating the Council's development management function, taking account of the Darlington Characterisation Study, Revised Design of New Development SPD, and the Blackwell Grange Golf Club Statement of Significance
- Preparing masterplans for areas of significant development and regeneration.

7.3 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Context

7.3.1 Green infrastructure includes locally important green spaces, green wedges, wildlife sites, allotments, urban fringe, trees, woodland, rights of way and countryside. The Darlington Core Strategy^{7.28} recognises the value of Darlington's network of multi-functional green spaces and inter-connecting links, which are planned, designed and managed to meet the environmental, social and economic needs of the community. It aims to protect, enhance and extend green infrastructure and the biodiversity and geological features that are found within it, to ensure that there is no net loss, except in exceptional circumstances^{7.28}.

^{7.28}Core Strategy
CS14, CS15, CS17,
CS18

7.3.2 Green infrastructure covers publicly accessible open spaces (about 580ha) and open land (about 660ha) in the main urban area and villages. Publicly accessible open space has unlimited public access, whereas open land is green infrastructure with no public access, e.g. the grounds of a large building, agricultural land and landscaping buffers. Between them, they provide places where people can enjoy sport, recreation, play and nature, and contribute to amenity and landscape quality (draft MGP 22). They can also support movement and food production, and can be critical to sustaining ecosystems. They can also contribute to achieving the appropriate sustainable building standards (see draft MGP 33) and sustainable drainage (see draft MGP 34) required in new developments.

^{7.29}National
Planning Policy
Framework,
DCLG, 2012

7.3.3 In accordance with national planning policy^{7.29}, rather than managing green infrastructure in a piecemeal fashion, a landscape scale approach will be adopted, using and managing land for what it is best suited to^{7.30}. Through investment, management and maintenance, more will be made of the network so that that a range of green infrastructure needs are met in each local area and in the Borough as a whole, according to the priority actions of the emerging Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy^{7.31}, the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan^{7.32} and the Darlington Allotment Strategy^{7.33}.

^{7.30}Green Food
Conclusions,
DEFRA, 2012

^{7.31}as identified in
the emerging
Darlington Green
Infrastructure
Strategy, DBC,
2013

7.3.4 The green infrastructure network of Darlington links up with networks within the rest of Tees Valley, Durham and North Yorkshire, providing for walking and cycling routes and allowing for species movement between areas.

Issues and Options Considered

^{7.32}Tees Valley
Biodiversity Action
Plan, Tees Valley
Nature
Partnership, 2013

7.3.5 A range of issues associated with protecting, extending and improving green infrastructure in the Borough have been considered, and are set out below, together with a summary of the options that were considered to address them. Specific consideration is given to allotment provision.

^{7.33}Darlington
Allotment Strategy,
DBC, 2009

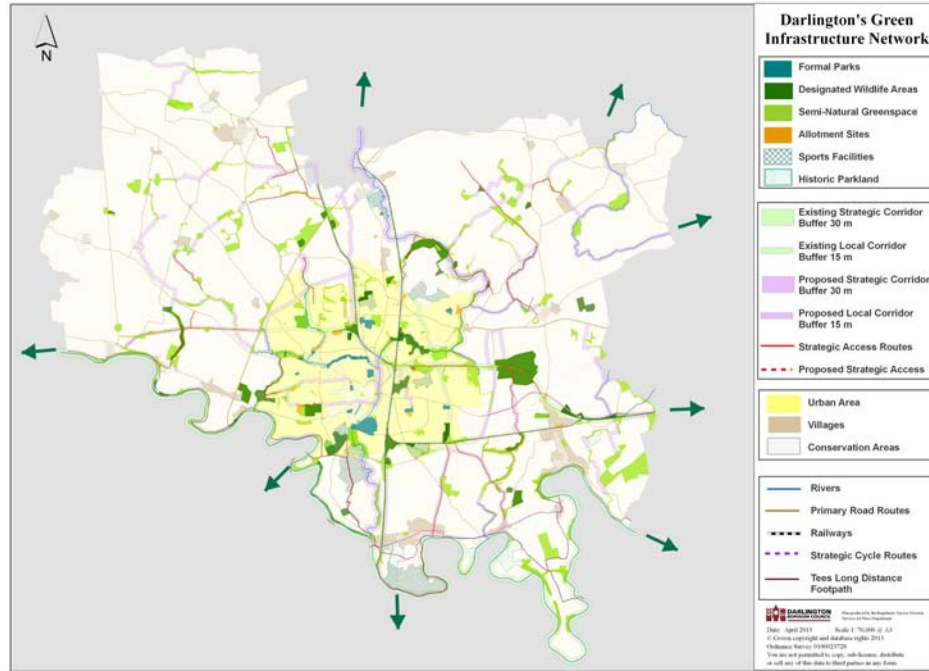
7.3.6 **Green Infrastructure: Issues and options**
At the heart of Darlington's green infrastructure network are a network of green corridors; some follow natural features, including watercourses and woodlands and others follow man made routes such as railway lines and roads. Some are relatively new (the Eastern Transport Corridor) and others started as trade routes (Salters Lane) (see draft policy MGP 22). Most are used now, but some will be

7.34 as identified in the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, 2008

Darlington Local Plan: Making and Growing Places Preferred Options, June 2013

new corridors (or parts of) added over the lifetime of this plan. All are important for movement, wildlife, landscape and recreation. Four strategic green corridors^{7.34} including the River Tees and the River Skerne function within and across the Borough's boundaries while the eight local green corridors^{7.31} including the former Barnard Castle Trackbed function within the Borough, usually connecting neighbourhoods or the urban and rural areas. These connect a range of spaces for informal recreation, play, nature, movement and amenity (see **Figure 7.3.1**). Most spaces, such as South Park, have more than one of these functions. The width of their buffer zones (identified in this draft policy) are different, reflecting the minimum width needed for habitats within or adjacent to the corridor to function, for a distinct landscape to be recognised, and to provide appropriate and sufficient space for access and recreation.

Figure 7.3.1: Overview of Darlington's Green Infrastructure Network



7.35 as set out in the Green Infrastructure Topic Paper, DBC, 2013

7.3.7 The amount, quality, value and main function of each accessible green space in the urban area and villages has been assessed^{7.35}, and the amount of open land and its landscape, biodiversity and amenity value has been assessed^{7.35}. Unless a space has been identified for an alternative, more sustainable use, all are protected by this draft policy to ensure that there is enough open space and open land in the Borough over the plan period to meet resident's needs and provide the other functions that green infrastructure is needed to perform. For practical purposes only those of 0.1ha or more will be identified on the Policies Map.

7.3.8 Most people have easy access to a good quality park for formal and informal recreation and play, while Darlington's impressive play offer means that most children have easy access to adventurous play, for example at West Park and Broken Scar. Wildlife friendly spaces including Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites provide most people with access to a quality natural environment (see draft MGP 25), and a complementary network of smaller spaces provide for informal recreation e.g. walking, jogging, close to homes and work.

7.36 Localities are North West, Central, South West, South East, North West and Rural Area

7.3.9 However, quantity, quality and access to different types of open space varies between localities^{7.36} within the Borough (see **Appendix 8** for map)^{7.35}. For instance the North East would benefit from more children's play space, while people living in the South East would benefit from better access to a park. So it is

^{7.37} see Planning Obligations SPD, DBC, 2013

Darlington Local Plan: Making and Growing Places Preferred Options, June 2013

important that a draft policy reflects the different open space characteristics, needs and aspirations of people that live in each part of the Borough.

7.3.10 These unmet needs will remain unless existing spaces are put to new uses and/or new spaces are provided. Projects^{7.34} to increase use of existing spaces to meet residents needs, including Salters Lane Community Garden and The Banks, Middleton One Row are underway, where community groups have got funding from organisations like the National Lottery for the works. Elsewhere planning obligations, secured with new development, may also be used^{7.37}.

^{7.38} Major new development: 20 or more dwellings or 1000m² gross non residential floorspace

7.3.11 As the Borough is relatively rich in the amount of green infrastructure it contains, new open space will only be sought as part of major new development^{7.38} where the amount and mix of development proposed requires substantial green infrastructure to deliver a sustainable new neighbourhood, or to create an appropriate business or leisure environment. The Council recognises it is not always possible to achieve this all on site; in those cases, equivalent off site provision will be sought^{7.38}.

7.3.12 Quantity standards (see draft policy MPG 24) will be used to ensure that there is enough accessible open space overall and for each open space function throughout the plan period, taking account of population change (to 2026)^{7.35}. Standards take account of the amount and location of existing space, and planned losses/gains of space, and the amount and location of new development. Spaces must also be of the appropriate quality and within a reasonable walking distance of most people's homes to ensure they are used positively. The standards proposed will also help guide the use of resources, including those that may arise from planning obligations^{7.37} and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

^{7.39} Maintenance levy: annual sum paid by the houseowner or property owner to an independent body or management company to enable the long term maintenance of green space

7.3.13 Provision should also be made for open space maintenance to ensure quality remains. For new large greenspaces, particularly those in the strategic locations, a maintenance levy^{7.39} will be applied, to ensure long term maintenance by a management company. Elsewhere, where agreed, a one off maintenance contribution may be sought so that maintenance can be undertaken by the Council^{7.35}.

7.3.14 Two options for protecting and improving green infrastructure have been considered and consulted on previously, in 2010^{7.40}:

^{7.40} Accomodating Growth Issues and Options Report, November 2010

- a) identify green infrastructure over 1ha or more in the urban area and 0.1ha in the villages that have been identified as a necessary part of the future green infrastructure network in an adopted strategy, and/or, have been identified as requiring quality and/or access improvements to meet the communities needs;
- b) in addition, include any sites identified through the consultation.

7.3.15 Reflecting more recent issues the following options have also been considered:

- c) protect all green infrastructure in the Borough irrespective of size, eliminating spaces which are better retained for alternative uses, but only identify sites of 0.1ha or more on the Policies Map for legibility;
- d) establish an overall quantity, quality and accessibility standard for accessible greenspace and for each type of open space;
- e) in addition to b), establish standards for each locality area;
- f) where appropriate, identify the indicative amount of open space to be provided with major new development;
- g) negotiate open space provision on a site by site basis.

7.3.16 **Open space standards of provision:** Option d) which identifies a quantity, quality and accessibility standard for accessible greenspace at a Borough and

locality level and for each type of open space, will ensure that there is enough accessible greenspace in the Borough to meet resident's needs in the long term. Without standards local open spaces may be lost to development and the mix of uses may not meet resident's needs.

- 7.3.17 **Green space provision through new development:** Option f) will ensure that new development provides the right amount and type of green space to meet its needs, based on a clear approach^{7.34} (set out in **Appendix 7**), rather than providing open space in a piecemeal fashion, which can lead to an undersupply of certain types of open space in some areas. It will ensure developers are aware from an early stage of the requirements for open space from major new development.
- 7.3.18 In earlier consultations^{7.40}, issues identified included identifying and protecting all areas of existing and potential green infrastructure, ensuring all new development provides enough greenspace to meet its needs, protecting trees and providing enough allotment sites. However, all green infrastructure will be protected by draft policy MGP 23, more guidance on trees is provided (see draft policy MGP 25) and five new allotment sites are identified to meet an identified demand in draft policy MGP 23. The new standards of provision will ensure that the amount of open space is kept at an appropriate level to meet the needs of residents while draft policy MGP 23 and Appendix 6 identifies the amount of new open space to be provided for by major development.
- 7.3.19 Taking all the above into account, Option b), in combination with options c) and f) is the preferred option, having eliminated spaces which are better retained for other uses. It is made up of spaces identified previously^{7.35}, new smaller spaces, and new open space provided with new development^{7.35}.

Allotments – issues and options

- 7.3.20 Allotments provide residents with space to grow their own fruit and vegetables. With 0.3ha per 1000 people (equivalent to about 24 plots/1000 households)^{7.35}, Darlington's allotment provision is slightly above the national average^{7.41} but it is concentrated in the more densely populated parts of the urban area, and parts of Faverdale, Cockerton West, College, Harrowgate Hill, Eastbourne and Park West wards lack provision. There has been a recent surge in demand, with an estimated 300 people currently on the Council's and self managed sites waiting lists. This indicates a need for more allotments, which could be provided by making better use of existing allotment space, including reducing the size of existing plots as they are released and/or providing new allotment sites, and/or providing more opportunities for people to get involved in growing plants, e.g. through community gardens. In the rural area sites are managed by Parish Councils and self managed associations; all have on average between 4-6 people on their waiting lists, which they are able to manage through natural turnover.
- 7.3.21 The options considered were:
- a) to provide enough new allotment sites to meet the needs of the waiting list during the plan period;
 - b) to provide enough allotment sites to provide for half the waiting list through new provision and make better use of existing allotment sites and community gardens to provide for the remaining half.
- 7.3.22 Option a) would require the identification of a significant amount of new land, which is either currently unused or used as another type of open space. The identification of new sites was constrained by the specific requirements for new allotments, e.g. good quality uncontaminated soil, ability to connect to a water supply, sufficient space for on-site car parking. It was also limited to only lower

^{7.41}20 plots per 1000 households, National Allotment Society

quality open spaces in the urban area. As such, insufficient land could be identified to deliver this option.

7.3.23 The sustainability appraisal found.....

7.3.24 Option b) is therefore the preferred option. An assessment^{7.35} identified two small spaces in Harrowgate Hill and Cockerton West that could be converted to allotments to address unmet demand in these areas. Also, the existing Barmpton Lane Allotments Association have expressed interest in extending their site into land to the north, by securing funding from organisation like the National Lottery. Elsewhere, the potential developers of the North Western and Eastern Urban Fringes (see draft MGP 5 & 6) have indicated that allotments will be incorporated into their green infrastructure provision.

7.3.25 These five potential new allotment sites could provide at least 168 full plots or about 250 full and half plots, meeting over half the waiting list demand. Changing full plots to half plots on existing sites as they become available, and the promotion of local food production in community gardens, could meet the rest of the demand.

Policy MGP 23: Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure will be protected, and where appropriate, improved and extended to provide a quality, safe and accessible network of well connected, multifunctional open spaces for recreation and play and to enhance visual amenity, biodiversity, landscape and productivity. This network and its key features will include:

- A) Strategic and local green corridors. All new development within 30m of the centre line of a strategic green corridor and 15m of the centre line of a local green corridor should, through good design, seek to conserve and enhance the function, setting, biodiversity, landscape, access and recreational value of the corridor;*
- B) Priority projects identified in the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy;*
- C) Locally Important Open Spaces^{7.42} in accordance with adopted standards in draft policy MGP 24;*
- D) Allotments;*
- E) Local Green Spaces^{7.42} in draft MGP 22;*
- F) Wildlife friendly greenspaces identified in draft policy MP25;*
- G) Green wedges identified in draft policy MP22;*
- H) Parklands identified in draft policy MP22;*
- J) About 46.06ha of new accessible multifunctional open space provided for through major new residential development identified in Appendix 6 :*
- K) About 22.74ha of new wildlife friendly greenspace provided for, over the plan period, through non residential development identified in Appendix 7:*
- L) New allotments on:
 - 1. land at Muscar House Farm (50 plots) (by 2015);*
 - 2. land within the North West Urban Fringe (50 plots) (by 2021);*
 - 3. land at The Ridgeway (12 plots) (by 2016);*
 - 4. land within the Eastern Urban Fringe (50 plots) (by 2026);*
 - 5. land to the rear of Bylands Way (6 plots, by 2016)**
- M) Ensuring that all major development includes high quality structural landscaping along its boundaries and between different uses.*

All sites of more than 0.1ha are identified on the Local Plan Policies Map.

^{7.42} Local Green Spaces: space close to the community it serves, which has local significance, is local in character and is not an extensive

MGP24: Green Infrastructure Standards

Within the Darlington urban area, open space will be maintained and enhanced to achieve the following overall standards of provision:

- A. 6.0 ha of open land per 1000 people, of which 4.9ha per 1000 people will be accessible open space to bring 95% of people within a 15 minute walk (1000m) of an accessible space;
- B. 0.99 ha of parks per 1000 people and so that all parks are at least 4* quality;
- C. 4.1 ha of informal recreation space per 1000 people so that all spaces are at least 3* quality;
- D. 1.7 ha of children's play space per 1000 children so that all spaces are at least 4* quality;
- E. 3.2 ha of wildlife friendly greenspace per 1000 people so that 65% of spaces are at least 3* quality and 25% are 4 star quality and above;
- F. 1 ha Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 people to bring 95% of people within 1km of a Local Nature Reserve identified by draft MPG 25;
- G. 0.30 ha of allotment space per 1000 people.

Within each locality, accessible open space will be protected and improved to achieve the following standards of provision:

	Accessible open space	Parks	Informal recreation space	Wildlife friendly greenspace	Children's play space
	Ha per 1000 people				Ha per 1000 children aged 0-16
A. North West	3.7ha	0.3ha	3.2ha	2.7 ha	1.3ha
B. Central	3.5ha	0.3ha	3.7ha	2.7ha	2.5ha
C. South East	4.8ha	0.4ha	4.5ha	3.0ha	1.2ha
D. South West	6.0ha	0.3ha	5.0ha	3.7ha	1.0ha
E. North East	5.8ha	0.6ha	4.7ha	3.4ha	3.6ha

Other accessible green space should be maintained to the following quality standards:

- A. Green corridors: to be at least 4* quality and above;
- B. Landscape amenity space: at least 3* quality and above;
- C. Cemeteries: at least 4* quality and above;
- D. Civic spaces: all spaces to be 5* quality.

Outside the urban area provision of open space will be protected and improved where appropriate, so that 80% of sites are maintained at 3 star quality or above, with at least 30% being 4 star quality or above.

In areas of open space deficiency, where it is feasible or viable, the following open space provision should be made to meet the needs of the new development:

1. 5 dwellings (or 0.1ha) or more or 500m² gross non residential floorspace or more will be required to make provision for off site accessible open space;
2. 20 dwellings or above (or 0.2ha) or 1,000m² or above gross non residential floorspace will be required to make provision for accessible open space as required by draft policy MGP25, primarily on site for design, amenity and community reasons;
3. In the strategic development locations, open space provision will be expected to be met on site.

7.3.27 Making it Happen

- Operating the Council's development management function;

- Preparing masterplans for each of the strategic locations;
- Implementing the emerging Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy;
- Delivering the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan;
- Preparing Planning Briefs and other non statutory plans;
- Supporting Friends Groups, self managed associations and community groups to securing funding to improve, manage and maintain specific locally important spaces.

7.4 PROTECTING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY

7.4.1 Core Strategy Policy CS15 sets out the broad principles for protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity. This policy aims to expand upon CS15 and in particular, the effect of new development on biodiversity and geodiversity assets (point 2 of CS15). It will provide more detail on how potential impacts will be considered, to give more certainty to applicants and decision makers. Some practical design advice is also provided in the Council's Design SPD (Footnote to full title and section 6.10)

^{7.44} Designated sites: Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, Community Woodland

7.4.2 Darlington's 42 nationally and locally designated wildlife sites^{7.44} provide different levels of protection for a growing range of protected and priority habitats and species, including the Noctule and Soprano Pipistrelle Bat and Goosander. Nationally protected sites, including Neasham Fen SSSI and Drinkfield Marsh Local Nature Reserve, will continue to be protected and enhanced, consistent with national legislation^{7.45} and the objectives in their management plans, while Local Wildlife Sites and Community Woodland have local protection. Three Local Geological Sites protect areas of geological value in the Borough.

^{7.46} Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010

7.4.3 Three new Local Nature Reserves will be designated at Red Hall, Cocker Beck, and Mill Lane, while Brinkburn and Maidendale LNRs will be extended to provide greater protection for the protected and priority habitats and species that live there^{7.46}. (The actual list will need to be included in the emerging G.I. Strategy for this reference) This will also help the Borough meet the national nature reserve standard identified in draft Policy MGP 25. (reference the Natural England 1Ha/1000 pop/within 1Km target?)

^{7.46} as identified by the emerging Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy, DBC, 2013

7.4.4 In comparison to neighbouring authorities, Darlington does not have much designated land of a European or National Level, so the 300ha of other local wildlife friendly greenspaces, for example, Cocker Beck and Baydale Meadows, are also of high importance. They allow wildlife, including protected Water Voles and Great Crested Newts to move between designated spaces for feeding, mating and migrating, so helping to ensure biodiversity remains viable in the long term.

^{7.47} Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem

7.4.5 'More, better, bigger and connected sites'^{7.47} across the Borough, linked by wildlife corridors, smaller wildlife rich 'stepping stones' and 'buffer zones' (see draft Policy MGP 24), such as along the green corridors, will help establish healthy ecological networks for all species^{7.48}, including the Brown Trout, Little Grebe and Grey Wagtail, and allow ecosystems to be sustained, with attendant benefits^{7.49}. The alternative, managing spaces in isolation, could lead to a decline in their number, quality and mix, potentially resulting in habitats being lost and the beneficial functions of ecosystems being reduced.

^{7.48} Identified by the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan, Tees Valley Nature Partnership, 2013

7.4.6 Connectivity will be improved along watercourses, including the strategic River Tees and River Skerne, public rights of way and railway lines and along field margins in the rural area^{7.46}, to ensure species can move easily across and beyond the Borough. Improving the wildlife value of lower quality urban greenspaces will provide valuable habitats for species, including the Dingy Skipper and Holly Blue butterfly, and nesting birds like the Song Thrush and

^{7.49} e.g. breaking down waste products, regulating water and air quality, pollinating food and climate control

7.4.7 There are also big opportunities to increase the stock of protected and priority habitats and species through well-designed new developments^{7.50}, especially in the strategic locations. Development at Central Park (see draft Policy MGP3) and in the Town Centre Fringe (see draft Policy MGP4) particularly, will enrich biodiversity in areas of limited provision.

^{7.50} in accordance with the Design SPD, DBC, 2011

7.4.8 Biodiversity varies according to location and the presence of protected and priority habitats and species. The type and level of assessments required alongside new development proposals will reflect biodiversity value, and a Phase 1^{7.51} Habitat Survey (Extended), tree surveys and/or detailed species surveys may be required if protected or priority habitats and species are likely to be present. Through an Ecological Masterplan^{7.50} and/or the Design, Access and Sustainability Statement^{7.52}, the design and layout of new development should be informed by, and respond positively to, the ecological value of the site and the immediate environment and show this will be protected and enhanced. Even where little biodiversity exists, functional ecological networks should be created; landscaping schemes and green roofs and walls can provide nesting sites, roosting sites and shelter for birds, bats and amphibians. Provision in or adjacent to a green corridor or a designated site, should be informed by the strategic aims of the corridor^{7.45} or the site's management plan.

^{7.51} Phase 1 Habitat Survey: assess habitats present, rare plant species and whether the habitat has potential to shelter protected or BAP species

^{7.52} submitted with a planning application.

^{7.53} detailed in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010

7.4.9 Where internationally and nationally protected species, such as the otter and water vole are identified, development should protect them and their breeding and resting places from disturbance or injury. This will be monitored through application of the derogation tests set out in national legislation^{7.53}.

7.4.10 With the exception of protected species, where a licence may need to be sought from Natural England, impacts which are unavoidable, should be fully mitigated for within the locality. Appropriate enhancements can include maintaining existing priority habitats, creating new habitats, providing sustainable drainage schemes with wetlands and reedbeds (see draft Policy MPG 34), new native woodland and street trees and the protection of existing trees^{7.54} on or off site, particularly in the strategic locations. Planning conditions and/or planning obligations^{7.55} may be used to secure mitigation.

^{7.54} Through Tree Preservation Orders

^{7.55} in accordance with the Planning Obligations SPD, DBC, 2013

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

7.4.12 To ensure suitable schemes are brought forward and that the long term quality of all biodiversity features proposed is maintained, a masterplan, showing how the features will be designed should be submitted with any major planning application, together with a management and maintenance plan, showing how the features will be maintained in the long term, and this should be submitted with any planning application. A maintenance contribution secured via a Section 106 agreement may be required^{7.55}.

Preparing a Draft Policy; the Preferred Option

7.4.13 Given the important role of biodiversity in providing the basic life support system that we all depend upon, the only option considered was to recognise, protect and value the different biodiversity sites and features in the Borough, and to improve the biodiversity value of degraded areas, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity in Darlington in the long term.

7.1.14 Sustainability appraisal... (to follow)

Draft Policy MGP 25: Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Development

The Council will ensure that sites and features of biodiversity and geodiversity importance are given full and appropriate recognition and protection.

Development should provide for no net loss in biodiversity or geodiversity by:

- a) protecting and mitigating any impact upon protected species, to be monitored through application of the derogation tests detailed in the Habitats Regulations; and;*
- b) significantly and demonstrably enhancing the quality, extent and mix of priority habitats and species identified in the NERC list (see appendix 6)*
 - i) providing new habitats; and/or*
 - ii) creating, improving or extending ecological networks; and/or*
 - iii) improving opportunities for public enjoyment.*

Within the areas listed below, as identified on the Policies Map, specific actions will be taken as follows:

A) River Tees Strategic Corridor: *encourage protection and enhancement of connections between different parts of the ecological network through:*

- creating quality riverside habitat in buffer zones (see Policy MGP 24)*
- managing agriculture less intensively;*
- planting native trees and ground plants;*
- diversifying the mix of wetland and wet woodland habitats;*
- management of invasive species;*
- creating artificial habitats such as otter holts, bird boxes.*

B) River Skerne Strategic Corridor: *encourage improvements to the value and ecological mix to:*

- provide quality priority habitats and species in the buffer zone;*
- restore the natural river course and systems and character, e.g. meanders and earth bank sides;*
- retain the natural floodplains;*
- incorporate sustainable drainage systems;*
- plant more native broadleaved, trees, grassland and wetlands to accommodate a range of protected and priority habitats and species;*
- incorporate green features, such as green roofs and green walls; and*
- manage invasive species.*

C) Rural area (see Policy MGP 8,9 &10): *promote the reinstatement of traditional species rich field margins and hedgerows & trees, along with new opportunities for mixed habitats, including Meadow, woodland and wetlands, to provide greater connectivity for wildlife.*

D) Nationally and locally designated wildlife sites: protect, maintain, manage and where appropriate extend, in accordance with their management plans, including:

- 4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs),
- 7 Local Nature Reserves (with extensions at Maidendale and Brinkburn),
- 28 Local Wildlife Sites
- 3 Community Woodlands, and
- Ancient woodland

E) Local Nature Reserves; designate new sites which meet the Natural England Criteria, to ensure the protection of land and species including Red Hall Wetland, Mill Lane (spanning the Skerne), and Cockerbeck.

F) Wildlife friendly greenspaces, parks and parklands: Protect and improve their wildlife value (appendix 6).

G) Local Geological Sites (LGS's): protect the existing sites at Killerby (North Lane Quarry), Houghton-le-Side (Disused Quarry, Side Hill) and High Coniscliffe Quarries (Disused), and designate new sites, as appropriate.

Applicants proposing development within or adjacent to the above sites that are likely to impact upon their biodiversity and/or geodiversity will need to follow the following sequence of actions to identify and adequately mitigate impact on biodiversity/geodiversity, and submit evidence that this process has been followed with any planning application :

1. establish the type and mix of habitats present and any likely impacts on the habitat;
2. for any habitats adversely affected, undertake an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, and identify appropriate mitigation;
3. where protected species are present, further survey work will be required to comply with Habitats Regulations^{7.53} including fulfilling the three derogation tests.
4. take account of and reflect the detailed advice set out in the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy and Revised Design of New Development SPD.

If impact **cannot be adequately** mitigated, compensatory measures to mitigate for the loss must be included, including the creation of priority habitats, as detailed in NERC list at Appendix 6.), with the first priority being on site provision. Only with adequate reasoned justification will any off site mitigation measures be permitted, and such provision would be secured by Section 106 contribution or Community Infrastructure Levy.

7.5 OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

Context

7.5.1 The Darlington Core Strategy^{7.56} recognises the important role quality, accessible, managed outdoor sport and recreation facilities can have on residents' health and quality of life. Since 2011 it has helped increase participation in sport in Darlington to 24.2%, currently the highest in the Tees Valley^{7.57}. It aims to protect, enhance and extend this sporting offer, to ensure that provision meets residents' needs now and in the future. As a result, any loss of sports facilities will only be considered in exceptional circumstances in accordance with the criteria in the Core Strategy^{7.56}.

7.5.2 Outdoor sports and recreation facilities cover playing fields and synthetic turf pitches as well as a wide range of other facilities for tennis, bowling, golf, athletics

^{7.56}Darlington Core Strategy, 2011, Policy CS18

^{7.57}Darlington Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, DBC, 2013

and cycling, in the urban area and the villages. Between them, they enable people to enjoy sport at parks, schools and private clubs, either for casual, 'pay as you play' or competitive use. Complementary indoor sports facilities are covered by draft Policy MGP 31.

^{7.58} Darlington Playing Pitch Strategy, PMP, 2009

- 7.5.3 Through investment, management and maintenance, the most effective use will be made of the network in the future, consistent with the priority actions identified in other Council strategies^{7.57, 7.58, 7.59}.

^{7.59} Darlington Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy, PMP, 2009

Issues and Options Considered

- 7.5.4 A range of issues associated with protecting, extending and improving playing fields and outdoor sports facilities in the Borough have been considered, and are set out below, together with a summary of the options that were considered to address them.

Playing fields: Issues and options

- 7.5.5 Consistent with the Core Strategy^{7.57}, playing fields are provided and maintained in accordance with a hierarchy of provision. Within each playing field, a number of playing pitches can be marked out, sizes are different for adults and juniors, and the mix of pitches can vary to reflect the sporting seasons. The focus are the three managed hub sites at Blackwell Meadows, Eastbourne Sports Complex and Longfield Academy which provide facilities for different sports for adults and juniors, and have changing rooms and car parking. All have secure community use^{7.61} and provide for competitive league matches as well as 'pay as you play'. A complementary network of smaller satellite sites including schools, parks and sports clubs provide for pitch sports closer to home and work. Single pitch sites in open spaces are the lowest tier and have no changing rooms or car parking. Continued use of this hierarchy will ensure provision best meets local needs and future demands, and encourages greater participation in sport in a cost effective way.

^{7.60} as set out in the Green Infrastructure Topic Paper, DBC, 2013

- 7.5.6 The amount, quality, carrying capacity and accessibility of each playing field in the urban area and villages has been assessed^{7.60} to determine whether there is enough provision to meet the demand for football, rugby union, cricket and hockey for adults and juniors, now and in 2026. All playing fields will be protected by this draft policy and will be identified on the Policies Map.

- 7.5.7 Quantity, quality and access to playing pitches varies, and for each type of sport^{7.60}. Darlington's 109 playing pitches provide for adult and junior football, rugby union, cricket and hockey. Accessibility, particularly to educational facilities, has increased significantly in the last five years; 74% of pitches now have secure community use, but securing access to the remaining pitches at schools is important, particularly in areas where access to sports facilities is otherwise limited, e.g. villages.

- 7.5.8 Pitch quality tends to be lower in open spaces, including the three playing fields at Glebe Road, Eastbourne School and Springfield School identified by draft policy MPG 16 for future housing development^{7.60}. All are below average quality single playing fields and are not capable of accommodating league matches, have no changing rooms or car parking, and are also used by residents for informal recreation. These will be re-provided at a managed hub and/or satellite site, for example Blackwell Meadows. As a result each pitch will be laid out to a higher quality, making it able to accommodate more matches a week, helping to reduce the overall amount of new pitches required over the long term. Secure community use will also be a requirement, and playing pitch re-provision will be phased, so that development will only start once the replacement pitch is available for use, so teams will experience no disruption to their programmed matches and training.

^{7.61} Secure community use: guaranteed access to the facility out of hours for organised community groups and teams

7.5.9 About 33.98 hectares of playing fields will be needed in 2026^{7.60} for adult, junior and mini football, rugby union, cricket and hockey, unless more pitches are provided and quality and accessibility improvements to existing pitches are made. The shortfall of junior football at peak times is likely to increase from 12 junior football pitches to 15.9 in 2026^{7.61}. Provision will also need to respond to the changing requirements of football; in the next few years changes are expected to be made to the way junior football operates, with mini soccer expected to be more common. Work is still ongoing to agree the detailed requirements for junior and mini soccer as part of a Playing Pitch Strategy Review.

7.5.10 A shortfall of four junior rugby union pitches will increase from 4.0 to 4.5 in 2026 while adult rugby players will need an additional pitch over the same timescale; Mowden Park Rugby Football Club, which has recently relocated to Darlington Arena, aspires to create a new hub site with at least five new rugby union pitches (about 7.8ha of playing fields). This is expected to meet the demand for rugby union in the Borough in the long term. Provision for adult football, as well as cricket and hockey meets demand.

7.5.11 Additionally, it is expected that new playing fields will only be provided on site at the strategic locations where the size and mix of development proposed requires sports facilities to deliver a sustainable new neighbourhood. In the long term, the potential developers of the North Western and Eastern Urban Fringes (see draft policies MPG 5 and MPG 6) have indicated a hub site could be accommodated within their masterplans; about 8ha of playing fields will be provided at each, which could include any requirements from new schools. Provision will be phased to reflect the delivery timescales for housing in these locations, ensuring that playing pitch provision is delivered steadily over the plan period to meet the needs of residents at that time. For all major development elsewhere, a financial contribution may be sought to provide or improve playing fields in the Borough^{7.62} in accordance with the priorities of Council strategies.

7.62 in accordance with the Planning Obligations SPD, DBC, 2013

7.5.12 These two new playing field hubs and the new hub site at Darlington Arena could provide at least 15 pitches, meeting two thirds of the demand. In the medium term, Darlington Football Club also aspire to return to the town and would require new playing fields. Additionally the development of new schools potentially at Lingfield Point or the Town Centre Fringe will require an appropriate amount of playing fields to meet the curriculum needs of the pupils. For all new educational facilities, secure community use will be required, secured via planning condition attached to a planning permission. This will help reduce the shortfall further. Outstanding shortfalls will be met through improving the quality of existing pitches and securing access to educational facilities.

7.5.13 A quantity standard will be used to ensure that there are enough playing fields overall, throughout the plan period, taking account of population change (to 2026)^{7.60}. Standards take account of the amount of playing fields and planned losses/gains, the quality of pitches and their ability to accommodate an appropriate number of matches a week, and the amount and location of new development. The standard proposed will also help guide the use of resources, including those that may arise from planning obligations^{7.62} and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

7.63 Maintenance levy: annual sum paid by the houseowner or property owner to an independent body or management company to enable the long term maintenance of green space

7.5.14 Provision should also be made for maintenance to ensure quality remains. In the strategic locations, a maintenance levy^{7.63} will be applied, to ensure long term maintenance by a management company. Elsewhere, where agreed, a one off maintenance contribution may be sought, so that maintenance can be undertaken

^{7.64}Accommodating
Growth Issues and
Options Report,
November 2010

7.5.15 Two options for protecting and improving playing fields were considered and consulted on previously^{7.64}:

- a) identify land for new playing pitches in the urban area and the villages that have been identified as a necessary part of the Borough's sporting offer in the Playing Pitch Strategy, and/or, have been identified as requiring quality and/or access improvements to meet the communities needs;
- b) in addition include any sites identified through the consultation.

7.5.16 Reflecting more recent issues identified above the following options have also been considered:

- c) identify an overall quantity standard for playing fields;
- d) provide the shortfall of playing fields as new sites during the plan period;
- e) provide at least two thirds of the identified amount of playing fields through new provision at the North Western and Eastern Urban Fringes and Darlington Arena and improve the quality, management and accessibility to existing playing pitches, to improve provision overall.

7.5.17 Option d) would require the provision of a significant amount of land which is either currently unused or used as another type of green infrastructure. The identification of new sites was constrained by the specific requirements for new playing fields, e.g. good quality, uncontaminated soil, land that is not required to be left open as a flood plain and the ability of the site to be managed through a school, club or community facility. Not enough land could be identified to deliver this option.

7.5.18 To ensure that there are enough playing fields planned for over the long term to meet residents needs, option b) (of the two options considered previously^{7.64}) is the most sustainable in combination with options c and e, after the re-location of single pitches has taken place. The portfolio includes those playing fields identified previously with additional playing fields included that have been provided since 2010, for example at Blackwell Meadows. This also takes into account the provision of three new hubs at Darlington Arena and at the North West and Eastern Urban Fringes (see draft Policies MGP5 & 6). Securing community use at other educational sites and re-providing lower quality unmanaged single pitches to hub/satellite sites could meet the remainder of the demand.

Other outdoor sports facilities – issues and options

7.5.20 Access to the Borough's other sports facilities varies, as does its quality and spare capacity. Current sport and recreation provision will be maintained, focussing on improving quality and access, for example at Eastbourne Sports Complex. Opportunities for new facilities that complement existing provision should be in accordance with the hierarchy set out in the Core Strategy^{7.56}, for example at Lingfield Point (see draft Policy MGP4).

7.5.21 In recent years, access to sports facilities at educational sites has improved, with only 26% not providing access out of school hours. Several schools have successfully converted to Academy status and new and improved facilities have been provided as a result, for example new tennis courts are being provided at Longfield Academy.

7.5.22 As most sports provision is market led or otherwise outside Local Authority control, quality and access improvements can only be secured through the planning system by attaching conditions to planning permission for extensions, alterations or for new facilities.

7.5.23 Two options for protecting and improving sports facilities were considered and consulted on previously^{7.62}:

- a) identify land for new sports facilities in the urban area and the villages that have been identified as a necessary part of the Borough's sporting offer in the Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy, and/or, have been identified as requiring quality and/or access improvements to meet the communities needs;
- b) in addition, include any sites identified through the consultation.

7.5.24 No new sites were identified through the consultation so option a) is the preferred option. It will ensure that existing and new facilities are protected, based on a clear approach^{7.62}.

7.5.25 Sustainability appraisal... (to follow)

Draft Policy MGP26: Outdoor Sports Facilities

Within the Borough, playing fields will be maintained and enhanced to achieve 0.85 ha of playing field per 1000 people in the Borough. This will include:

- a) playing fields that have been identified in the Darlington Playing Pitch Strategy;
- b) new playing fields at Blackwell Meadows (about 3.04ha) (by 2014);
- c) a new playing pitch hub at Darlington Arena (about 7.8ha) (by 2017);
- d) a new playing pitch hub within the North West Urban Fringe (about 8ha) (by 2024);
- e) a new playing pitch hub within the Eastern Urban Fringe (about 8ha) (by 2026).

In addition land will be reserved for playing fields at the Town Centre Fringe and Lingfield Point to meet the curriculum needs of new primary and secondary schools identified in the Borough. If new schools are not required in these locations (draft policies MGP 3 & 4 refer), then the land should be made available for other community sport. If this cannot be delivered within a reasonable time, the land may be released for additional new housing.

Other outdoor sports facilities will be protected, and where appropriate, improved and extended, to provide a safe and accessible network of quality facilities for outdoor sport. This will include:

- i) All outdoor sports facilities that have been identified in the Darlington Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy;
- ii) New outdoor sports facilities at Lingfield Point (by 2026);

All will be protected and identified on the Local Plan Policies Map.

If there is a deficiency of playing fields or outdoor sports in the Borough, where it is feasible or viable, the following provision should be made to meet the needs of new development:

1. 10 dwellings (or 0.2ha) or more or 1000m² gross non residential floorspace or more will be required to make provision for off site outdoor sport facilities in accordance with the Planning Obligations SPD
2. in the strategic development locations, provision will be expected to be met on site. Site specific requirements will be set out in draft policies MGP 3, 5 and 6.

Making it Happen

- Through operation of the Council's development management function;

Darlington Local Plan: Making and Growing Places Preferred Options, June 2013

- Through preparation of masterplans for each of the strategic locations;
- Through operation of the Darlington Playing Pitch Strategy;
- Through operation of the Darlington Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy;
- Through preparation of Planning Briefs and other non statutory plans.
- Through academies, private clubs, Parish Council and other organisations securing funding to improve, manage and maintain facilities.