

9. INFRASTRUCTURE

9.1 PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Context

9.1.1 The term 'physical infrastructure' embraces all services necessary for any development, including water supply, wastewater and its treatment, energy and telecommunications. In this document, transport infrastructure is addressed separately, in draft Policy MGP27.

^{9.1} National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

9.1.2 National planning policy^{9.1} requires the Council to identify priorities for infrastructure provision, including the need for strategic infrastructure, and to support the expansion of electronic communications networks. The Core Strategy^{9.2} encourages enhanced infrastructure provision that supports delivery of its vision and objectives.

^{9.2} Darlington Core Strategy (DBC, May 2011) Policy CS1

9.1.3 Policy CS4 of the Core Strategy sets out strategic requirements for developer contributions to support the delivery of infrastructure, including utilities infrastructure. The Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, adopted in January 2013, which sets out how developer contributions will operate for most forms of infrastructure, does not cover utilities infrastructure.

9.1.4 Darlington's Local Economic Partnership, Tees Valley Unlimited, is currently preparing a strategic infrastructure plan. Once published, its conclusions will inform this policy, where necessary.

Issues

9.1.5 Four issues for utilities infrastructure provision in Darlington over the plan period have been identified:

- (i) providing better broadband;
- (ii) coping with the impacts of climate change on the networks, and the adaptations and mitigations required;
- (iii) facilitating growth and economic development of Darlington; and
- (iv) ensuring there are no significant adverse amenity or public safety impacts arising from providing new radio and telecommunications equipment.

^{9.3} BDUK Next Generation Access - Baseline Mapping for Darlington BC, November 2012

9.1.6 Darlington's broadband provision is currently poorer than in other parts of the Tees Valley. There aren't any locations in the Borough with more than one superfast broadband provider (known as 'black areas') and several strategic development locations, such as the North West Urban Fringe and much of the Town Centre, lack superfast broadband altogether^{9.3}. Although BT has recently announced a large investment in broadband in the town, it is unclear at this stage what impact this will have, and where.

9.1.7 Whilst broadband networks in the Borough need to expand, the way this expansion is carried out should have due regard to public and residential amenity. Telecommunications equipment tends to introduce new elements into the character of residential areas; it need not necessarily harm that character, and the Council will use its planning and prior notification powers to ensure that the siting and design of equipment respects townscape character and does not cause substantial harm to amenity or highways matters.

9.1.8 Initiatives and policies to reduce energy use and carbon emissions (e.g. Core Strategy Policy CS3 and Warm Up North) are essential to deliver the objectives of the Core Strategy. However, the strain on the electricity supply network is expected to increase. This is because there will be more things like new domestic

scale renewable installations feeding into the electricity grid through existing connections, and new heavy users of electricity such as electric vehicle charging points and heat pumps are anticipated.

- 9.1.9 The direct effects of climate change, such as shorter but heavier periods of rainfall, are likely to see continued stress on all utilities infrastructure systems, e.g. flooding of combined sewers, at the same time as sources of funding become more limited. Infrastructure networks are therefore under pressure and this increases the importance of avoiding unnecessary stresses to networks from inappropriate new development, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS4.
- 9.1.10 The Council has consulted with the providers of infrastructure to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in existing infrastructure for the housing, employment and other growth proposed in this document. The infrastructure providers have confirmed that their systems could, in principle, cope with the allocations proposed without any significant works required, although gas and electricity capacity issues can only be addressed on a practical basis when detailed and firm development proposals are available. No need for specific planning policies to enable or facilitate improvements to the infrastructure networks has been identified.

Options Considered

- 9.1.11 The following three options were considered:
- a) a short, positively framed, criteria based policy solely dealing with telecommunications to meet the minimum requirements of the NPPF.
 - b) a more detailed policy that, as well as the limited telecommunications issues specified in the NPPF, includes a criterion to encourage broadband development and guide its design and siting, and expands on policy CS4 to ensure that new development does not have an unnecessarily negative effect on infrastructure networks.
 - c) a policy that does everything in Option (b) and also encourages the development of broadband networks in specific priority locations.

Preparing a Draft Policy: the Preferred Option

- 9.1.11 The preferred option is Option (b). Option (a), whilst meeting national policy requirements, would not address any of the local priority areas described above. Option (c) would highlight the strategic development locations which are also some of the main parts of the urban area that are least well served by existing broadband. However, given that broadband provision is covered in the relevant strategic location policies elsewhere in this document (see draft Policies MGP 3, 4, 5 and 6) and that most of the works required would be minor or not requiring planning permission^{9.4},^{9.5} this option was also rejected.

^{9.4} Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order part 24, 2001

^{9.5} Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003

- 9.1.12 Option (b) would allow some guidance to be provided regarding the instances in which the Council would place conditions on the installation of apparatus. These would be to ensure that any infrastructure associated with telecommunications provision does not obstruct the highway unduly or give rise to substantial noise pollution or amenity issues.

- 9.1.13 Option (b) would also allow the capacity of existing utilities networks to be protected, bringing it in line with other infrastructure provision covered by the Planning Obligations SPD. Utilities that are under strain can negatively affect the attractiveness of the Borough's residential and business environments, and unless mitigated, new development can place additional stress on the networks, increasing the likelihood of temporary failure.

- 9.1.14 Core Strategy Policy CS4 states 'Developer contributions... should mitigate any additional impacts the development would have in the locality.' Unlike other infrastructure, the Council cannot seek planning contributions for utilities, as this

type of infrastructure is delivered by others. It is therefore necessary to ensure that developments are accompanied by the utilities required to support the development at the time it is built, to ensure there is no net negative impact on the operation of existing networks. This can be done through the insertion of a specific criterion in the draft policy.

9.1.15 All utilities companies have identified early consultation with potential developers as an important requirement. Before submitting a planning application, those applying for new development or intensification of use will be expected to contact all the relevant utilities providers and regulatory bodies, or submit their proposals to the Council's pre-application service, to ascertain how their development can be accommodated.

9.1.16 Sustainability appraisal... (to follow).

Draft Policy MGP 30: Physical Infrastructure

Proposals for new development must be capable of being accommodated by existing or planned utilities (whether supplied by utilities providers or the development itself), and should not:

- (a) have a net negative impact on the operation of existing utilities networks;*
or
- (b) worsen the services or protection from risk enjoyed by the existing community.*

Utilities will include off-site service infrastructure, surface water, sewage disposal, water and sewerage facilities, flood risk defences and control facilities, and power.

Development of radio and telecommunications equipment and installations will be encouraged provided that the telecommunications equipment and installation is sited and designed to respects the character of the area and is not materially harmful to visual or aural amenity or the safety of road or pavement users.

Making it Happen

Through the development management process, including consideration of prior notifications, and by ensuring the provision of other new utilities infrastructure where a need has been indicated by the utilities providers.

9.2 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Context

9.2.1 Social infrastructure encompasses a range of community facilities including schools, community centres, libraries, health care facilities, indoor sports facilities, cemeteries and arts and cultural facilities. Access to a wide range of good quality community facilities is identified within the Core Strategy^{9.6} as a key contributor to the health and well-being of people who live and work in the Borough, and the timely provision and upgrading of facilities is required to ensure Darlington's future growth brings more prosperity, safety, sustainability and inclusiveness.

^{9.6} Core Strategy Policies CS6, CS7, CS9, and CS18.

Issues and Options Considered

9.2.2 The land use and planning issues associated with providing particular types of social infrastructure in the Borough are set out below, together with a summary of the options that were considered to address each.

Indoor Sports Facilities – Issues and Options

^{9.7} as defined in Darlington's Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy (2009)

9.2.3 Indoor sports facilities include swimming pools, sports halls & community halls, health and fitness facilities and dance studios, and other specialist provision such as indoor bowls, squash courts, gymnastics centres, boxing gyms and indoor tennis^{9.7}. These facilities can be provided by academies, schools and colleges, private sports clubs, parish councils and at community and village halls.

^{9.8} St Aiden's Academy; Darlington College for Maths and Science (formerly Branksome School, now sponsored by Longfield Academy); Hurworth Secondary School Academy; Hummersknott Academy and QE VI Form College.

9.2.4 The Core Strategy (Policy CS18) seeks to protect and where appropriate, enhance a range of quality, accessible and safe facilities, to support more participation in indoor sports and promote healthier lifestyles. In recent years, access to sports facilities at educational sites has improved, as several schools have successfully converted to Academy status and new and improved facilities have been provided, e.g. a new sports hall at Longfield Academy is underway, providing better access to indoor sports provision in the northern part of the Borough. This will function as a third strategic 'hub' site, in addition to the Eastbourne Sports Complex and the Dolphin Centre. Improvements to facilities at other key education sites^{9.8} will provide a network of complementary satellite sites for indoor sports provision.

^{9.9} Review of the Borough wide Sports Facilities Database

9.2.5 However, recent work^{9.9} indicates that access to and quality of existing facilities can be improved further. This may be partially addressed if more schools convert to Academy status, as this includes a requirement for public access, but there is evidence^{9.10} to suggest there is also not enough specialist sports provision, specifically indoor tennis courts, nor enough indoor active play facilities, such as BMX tracks and skate parks.

^{9.10} Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy, Darlington Borough Council (2009).

9.2.6 As most indoor 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. The Core Strategy (Policy CS18) requires community use to be secured for new provision on educational sites in priority locations. This policy could address how applications for new development outside priority locations are treated, as new provision in these locations could also meet identified local needs.

9.2.7 The policy could also set quality and access standards for any new, extended or altered facilities.

Primary Health Care Facilities - Issues and Options

^{9.11} One Darlington Perfectly Placed: A Vision for Darlington 2008-2021

9.2.8 Helping to reduce health inequalities is a key local policy objective^{9.11} and providing accessible local healthcare facilities can improve the quality of life and well being of residents. Darlington has a network of primary and community care facilities, such as GP surgeries, dentists and a walk in centre, as well as mental health and acute hospital facilities at West Park and Darlington Memorial Hospital respectively; both of these are expected to continue to offer accessible healthcare from their existing sites. There is also a private general hospital at Morton Park, and a private mental hospital at the Durham Tees Valley Airport site.

^{9.12} ONS Interim 2011 Based Population projections

9.2.9 Housing growth and an ageing population are placing pressure on primary healthcare facilities in Darlington; population projections^{9.12} indicate a further 7,800 people by 2026, which is around 2,600 extra patients in every five year period, while the over 65 population, which places a higher demand on services, is projected to increase by 4,100 from 2011 to 2021. These factors suggest three additional consulting rooms will be needed every five years, and a further three consulting / treatment spaces to specifically support the needs of an ageing population, by 2021.

9.2.10 During the plan period, significant new housing is planned in north-west, central

and east Darlington, and more limited numbers in north Darlington (see draft Policy MGP 16). This will generate additional needs for primary health care, for which no dedicated general practice provision is currently planned. Some GP practices near to these areas are already experiencing significant pressure on patient lists, e.g. from the West Park development, but have limited additional capacity at existing premises to expand.

9.2.11 The planning options considered were:

- a) *absorb future demand within existing capacity of GP practices* – most practices in the Borough have already expanded to the capacity of their premises. There are also limited options for changing the use of other health facilities;
- b) *expand existing premises to create additional capacity* - there are limited opportunities to do this as most GP practice sites are already fully developed;
- c) *provide outreach or satellite health care facilities within community / social care buildings* – this could help GP services to be provided near to or within the new housing areas where people are expected to live; or
- d) *provide new build premises* – this is likely to be the most costly option, though part of the costs could be met by developers, if provided where significant new housing is proposed. It would also help provide GP services near to where people will live. New development beyond West Park will allow for the possibility of a new GP surgery being provided, or this could be provided within an expanded West Park Local Centre (see draft Policies MGP5 and MGP15).

9.2.12 In addition, the GP surgery at Middleton St George is at full capacity and cannot expand its existing building further. The GPs have identified and purchased a larger site within Middleton St George to accommodate a larger relocated general practice facility on Yarm Road, but have yet to secure funding. This plan can safeguard the site for this use, to help facilitate its delivery, and is the only option being considered.

9.2.13 All the options above depend on funding being available.

Arts and Cultural Facilities – Issues and Options

9.2.14 There are aspirations (see Core Strategy, One Darlington Perfectly Placed: A Vision for Darlington 2008-2021 and recent studies^{9.13}) to promote and enhance arts and culture in the Borough, The Creative Darlington vision identifies arts and culture as being central to Darlington's future identity and economic success. Through bringing people together, the arts have a key role to play in promoting and enabling social inclusion and cohesion. The Town Centre and Town Centre Fringe both play a key part in the arts and cultural offer. The latter is home to the Civic Theatre which continues to be a key focus for cultural and arts activity and this is complemented by the Town Centre offer which remains a focus for cultural heritage and an ideal setting for cultural activity and events. The new retail, entertainment and leisure development at Feethams will further complement the existing offer.

9.2.15 Cultural and arts facilities are facing new challenges as income sources, including public sector funding, are increasingly under pressure. It is likely that not all arts and cultural facilities can be sustained, and any new facilities will need to be largely privately provided and supported. It may be possible to sustain some existing provision or to deliver new facilities, by sharing facilities and/or support with other community uses. As recognised within the Creative Darlington vision, the sustained development of the sector will depend on the support, co-ordination and prioritisation across arts organisations.

9.2.16 A new policy could:

- a) set standards of quality and community access for new provision, and for altering and extending existing provision;

9.13

Creative Darlington: Investing in a Creative Community - An Arts Vision for Darlington, Arts Enquiry Group (2011). Cultural Quarter Feasibility Study, Globe Consultants Limited (2011).

- b) provide more guidance on when proposals outside the Town Centre and Town Centre Fringe will be acceptable; and
- c) seek to resist redevelopment of key cultural or arts attractions.

Community facilities – Issues and Options

9.2.17 The Core Strategy (Policy CS9) seeks to safeguard local services and facilities that meet people's day to day needs. Local shops and other retail outlets are covered within draft Policies MGP2 and MGP15. This section covers community centres, village halls, social clubs, children's centres, churches, mosques and other community resources, such as libraries, which are important for socialising and other community activities. While pubs are a retail use (A4 use class) in planning, they are also important venues for community engagement and hosting community activities, and are therefore considered here. The range of community facilities within a community varies across the Borough.

^{9.14} Community assets can be land or buildings in public or private ownership. Also see 'Report to Cabinet, 5th March 2013, Assets of Community Value', Appendix 4, Draft Operational Policy - Darlington Borough Council Policy on The Community Right to Bid for Assets of Community Value

9.2.18 Many community facilities are experiencing reduced income, arising from either reduced use or reduced public sector or other external funding. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to maintain a list of community assets, and if these come up for sale, community groups can bid for them, to retain it^{9.14}. A planning policy to resist the loss of a community facility where it is the only remaining facility in a community where there is an identified need for it and for which a source of funding for ongoing management and maintenance could support this.

^{9.15} A High Quality Place for Every Child, School Organisation Plan (SOP) 2013-17, DBC

Schools - Issues and Options

9.2.19 Access to good schools is critical to the quality of life of residents, and improving it is a key ambition within the Core Strategy. The Council has to assess the local need for school places and ensure that every child resident in the Borough can have a place in a state funded school in Darlington^{9.15}. It works with a wide range of education providers, such as Academies and free schools^{9.16} to ensure this. More schools are expected to convert to Academy status over the next few years, so that by April 2013, 70% of all schools in the Borough are likely to be Academies.

^{9.16} Academies are state funded independent schools. Free Schools are usually new schools funded directly by government and not maintained by local authorities

9.2.20 The main planning issue is how to meet the need for additional school places arising from planned housing growth and population change^{9.17}. There is an immediate need for primary places and a longer term need to review secondary provision. Primary places across all ages are needed, but particularly reception places for four year olds, whilst increased secondary capacity is unlikely to be needed until 2020.^{9.14}

^{9.17} Every 100 new houses is expected, on average, to produce between 18 and 20 primary school age children and 13-15 pupils of secondary age.

9.2.21 Several existing schools can meet the immediate needs^{9.18}, but additional needs are likely to arise in the areas where significant new housing is proposed (see Policy MGP15), particularly in north and north west Darlington and at the Eastern Urban Fringe. Expansion of existing primary and secondary provision should be able to accommodate additional demand for school places associated with new housing at Central Park and the Town Centre Fringe, but to provide for the possibility of school provision close to where people live, the development of the Town Centre Fringe and North West Urban Fringe must provide for land to be identified for educational use until it is clear there is no longer a need (see draft Policies MGP3 and MGP5).

^{9.18} The SOP (2013-17) indicates that existing schools could provide almost 600 additional school places and meet immediate needs for further school places, especially reception age children.

9.2.22 The options being considered are:

- a) absorb future demand within existing capacity, although there are only a limited amount of spaces to accommodate projected demand and this is likely to be taken up within one to two years;
- b) re-open former classrooms that were taken out of use when numbers were falling, providing opportunity to increase the schools capacity without major

- capital investment;
- c) expand existing schools to create additional capacity and increase the admission number, such as additional classrooms. This is not possible in some areas, e.g. northern and eastern Darlington where most primary schools are already at capacity;
- d) provide new build premises - this is likely to be the most costly option, though part of the costs could be met by developers, if provided where significant new housing is proposed. This would also help to provide school places close to new neighbourhoods. New development at the North West Urban Fringe will allow for the possibility of new educational facilities being provided (see draft Policy MGP5) which could be replacements for existing provision.

West Cemetery Extension

9.2.23 The Council is responsible for managing and maintaining three cemeteries, West Cemetery on Carmel Road North (the largest), North Cemetery on North Road and East Cemetery on Geneva Road.

^{9.19}There are on average 69 burials per annum using new graves in the West Cemetery and there are currently 500 new grave spaces remaining.

9.2.24 North and East Cemeteries are likely to have enough space during the plan period (to 2026), however in order for the Council to continue to meet the burial needs of the Borough there is a significant need for new burial space at West Cemetery, the existing space for graves is likely to be used by 2019/20^{9.19}. The cemetery has been extended four times since it opened in 1858, with the latest extension in 1997 the area now covers 15.3 hectares.

9.2.25 At West Cemetery, there is 2.24ha of land adjoining the existing cemetery site, which is enough to meet all of the need for the remainder of the plan period. Through this policy, it could continue to be reserved for that purpose to allow for this. It is the only option being considered.

Preparing a Draft Policy: The Preferred Option

9.2.26 Taking into account comments received, the sustainability appraisal and the findings of other background studies underpinning this document, the preferred options which form the basis of the draft policy MGP31 below are as follows:

- a) **Indoor Sports Facilities:** the preferred option is to set a policy to guide quality and access standards for new, extended or altered facilities, and a policy to guide decisions on applications for new development outside priority locations;
- b) **Primary health care facilities:** the preferred option is a combination of options b) and c) in paragraph 9.2.11. Also the policy is to cover safeguarding a site at Yarm Road in Middleton St. George for a replacement GP surgery.
- c) **Arts and Cultural facilities:** the preferred option is to set a policy which is a combination of options a) to c) identified in paragraph 9.2.16, which will address aspects relating to community access and provide guidance for proposals for redevelopment of existing key cultural or arts attractions or provision of new facilities.
- d) **Community facilities:** the preferred option is for the draft policy to encompass all the aspects outlined in paragraph 9.2.18. Evidence in support of retaining the last community building will have to show there is no accessible alternative suitable facility. A 'lack of need' argument would need to be backed up by evidence, e.g. by surveying all community groups in the area, and a lack of funding would need evidence that no other community group in the neighbourhood would be prepared to take over the facility.
- e) **Schools provision:** The preferred option is a combination of option b) and c) in paragraph 9.2.22 to accommodate emerging demand within existing buildings or school sites. Option a), absorbing demand within existing schools is not sustainable as available spaces in existing schools will be taken up within one or two years, and Option d) is likely to be less deliverable, given lack of funding and certainty.

- f) West Cemetery Extension:** continue to reserve land for further burials at the site.

Draft Policy MGP 31: Supporting the Delivery of Community and Social Infrastructure

Land as identified on the Policies Map will be reserved for the following community uses and facilities:

- a) 1.2 hectares to the south of Yarm Road in Middleton St George for a replacement GP surgery, associated consulting rooms and car parking; and
- b) 4.6 hectares of land at West Cemetery for future burial space.

Comprehensive planning of land for development and regeneration at the Town Centre Fringe, North West Fringe and the Eastern Urban Fringe will be required to include for the possibility of new primary care and education provision as appropriate (see Policies MGP 4, 5 and 6).

In general, the Council will work with other providers to meet identified needs for health and education provision according to the following sequence, and provided that in doing so, existing geographical gaps are addressed and not made worse:

- (i) within existing premises; then
- (ii) by expanding existing premises; then
- (iii) by identifying other public sector buildings/space that could accommodate the use; and then
- (iv) by identifying suitable sites for new premises.

For new indoor sports provision and arts and cultural facilities, priority will be given to new proposals according to the locational strategy set out in CS18 and CS6 respectively. Proposals will be permitted elsewhere if it is shown that:

- a) it cannot be provided in the priority locations; or
- b) there is a need for it in the location proposed; and
- c) it will be easily accessible by a choice of means of transport; and
- d) for arts and cultural facilities, that, through market research and/or an impact assessment, it can be shown that there would not be any damaging impact on the vitality and viability of the Town Centre, including the evening economy.

Secure community access, outside of core school hours, will be required for any new provision on educational sites.

The loss of any community facilities will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:

- (a) there are sufficient other suitable alternative community facilities either within the neighbourhood or accessibly nearby; or
- (b) the community facility is no longer needed; and
- (c) there is no management and funding resources within the local community or that could be generated by partial redevelopment that could sustain a facility that meets identified local needs

Making it happen

- Through operation of the Council's development management function.
- Through preparation of masterplans for areas of significant development and regeneration;
- By working with partners to facilitate and provide health and education facilities to meet identified needs;
- DBC to undertake works at West Cemetery by March 2018 to lay out land

Darlington Local Plan: Making and Growing Places Preferred Options, June 2013
for additional burial space.