

ONE DARLINGTON: PERFECTLY PLACED

A Vision for Darlington: 2008-2021

Darlington Partnership

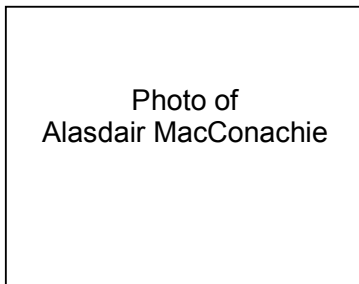
Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy

ONE DARLINGTON : PERFECTLY PLACED

A plan for the future of 99,000 people and the place where they live - one town, twelve villages and the surrounding countryside in the Tees Valley

Darlington is a borough, as well as a town. The use of the name Darlington in this document always refers to the whole borough of town, villages and countryside, unless the text states otherwise.

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*Alasdair MacConachie
Chairman, Darlington Partnership
March 2008*

Foreword

Welcome to One Darlington : Perfectly Placed, the overall plan for Darlington up to 2021. It is about both the people and the place. It is concerned with preserving and strengthening all that is good about life in Darlington, whilst tackling what needs to be improved to build a better quality of life for everyone in the borough community.

It sets out a vision for the future that reflects your views on what is precious about the borough, and on what could be better. It is about supporting your hopes and aspirations, about the well-being of your community, and ultimately about your happiness and fulfilment as a citizen of Darlington.

Darlington Partnership has led the preparation of the vision and the plan for turning it into reality, and partnership will be the key to its delivery. The plan is a framework for action by the whole community. Whilst the big organisations, like the Council, NHS and Police, will have a major role in delivering improvements, much of what we want – a strong borough-wide community that is both diverse and cohesive, vibrant and caring – is about us as individual citizens being able to pursue our diverse aspirations, live active, confident lives, make the choices that are right for us and have opportunities to participate in many different ways in the life of the community.

The Third Sector is already strong in Darlington, and the infrastructure organisations, community groups, voluntary organisations and faith groups are well-placed to lead and support many aspects of this vision, whilst individuals will also play their part through their volunteering activities.

The business community, as well, has a major part to play in building a stronger economy and the increased prosperity that will be the bedrock of much that we want to create for our community and our citizens.

Darlington has a great history of innovation, partnership and community life, and this vision seeks to carry that spirit forward into the future. We will measure success by what we create and deliver, but we will achieve it by what we all contribute as a community.

The Plan at a Glance

About This Plan

ONE DARLINGTON : PERFECTLY PLACED is the overall plan for Darlington

Darlington Partnership brings together everyone who is involved in making Darlington an even better place to live and work. This plan, prepared by the partnership, is the way of making sure that all the different organisations working in the borough – like the Council, NHS, Police, businesses, voluntary organisations and many others – work together effectively and pull in the same direction.

Much of the detail about how we will move forward, develop and improve Darlington is set out in the wide range of plans drawn up and carried out by all of these organisations. The role of this strategy is two-fold: to set out a high level vision for the future, based on the views and aspirations of the community; and to provide a framework to guide and steer all of our detailed plans and programmes so that they play their part in turning the vision into reality. More information is provided later in this document about this framework of planning and delivery arrangements.

Darlington has worked to a similar plan, 'Where Quality Comes to Life', since 2003. It has done a great job in co-ordinating and guiding services and projects, and it has helped Darlington to make big strides forward in many areas. In particular the aspirations we set for the economy have largely been achieved and it is timely to refocus on the next steps.

However, there have been major changes since 2003, and new opportunities and challenges have emerged. National government policy has changed; climate change has become a critical global issue that must be addressed at the local level; the Tees Valley City Region is emerging as an important working entity.

Locally, many of the priorities set in 2003 have been progressed or achieved, and the focus is shifting. Perhaps the most important change is the new commitment to engagement, to an enriched approach to listening, discussion and partnership right across the community in tackling issues and meeting needs. Changing demographic trends are also significant, with an ageing population, and significant in-migration from eastern European countries in the E.C is also an emerging phenomenon.

Darlington Partnership therefore decided the time was right to develop a new plan, and to broaden its embrace to reflect the aspirations of the whole community. This document is the result.

The vision for Darlington set out in this plan will be achieved through a wide range of detailed plans and programmes to be developed and delivered by partner agencies. Some of these plans are included in the 'From Vision to Reality' section later in this document.

The delivery of the vision will be secured through a series of short-term (3 year) Local Area Agreements (LAA). The LAA is a contract with government, built around a prioritised set of performance indicators, establishing the priorities to be achieved in Darlington to make progress towards the vision.

The Darlington Local Development Framework (LDF) is currently being developed to replace the Borough of Darlington Local Plan. It is a statutory requirement that the LDF must provide the spatial dimension for the One Darlington: Perfectly Placed vision. This relationship of high level vision and statutory planning policy has to be articulated through the Core Strategy of the LDF. This plan and the Darlington LDF Core Strategy have been drawn up in tandem, with some shared public consultation. The result is a close correlation between the delivery themes of this plan and the strategic themes of the LDF, the former setting out a visionary framework to guide the actions of all the agencies working in Darlington, and the latter a planning policy framework designed to secure the physical aspects of the vision through development.

One Darlington: Perfectly Placed acts as a single strategy to include the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, through the One Darlington priority to narrow the gap.

A Strategy for a Sustainable Community

A Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) has to be produced for every local authority area, and this plan is the SCS for Darlington.

A sustainable community is one where people of all ages and circumstances can meet their needs, whether material, social or spiritual. As a result it will be a place where people choose to live, work and relax. But it will also be a place where social, economic and environmental resources are managed in ways that don't compromise the quality of life of future generations or those in the wider world. A strong, sustainable economy providing high quality, well-paid jobs combined with long-term stability, is not so much an end in itself as the foundation for building the social inclusion and environmental well-being that are the desired characteristics of a sustainable community.

Sustainability is concerned, therefore, with the physical structure of our settlements, the location of housing, jobs, shopping and leisure facilities, the design of buildings and the transport links between them. But sustainable communities are about more than bricks and mortar. They need good governance, public participation, partnership working, excellent public services and civic pride.

We start from a strong base in Darlington, and we made good progress under the first community strategy is reinforcing many aspects of social, economic and environmental sustainability. This plan is designed to maintain this progress towards making Darlington a genuinely sustainable community.

A Track Record of Partnership

Partnership working – building relationships to improve the future – is a distinctive part of Darlington's story, and Darlington Partnership is the latest episode. Going right back to the formation in 1818 of the Darlington Committee that created the Stockton and Darlington Railway, and the momentous meeting between Edward Pease and George Stephenson that set the future on steam traction, effective partnerships have been the key to Darlington's innovation and enterprise, and its contribution to the wider world.

Another take on partnership, that of service and commitment to the community, is equally strong in Darlington. The Quaker ethos of business acumen combined with social philanthropy played a major part in shaping the town as we know it today, and a strong spirit of community service, across faith groups and secular organisations continues to be a really vital aspect of life in the borough.

Darlington Partnership grew out of the Employers' Forum, formed in 1992 by Darlington's M.P. and the Leader of the Council to engage and work with the main private sector companies in Darlington. The forum was renamed and launched by Tony Blair as the Darlington Partnership in 1997, to provide a formal interface between the new unitary Borough Council and the private sector. Its primary task was to promote the borough as a place to do business and stimulate economic development.

Darlington Partnership was seen as a model of good practice by government when it decided that Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) should be set up in all parts of the country, and the Partnership became the LSP for Darlington. As the LSP it was expanded, under the private sector chairmanship of Alasdair MacConachie, to include broader representation from the public, community and voluntary sectors. The first community strategy, 'Where Quality Comes to Life', was published in 2003.

The Partnership is structured around a Board, currently with 34 members, and five supporting partnership theme groups, currently the Children's Trust; Learning and Culture Partnership; Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership; Health Improvement and Social Inclusion Group; and Economy, Environment and Transport. The Darlington Assembly brings together up to 200 representatives from across the community twice each year to discuss and contribute to the Partnership's work on key issues and programmes.

With the publication of **ONE DARLINGTON : PERFECTLY PLACED**, the Partnership's theme groups will be restructured to enable effective delivery of the new plan. Needs change over time and across different parts of the community, and it is important that the Partnership is flexible and responsive to these needs. This plan similarly sets out a framework designed to accommodate changing needs and priorities whilst steering towards the agreed vision, and we will continue to listen to what people are saying across the borough community, respond quickly to tackle problems, and guide the provision of effective services to meet those changing needs.

The organisations represented in the Darlington Partnership are listed in the final section of this plan, inside the back cover.

The Vision for Darlington

ONE DARLINGTON - PERFECTLY PLACED

A friendly spirit of innovation that changed the world

Our vision of Darlington in 2021 is drawn from the discussions that have taken place through engagement with the community and from the findings of the Enquiry Groups.

It is a vision of a community that respects its unique heritage and retains the borough's character, friendliness and quality of life. At the same time we want to make the most of our potential for greater prosperity, and open up aspiration and opportunity for everybody. Across the town, the villages and the countryside we want to build a genuinely sustainable, cohesive and caring borough-wide community.

Darlington's spirit of innovation, ambition and enterprise quite literally changed the world¹ whilst at the same time shaping the place that we know and enjoy today, the buildings, tree-lined streets and friendly market town atmosphere that contribute so much to the borough's quality of life.

This spirit lives on. There is a clear understanding of what is needed to build a more prosperous, inclusive and thriving community. We also have a great track record of innovation and success achieved through Darlington's recognised strength in partnership working, involving private, public, voluntary, community and faith sector organisations.

There is much to do, however, with significant challenges and opportunities ahead. Our vision of 'One Darlington' refers to both making the most of Darlington's unique character and qualities, and to building inclusion and opportunity for all. We particularly need to narrow the sometimes-wide gaps that exist across the borough in prosperity, educational attainment, health and life expectancy, and access to jobs, services and facilities.

Our vision is not limited to material well-being, however. Right across the borough there is a shared view of what we want from a 'sense of community'. 'One Darlington' is about renewing a sense of belonging, of being part of vibrant, confident and active communities, ones where shared values of respect, caring and commitment to others have been reinforced, so that they have real meaning and common currency. And this does not mean imposing 'sameness' on everybody – our vision is of an increasingly diverse community where all people are valued and are able to fulfil their potential.

Darlington is 'perfectly placed' in terms of its location and accessibility, and also in being poised to make the most of its opportunities to attract business investment and increase employment and wage levels. We can also exploit these opportunities to add to the existing excellent leisure and cultural facilities, and create an exciting, vibrant quality of life, whilst retaining the friendly, attractive and accessible feel of the place.

The biggest challenge of all, though, is to ensure that we meet our needs in Darlington in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, both here and in the wider world. This is a plan for a sustainable community. The 'perfect place' in 2021 will marry the best of the past with our aspirations for sustainable prosperity, a strong sense of community and improved quality of life for all Darlington people, including future generations, whilst respecting local and global environmental limits.

So what could the Darlington of 2021 look like? The achievements of the past might open our eyes to the possibilities of the future, and perhaps it will look something like this:

¹ Referring to Darlington's role as the birthplace of the railways and as builder of some of world's great bridges – see the 'Darlington Facts' section.

The Past...

...and the Future?

Darlington's innovation and investment in steam traction sows the seed of the railway age in 1825, and transforms human horizons across the world through the advent of mass transportation.

Tees Valley Metro provides state-of-the-art rapid light rail services across the Tees Valley, linking into Darlington town centre.

Darlington bridges the world, with many of the most iconic bridges and structures across the globe, from Sydney Harbour to the new Wembley Arch, designed and prefabricated in the town.

The employment prospects of local people have been transformed by skills development programmes that have, in turn, made Darlington the location of choice for high wage global companies, with specialist clusters in modern engineering and logistics, and a key business and professional services centre.

Exploiting its position at the heart of the growing national rail network, Darlington's Northern Echo becomes the first genuinely national newspaper on New Year's Day, 1870.

Darlington's growing prosperity, diverse arts and cultural scene, attractive environment and strong housing market add up to a unique quality of life offer, making the borough the residential location of choice in the region. The creative industries sector is starting to favour Darlington as a location on the back of the influx of young professionals choosing to live in the area.

Innovation in the field of education includes George Dent Nursery School, the second oldest in the country, whilst more recently the Education Village is the first example nationally of mainstream and specialist education provision being integrated on one site.

Darlington University Campus is internationally renowned for its innovative teaching programmes. The student population is a cornerstone of the vibrant, intelligent culture that Darlington offers.

Darlington's agricultural innovations include the development of the shorthorn cattle breed by the Colling brothers. Later, in 1920, Darlington stages the Royal Agricultural Show at Hundens, opened by the Duke of York

People come to Darlington by high-speed rail services from across Europe to attend conferences at the northeast's primary meeting venue in Central Park. Other visitors stream in for the Darlington Fringe festival that enlivens the Parkgate cultural quarter. Yet others come for the outdoors – the maturing Community Forests, enlivened by outdoor art and sculpture, and the landscape of the Tees Valley

These future scenarios may be coloured by imagination, but there are seeds of reality for all of them in current initiatives - we now have every opportunity to carry Darlington's impressive history of achievement forward into an equally impressive future.

One Vision into Two Priorities

The clarity of vision that has emerged from all of the discussions that have taken place across the borough has led us to set two priorities for future work to deliver the vision. These two priorities are encapsulated in the two components of the vision:

- One Darlington – embracing our approach to **people**, and specifically the need to make sure that people are not disadvantaged by their income, where they live or by any other potential disadvantage that could cause them to miss out on the opportunities that will be created by realising our vision
- Perfectly Placed – describing Darlington as a **place** and helping us shape our investment decisions, spatial planning and care for the environment

In this section of the plan, each of these priorities is explored in more detail. Later in the plan, five themes are set out as the framework for organising and delivering future actions. These themes are focused on particular topics or aspects of living in Darlington – prosperity, aspiration, health, environment and safety. The two priorities will carry the vision forward into all of the themes, to make sure that the actions we take within each theme are tested and shaped by it.

About Darlington

Before turning to each of the priorities individually, a very clear message was articulated in the consultation process about Darlington that provides the bedrock for both of these priorities. People from all parts of the community, from diverse circumstances and interest groups, want this plan to emphasise the borough's positive qualities before going on to address those aspects that need improvement.

Most people state that Darlington is a good place to live. The physical environment is attractive, comfortable, accessible and green. The place has a friendly atmosphere, and many people cherish its 'market town' character. Most people regard the community as remarkably tolerant and welcoming, and that includes people experiencing Darlington from a wide range of minority perspectives. In recent years the strengthening of the economy with the transition from the industrial to the information age has opened up new work and learning opportunities. The borough is relatively well off in terms of 'social capital' with an active Third Sector and volunteer community. For a town of its size Darlington provides an outstanding range of sporting, leisure and arts/cultural facilities. The villages provide attractive environments and active communities, and the borough encompasses a swathe of attractive, accessible countryside. Four national parks are within an hour's drive, Newcastle, Leeds and London are easily reached by fast rail services, and there is rapid access to Europe through Durham Tees Valley Airport.

It is also very clear that there is a strong sense of civic pride across the community, a pride in Darlington's history and the role the town has played on the world stage. Many people refer to the Quaker ethos of innovation and business success combined with social philanthropy that weaves through local history and that has shaped the town as we know it, and to how this ethos is still evident in the local spirit of enterprise combined with commitment to the community. Carrying that spirit forward is a vital part of our vision.

Pride in the borough must not, of course, detract attention from the very real issues and problems to be addressed through this plan, but equally our focus on improvement, and particularly on tackling deprivation, should be matched by care for the well-being of the whole community and environment.

The most significant issues and problems that must be addressed through this plan include:

- Responding to long-term changes in local demographics, with an increasingly ageing population through the lifetime of this plan impacting on the specification and cost of health and care services, combined with opportunities for extending people's working, learning and leisure lives and enhancing well-being in old age.
- Tackling the gaps in health and well-being across the borough, and particularly narrowing the current 13 year gap in life expectancy between the wards with longest and shortest average lifespan
- Linked to the above, addressing the increasingly serious health issue of obesity across the population, with a particular emphasis on early intervention with children and young people
- Improving educational attainment across the borough, and reducing the disparity in the performance of schools and communities
- Building a vibrant but safe night-time economy, tackling the misuse of alcohol, particularly amongst under-age children, and reducing violence and injuries associated with alcohol misuse
- Reducing anti-social behaviour and enhancing people's perceptions of safety across the borough
- Attracting economic investment into the borough, continuing to increase the number and quality of jobs available in the local economy, raising wage levels
- Working with employers, schools, colleges and the university to address the skills shortfall in the local economy
- Continuing to promote and improve Darlington town centre, support independent retailers and pursue a viable future for the indoor and outdoor markets
- Securing the investment in the major infrastructure projects, including Central Park, The Oval town centre development and Tees Valley Metro, needed to underpin economic growth in the borough
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- Tackling traffic congestion whilst enhancing accessibility to jobs, facilities and services for all residents and for businesses across all parts of the borough
- Doing all that we can locally to reduce our contribution to global CO₂ emissions, and to have a beneficial effect on climate change

These are the most important issues for Darlington at the point of publication of this plan in 2008, but these will change during the lifetime of the plan, and it must be flexible to adapt to changing circumstances. As MP Alan Milburn said to the Darlington Assembly during the preparation of the plan, "The priorities and needs of the area fifteen years ago were different from those of today, and will change again as we progress. It is our duty to ensure that we are in control of these changes and to create the Darlington that meets our vision".

The structure of the plan is designed to achieve this. The combination of long-term vision and planning framework set out in this document, combined with short-term delivery programmes set out in the Local Area Agreement and in the action plans of the Darlington Partnership Theme Groups, will enable us to adapt to changing circumstances whilst continuing to steer towards our long-term goals.

One Darlington

The One Darlington priority carries forward the vision as it relates to people, and it therefore has many strands, including:

- Tackling deprivation wherever it exists, narrowing the gaps in life chances across the borough, and focusing on reducing inequality for the most deprived and disadvantaged
- Nurturing a strong, vibrant and cohesive borough-wide community of town, villages and countryside, with shared values of respect and caring for others
- Valuing diversity – recognising that a cohesive community doesn't mean everyone being the same; supporting and empowering everyone to develop and pursue their true aspirations and make the life choices that are right for them as individuals, whilst honouring the values of respect and caring for others
- Making sure that groups of people who may be at risk of discrimination or disadvantage are included in the community, with equality of opportunity and access to services
- Linked to the above, protecting vulnerable people, ranging from individual victims of domestic violence to whole groups or communities at risk of abuse and violence
- Valuing each person for who they are, throughout their lives, and recognising and valuing what each offers and contributes to the community as well as what each needs
- Encouraging and opening up opportunities for people to volunteer their skills, experience and willingness for the benefit of the community, and generally to build-up social capital in the borough
- Regarding the happiness, fulfilment and well-being of individuals as a legitimate concern for the community as a whole, and doing what is possible to support individuals to enjoy their lives and achieve wholeness and mental well-being.

All of these strands, and more, have been strongly championed across the community in the discussions to develop this plan, and also embody the priorities identified in the findings of the Life Chances Enquiry Group.

Tackling deprivation, 'narrowing the gaps' and promoting social inclusion will inevitably be the dominant issues for the Council, NHS, Police and their related agencies over the lifetime of this plan. The One Darlington priority challenges all plans, programmes and decisions within each of the five delivery themes to contribute to reducing deprivation. This is reflected in the delivery themes and work strands, in terms of ensuring that everyone can share in the benefits of increased prosperity, pursue their aspirations, enjoy good health and life expectancy, live in an attractive environment, be able to get around easily and affordably, and live without fear of crime or anti-social behaviour. The approach to tackling deprivation is therefore woven into all aspects of future planning and delivery, and is not restricted only to those areas of work specifically focused on deprivation, such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, the Community Partnership arrangements in the most deprived wards, the Health Improvement Strategy, the Social Inclusion Strategy 'All Together Now'.

The Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) are equally focused on issues of deprivation, social equity and inclusion, and have a major role to play within the One Darlington priority. The TSOs role is often complementary to the public agencies, particularly in terms of providing support and guidance targeted on the needs of individuals, and directed towards enhancing individual well-being, equality of opportunity, access to information, advice and guidance, and building social capital through volunteering and motivating people to be active citizens.

Whilst focusing delivery on reducing deprivation and support for people in vulnerable situations, it is very clear from the development of this plan that there is a broader aspiration for One Darlington that is evident right across the borough – building a stronger, cohesive and active community that upholds shared values of respect and caring for each other. The faith communities and the Life Chances Enquiry Group have particularly championed this holistic aspiration, but all of the agencies and groups working in the borough can contribute to building this vision of revitalised community life.

The One Darlington priority is about bringing all of these perspectives on individual and community well-being to bear on the programmes and actions developed across all the delivery themes set out in the next section of the plan.

Perfectly Placed

Perfectly Placed carries forward the vision as it relates to Darlington as a place, rooted in the borough's assets of location, accessibility and attractive environment, and the potential for exploiting these assets to make Darlington a place where everybody can enjoy a high quality of life. It recognises, as well, that Darlington is perfectly placed within North East England and the Tees Valley, and that it can attract investment and economic activity that might not otherwise come to the northeast, and the borough therefore has a key role in achieving the region's economic aspirations. Like One Darlington, Perfectly Placed embraces several strands, including:

- Further enhancing shopping, leisure and employment opportunities in the vibrant, attractive town centre, whilst looking after the friendly market town character as a place that people want to visit and where they feel safe and comfortable
- Continuing to exploit Darlington's location, accessibility and quality of life to help businesses to grow, and to attract new ones into the borough, by continuing to provide employment sites and spaces that meet business needs; and to attract high quality jobs and increase average pay levels whilst maintaining the lowest unemployment rate in the region
- Maintaining and enhancing the cultural life of the borough, making the most of the excellent established arts facilities and programmes and looking for opportunities to develop and enrich them
- Exploring the opportunity to develop and promote Darlington as a University town, and to potentially exploit that development to strengthen Darlington's economy, cultural offer and overall quality of life – this development is too recent to have been discussed in the consultation on this plan, but its potential economic, educational and cultural benefits should be examined
- Making the most of Darlington's excellent transport links, both outwards into the region, the rest of the country and into Europe, and within the borough to provide good accessibility, travel safety and choice of transport modes for everyone
- Increasing the supply and range of affordable housing in response to the significant increases in prices in recent years, and the impact of rising prices in a low wage economy, as well as improving generally the range and choice of housing
- Continuing the programme to provide new and revitalised school buildings across the borough, to complement the established range of good schools and provide high quality learning environments for all children
- Learning from the best examples of new development in the borough, like West Park, to develop sustainable neighbourhoods with a good range of local facilities and transport links to the town centre and employment areas

- Valuing and reinforcing Darlington’s excellent green infrastructure of parks, open spaces, green corridors and countryside features like ponds, hedgerows and woodland, combined with good public access for recreation
- In pursuing all of the above, ensure that spatial planning, design of buildings, transport networks, waste management and other factors are combined to minimise carbon emissions and ensure that Darlington plays its part in reducing climate change

The challenge under the Perfectly Placed priority is to bring about the development and improvements that Darlington needs to support our aspirations, tackle deprivation and provide opportunities for a good quality of life for everybody, whilst preserving and strengthening the scale, character and sense of place that people value so much.

The Delivery Themes

Five themes for organising and delivering improvement actions have been identified as a result of all the consultation, discussion and prioritisation that went into the development of this plan. The themes are:

- Prosperous Darlington – focused on creating a vibrant economy and prosperity for all, recognising the quality of life that makes Darlington perfectly placed
- Aspiring Darlington – enabling people to develop and achieve their aspirations, and to maximise their potential
- Healthy Darlington – improving health and well-being for everybody, irrespective of social, economic and environmental constraints
- Greener Darlington – ensuring an attractive and ‘liveable’ local environment, and contributing to tackling global environmental challenges
- Safer Darlington – creating a safer and more cohesive Darlington.

Each theme is structured in the same way, carrying the One Darlington and Perfectly Placed priorities forward into long-term outcomes and a series of ‘strands’ that provide a framework for future action planning. Some headline projects are outlined, although most projects and programmes will be developed through detailed action plans. The results of the consultation and Enquiry Group processes, which helped to shape the vision, are summarised in the ‘What You Told Us’ sections.

This framework has been designed to provide a simple and straightforward structure for the plan. The One Darlington and Perfectly Placed priorities set out in the previous section are designed to counter-balance this simple structure, to ensure that issues and topics like, for example transport and arts and culture, that cut across more than one of the themes are built in to theme actions.

The priorities are also designed to ensure linkage across themes, so that complex issues with multiple dimensions are addressed comprehensively in action planning that involves all the appropriate agencies.

Another key aspect of the plan’s structure is the long-term focus of the vision combined with short- and medium-term delivery action planning. This allows improvements to be prioritised and programmed over longer timescales than in the past. The actions set out within each of the five themes in the following section are focused on the short to medium term, but needs and priorities will shift, and new actions will emerge, over the lifetime of the plan, and its structure is designed to accommodate this.

PROSPEROUS DARLINGTON

The One Darlington and Perfectly Placed Priorities

The One Darlington priority poses a range of challenges for future work to build prosperity in the borough, including:

- Building a stronger economy that continues to improve living standards for the community as a whole, and ensuring that new development brings benefits for people
- Narrowing the gap in prosperity between the community as a whole and the most deprived groups and neighbourhoods
- Attracting high quality, well-paid jobs to the borough, tackling the low wage economy, and ensuring that local people have the skills needed to attract and compete for those jobs
- Ensuring that rural and village communities benefit from economic strategies, in terms of access to jobs and sharing in prosperity
- Recognising and accommodating the broader view of prosperity and aspiration as embracing spiritual and mental well-being and the ‘social capital’ of community involvement, as well as material wealth

The Perfectly Placed priority similarly provides a visionary context for future work, including:

- Exploiting of Darlington’s distinctive character, location and quality of life advantages to promote the borough and attract investment and jobs
- Ensuring that economic growth contributes to strengthening the attractiveness of the town centre, maintaining the viability of the markets, and to enhancing the vibrant cultural life and facilities that is central to the vision
- Linking economic investment projects to transport improvements to enhance accessibility for everybody and to address congestion
- Maintaining and enhancing Darlington’s character, scale and friendly market town atmosphere
- Making the most of the University project, as it progresses, to promote Darlington and secure benefits for the local economy

Where We Are

In the first community strategy we said that we wanted to increase levels of employment, achieve higher wage levels, promote growth in business start-ups and retain more local spending within the local economy.

Since 2002, the Darlington Gateway Strategy has been remarkably successful in tackling what was the principal barrier to economic growth, the lack of sites and premises to meet the needs of potential employers. Gateway has attracted £420 million of private sector investment into the borough to date, resulting directly in the creation of over 2000 new jobs. This is projected to increase to around 4300 new jobs from over 1 million square feet of new employment accommodation by 2010, as a result of the renewed Gateway Strategy.

A self-sustaining commercial property market has been created in Darlington through increased office rental levels. Employment levels have increased, and the gap in unemployment rates between Darlington and the rest of Great Britain has been narrowed.

Business start-ups have also increased, with a 5% rise in the number of VAT registered businesses, but more support is needed to raise the survival and growth rates of new businesses. There is little evidence of increased spending in the local economy through public procurement, and this will be a key focus for the future.

The improvement of the town centre has been tackled as an important strand of Gateway, with the Pedestrian Heart now completed and progress on the £100 million Oval (Commercial Street) shopping and leisure development.

Our One Darlington focus highlights the remaining gap of 0.7 percentage points in unemployment rates between Darlington and the Great Britain average, whilst pay levels remain low. Average earnings of people employed in Darlington have increased in recent years but are still 7.1% lower than the Tees Valley average and 17.7% lower than the average for Great Britain (2006).

Darlington is ranked as the 95th most deprived area in the country, with 45% of the population living in 10 wards that are amongst the 25% most deprived in the country. 7 wards are amongst the 10% most deprived, and 31% of the borough's population live in them. (2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation).

Housing choice is an important condition for economic growth, and it is important to align and co-ordinate housing development, economic growth, and population changes. Darlington has applied to the government to become a Northern Housing Growth Point. If successful, this will provide funding to bring forward sites for housing development that require infrastructure investment to make them viable, as well as enabling intervention in the housing market to secure types of housing provision required to meet current and planned local needs. In Darlington, this means expanding the stock of affordable housing, making sure that future housing development meets the needs of an ageing population, making all new dwellings carbon neutral within the lifetime of this plan, as well as enhancing choice across the housing market to support our quality of life and inward investment aspirations.

Effective transport is vital to a thriving economy, and congestion and poor accessibility are costly to business. Darlington enjoys high levels of accessibility and we must ensure that, as the economy grows and wealth increases, congestion problems are avoided.

The focus on prosperity should recognise the important role of the voluntary sector and the faith communities in running social businesses that support charitable and community work. The local economy must maintain and enhance opportunities for these businesses to prosper.

What You Told Us

The vision and the One Darlington and Perfectly Placed priorities are based on the results of consultation and the enquiry group process.

The Economy Enquiry Group findings were very much in line with the Gateway Strategy priorities, focused on quality of life, expansion of business premises and infrastructure, accessibility and transport improvements, getting the right skills into the employment market, growing high value sectors, ensuring everyone can benefit from increased prosperity, and exploiting Darlington's distinctive character to promote the borough.

The results of public consultation and the Citizens' Panel survey focused on providing support to and incentives to businesses, and promoting Darlington to attract high value companies. They matched the Enquiry Group findings in supporting development of the Town Centre Fringe to stimulate growth; attracting high quality, well-paid jobs; and further developing the town centre to provide shopping and leisure facilities.

These findings have been combined and incorporated into the work strands summarised below.

Long-Term Outcomes and Performance Measures

The core outcomes for prosperity that must be delivered to enable the One Darlington : Perfectly Placed vision to be achieved are:

- To increase average earnings to narrow the gap between Darlington and the rest of the country
- To increase the Darlington employment rate, and eliminate the gap in unemployment rates between Darlington and the rest of the country
- To increase unemployment, pay levels and economic prospects for people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods

The following performance indicators selected from the National Indicator set will be used to measure progress towards delivering these outcomes:

NI 166: Average earnings of employees in the area

NI 153: Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods

NI 151: Overall employment rate

Short-Term and Medium-Term Work Strands

The consultation results and Enquiry Group findings, fed into the plan through the vision and the two vision priorities, resulted in the identification of six strands for work within this theme in the short to medium-term, and a seventh was added following further discussion on the draft plan. Action planning will lead to the drawing up of detailed proposals under each of these strands.

1. **Quality of Life** – enhancing quality of life in Darlington as one of the borough’s key assets for economic growth, focused on promoting arts, leisure and cultural development; attracting high profile companies that reflect our aspirations for the area, enhancing transport choice and accessibility, and maintaining an attractive, green environment
2. **Employment Opportunities** – continuing to improve the range of high quality premises available for incoming and expanding employers, whilst ensuring that developments are sustainable in their locations, accessibility and building design through the Local Development Framework, Increase employment opportunities and attract higher paid jobs, and expand work opportunities for people experiencing deprivation. Assist Incapacity Benefits claimants into work.
3. **Accessible Darlington** – maintaining and enhancing further the second key asset in the Gateway approach, Darlington’s accessibility by rail, air and road, and ease of access within the borough.
4. **Growing Skills** – getting the right skills available in Darlington to support the growth of high value companies; and focusing on growing high value sectors – particularly business, financial and professional services; engineering design and construction; and knowledge intensive businesses; improving skills training and employment prospects for residents, including through the use of targeted training and recruitment clauses in public procurement

5. **Sharing Prosperity** – reflecting our One Darlington focus and reinforcing our proposals to increase employment opportunities; generating higher paid jobs and enhancing people’s skills and ability to participate in the job market; tackling the disparities in employment prospects and economic opportunity across Darlington; supporting local procurement; developing financial literacy for individuals (including information on benefits) and start-up businesses, and providing guidance to people with debt issues
6. **Diversity of Opportunity** – making sure that the local economy provides opportunities for people to pursue their diverse aspirations, so that Darlington is a place where people want to stay and develop their talents; providing encouragement and support for people to be economically active right across the community, and ensuring that opportunities are not limited by discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, disability or any other factors
7. **Distinctive Darlington** – creating a clear and consistent identity for Darlington’s future, reflecting its distinctive history, as a platform for raising the borough’s national and international profile.

ASPIRING DARLINGTON

The One Darlington and Perfectly Placed Priorities

Aspiration is at the heart of the One Darlington priority. The impact of the priority on work under the Aspiring Darlington theme includes:

- Addressing the gaps in educational attainment and raising the performance of all schools across the borough to match the best
- Supporting people to develop long-term aspirations and providing the widest possible range of lifelong learning opportunities to help people of all ages to pursue their aspirations; open up and promote opportunities for volunteering
- Complementing work under the Prosperous Darlington theme to equip people coming out of education with the skills needed to work in the modern local economy, and to maximise their potential in their working lives
- Linked to the above and the Prosperous Darlington theme, provide the learning opportunities and quality of life improvements to encourage Darlington's ablest young people to remain in the borough, and to attract and retain graduates from other areas
- Recognising the significant role played by the arts and culture in people's aspirations and personal development
- Easing the transitions between stages in people's learning and development, and in particular between primary and secondary schooling

The Perfectly Placed priority carries the vision forward into this theme in the following ways:

- Providing high quality facilities that support modern approaches to education in schools and for lifelong learning
- Expanding the existing range of arts and cultural businesses and services, primarily through the Central Park and Town Centre Fringe projects, to support people's learning and enhance quality of life
- Making the most of the Darlington University proposal to complement and strengthen learning opportunities in the borough, attract undergraduates to come to or stay in Darlington, and to contribute to building a vibrant and diverse quality of life

Where We Are

The 2007 review of the Children and Young People's Plan for Darlington provides an up-to-date and realistic picture of progress that our partnerships are achieving in improving educational prospects for our young people.

Academic performance varies across the Key Stages. At Key Stage 2, performance is well above the national average, with particularly strong results in mathematics. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades (Key Stage 4) is slightly better than the national average, whilst Key Stage 5 performance is excellent, with the borough being ranked as 11th best nationally.

The Eastbourne Church of England Academy has now been established to replace Eastbourne School, which was the poorest performing school in the borough. Pupils achieving 5A*-C grades fell to 19% in 2006, the lowest nationally, but recovered through targeted action to 45% in 2007, in advance of the formation of the Academy.

Absenteeism and exclusions are a particular concern in Darlington. Until recently performance was declining, but there is now evidence that a number of strategies, including the development of vocational options at Key Stage 4, are producing positive effects, with both absence and exclusion rates showing a downward trend – there has been a reduction of 600 attendance days lost to fixed-term exclusions between September and November 2007 compared to the same period in 2006.

There is a clear understanding in Darlington, reinforced by head teachers' evidence to the Local Strategic Partnership, that some of the barriers to further progress in improving academic achievement, require concerted joint efforts on a number of fronts and not only in schools. This understanding is reflected under other themes in this plan, notably in terms of skills training and health, in order to promote a holistic approach to improving the life chances of all our children and young people and reducing the attainment gap. Targeted interventions will be strengthened in community settings using the network of children's centres, school clusters/ extended schools and family learning centres.

Whilst there is a short to medium-term emphasis in this theme on education in schools, work within the theme must address the bigger picture of aspiration in order to support people to maximise their potential. This includes adult and lifelong learning, linked to our priorities on enhancing people's skills in the job market, and enhancing health and mental well-being as well as leisure; the role of the arts and cultural activities both in relation to adult learning/personal development and the wider quality of life agenda; developing provision and support for 14-19 year olds, linked again to skills development and engagement with employers; and the role of Third Sector organisations in developing children as well as adults.

What You Told Us

The vision and the One Darlington and Perfectly Placed priorities are based on the results of consultation and the enquiry group process. In relation to this theme, the Education Enquiry Group findings focus on primary to secondary transition, communication between schools and parents, disparities in performance between different schools, and building links between schools and employers focused on skills development and career guidance.

The community consultation placed more emphasis on equality of access to education. The Citizen's Panel shared this concern with access, but also gave weight to greater parental and carer involvement in education. The panel also wants to see more school places and choice, whilst partner agencies emphasises the issue of disparities between schools, and working towards all schools being schools of choice.

Overall results of consultation with residents, employers and visitors tell us that people want to see:

- All children having equal access to an excellent education, including those in rural communities, those with special needs and all other minority groups.
- Greater involvement of parents and carers in the education of their children, with better links developed between schools and employers.
- Education to include community and lifestyle issues (e.g. citizenship, health, environmental, respect for others).
- Engage, inspire and mentor young people (provide role models & work experience).
- More/improved training, including apprenticeships so we can 'grow our own' talent.

Further consultation emphasised the need for the theme to reflect a broad-based approach, embracing lifelong learning and arts and culture, linking to the Prosperous and Healthy themes. The findings of consultation on the Children and Young People's Plan have also been taken into account in constructing this theme.

Long-Term Outcomes and Performance Measures

The core aspiration outcomes that must be delivered to enable the One Darlington : Perfectly Placed vision to be achieved are:

- Improved educational attainment at all key stages, and ensuring that the performance of all schools matches the best
- Making sure that aspiration, attainment and life chances are not dependent on where people live, their economic circumstances or any other factors that might cause them to be disadvantaged
- Increase participation rates in post 16 education

The following performance indicators selected from the National Indicator set will be used to measure progress towards delivering these outcomes:

- NI 182: Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19
- NI 102: Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the expected level at Key Stages 2 and 4
- NI 75: Achievement of 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths

Short to Medium-Term Work Strands

The consultation results and Enquiry Group findings, fed into the plan through the vision and the two vision priorities, resulted in the identification of five strands for work within this theme in the short to medium-term. Two more were added following further discussion on the draft plan. Action planning will lead to the drawing up of detailed proposals under each of these strands

1. **Ensure all children receive high quality teaching and learning** – developing a Darlington-wide commitment to overcoming barriers to educational achievement, particularly with respect to the impact of poverty, deprivation and worklessness, tackling disparity in performance across schools, phases and vulnerable groups and supporting school leadership teams in their continuous improvement.
2. **Easing the transition from primary to secondary education** – providing a ‘seamless’ transition between primary and secondary school for all pupils and parents, as well as between years and stages within schools; tackling incidents of bullying and anti-social behaviour within and on the journey to school to eliminate impact on transition, and improving children’s experiences in travelling to and from school; providing children with the information, support, experience and confidence to manage the transition to eliminate socio-economic background or deprivation factors from the transition process.
3. **Improving parenting and communications with parents** – encouraging parents to be partners in their children’s education; ensuring clarity about the role of parents in relation to their children’s education, and behavioural and absenteeism issues; combined with improvements to the education provided by all schools within strand 1, engaging with parents on secondary school choice encourage choice of nearest school.
4. **Engaging with employers** – closely linked to the ‘Growing Skills’ strand in the Prosperous Darlington theme, promoting links between schools and employers to improve careers guidance, providing meaningful work-related learning placements, encourage young people to develop their aspirations and career choices, supporting young people in the transition from school to work or higher education and developing work-related/vocational diplomas

5. **Routes to Higher Education in Darlington** – progressing the development of University provision in Darlington, broadening the range of qualification routes to enable people to access higher education locally and, linked to 4 above, linking higher education qualifications available in Darlington to the skills needed to access local jobs and support local economic growth sectors.
6. **Early Intervention and Preventative Working** – ensuring that children, young people and families can easily access the services they require to meet learning, health and benefits needs; making early interventions to address behaviour issues and provide behaviour support services
7. **Supporting Aspiration, Lifelong Learning and Personal Development** – providing people with the information, advice and guidance needed to make appropriate life choices around learning and personal development; supporting and encouraging organisations that contribute to the development of children and young people; providing opportunities for adult learning; contributing to the provision of arts and cultural programmes linked to learning and development needs.
8. **Learning Environments** – providing high quality facilities to support modern learning/educational requirements; pursue the development of a university for Darlington linked to its potential for supporting economic development and the aspirations of young people

HEALTHY DARLINGTON

The One Darlington and Perfectly Placed Priorities

The Healthy Darlington theme plays a significant role in addressing the One Darlington priority, including:

- Narrowing the wide gaps in health and well-being, and in average life expectancy between the wealthiest and most deprived parts of the borough
- Making sure that the complex combinations of factors leading to health inequalities between neighbourhoods and socio-economic groups are addressed in work to tackle inequalities of opportunity and low aspiration under all the themes of this plan
- Tackling the specific causes of ill-health in Darlington, linked to inequalities in lifestyle choices, including high incidence of smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, poor diet and poor sexual health
- Encouraging people to adopt healthy lifestyle choices, including diet, physical exercise and activities that support mental health and well-being, including arts, cultural and spiritual pursuits

The Perfectly Placed priority points to the following factors being taken into account in work under this theme to improve physical and mental health and well-being:

- Making sure that everyone has access to affordable, decent housing that meets their individual and family needs
- Providing attractive, accessible and safe environments in all neighbourhoods that support relaxation and physical activities like walking and cycling
- Ensuring that everyone across the borough has easy, affordable access to health facilities and to essential services like outlets for affordable, healthy food

Where We Area

There are significant differences in health and well-being between Darlington and England, as well as significant differences within Darlington, across a broad range of measures. The reasons for this are complex, and can be summarised as: inequalities in opportunity – poverty, family, education, employment and environment (the wider determinants of health); inequalities in lifestyle choices – smoking, physical activity, food, drugs, alcohol and sexual activity; and inequalities in access to services for those who are already ill or in high risk groups (health inequity).

Action across all the themes of this strategy, and particularly in tackling economic inequalities and raising aspiration, will be important in helping to tackle this pattern of disadvantage, with the Director of Public Health working to co-ordinate and progress initiatives across all partner agencies including the voluntary sector. This sector has an important role in supporting health and well-being, due to their unique relationship and insight into the needs and views of different sections of our community, for example older people. The Regional Health Strategy provides the framework for guiding and funding the development of local plans and programmes.

The impact of these health inequalities is demonstrated by the 13 year difference in life expectancy between the best and worst wards. In parts of Darlington life expectancy is above the national average of 76.9 years for men and 81.1 years for women, but in the most deprived wards and communities life expectancy falls well below these averages.

Approximately 24% of Darlington children live in households dependent on means-tested benefits, whilst sickness benefit claims due to mental health problems is higher than average. Around 25% of adults in Darlington binge drink and the rate of hospital admissions for alcohol specific conditions is also higher than the England average. Less than a fifth of adults eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

Narrowing the inequalities gap remains a key priority, and programmes and interventions are required across all themes to tackle these factors that contribute to poor health and to reduce their effects. Specifically, lifestyle choices and behaviours must be addressed to contribute towards reducing smoking and alcohol misuse, tackling obesity, improving mental health and promoting good sexual health.

To date there has been initial success in reducing smoking, particularly amongst pregnant women, but premature deaths that can be attributed to smoking, particularly from heart disease and stroke, remain greater than the England average. Concerted and sustained action is needed to maintain the initial impact of anti-smoking programmes in reducing the risks and impact of the major causes of death and disability such as circulatory disease and cancer.

Other indications of initial success in reducing health inequalities in Darlington include reduction in under 18 year olds conceptions and the increased percentage of women breastfeeding. There have also been encouraging trends in health related physical activity, such as walking, cycling and participation in sports, particularly amongst young people. However even with these successes there is no room for complacency. Despite the positive trends, without continued focus on health inequalities across all partners in Darlington these rates will continue to be higher than the English average.

What You Told Us

The vision and the One Darlington and Perfectly Placed priorities are based on the results of consultation and the enquiry group process. The enquiry group looking at this theme gave priority to reducing the 13-year gap in life expectancy between the borough's healthiest and unhealthiest wards, maintaining, enhancing and promoting opportunities for everyone to participate in physical activities, and working with employers to champion healthy workplaces and giving a focus on schools as the setting for health improvement and physical activity programmes.

Community consultation results including the Citizens' Panel, focused on tackling health inequalities as the highest overall priority, particularly emphasised by rural and disabled residents. Access to health care is a significant concern for partners and the general public. The Panel also highlighted improvement of access to NHS dentistry as a high local priority.

Partner agencies want to see the raising of awareness and promotion of individual and community responsibility for well-being as a priority. The Citizens Panel supported an increased emphasis on preventative measures such as sports, walking and cycling and a focus on tackling obesity in young people.

Overall results of consultation with residents, employers and visitors tell us that people want to see:

- Better awareness of how to improve and take responsibility for our own health and well-being as individuals
- Addressing health inequalities, with more tailored and bespoke advice, education and support for residents in targeted areas in making healthier lifestyle choices
- Improved access to hospital care, GPs and health centres for all, including more NHS Dentists
- Better access to sports activities and support for grass roots sports

- Encouraging more walking and cycling

Long-Term Outcomes and Performance Measures

The core health outcomes that must be delivered to enable the One Darlington : Perfectly Placed vision to be achieved are:

- Narrowing the gap in life expectancy between different parts of the borough, and narrowing the gap in average life expectancy between Darlington and the rest of the country
- Maximising people's ability to live independently throughout their lives
- Improving the life chances of young people through good health choices

The following performance indicators selected from the National Indicator set will be used to measure progress towards delivering these outcomes:

NI 137: Healthy life expectancy at age 65

NI 120: All-age, all cause mortality rate PSA18

NI 112: Under 18 conception rate

Short and Medium-Term Work Strands

The consultation results and Enquiry Group findings, fed into the plan through the vision and the two vision priorities, resulted in the identification of four strands for work within this theme in the short to medium-term. Two more were added following further discussion on the draft plan. Action planning will lead to the drawing up of detailed proposals under each of these strands.

- 1. Tackle health inequalities to narrow the gaps in health, well-being and life expectancy** – targeting priority neighbourhoods and groups to tackle lifestyle choices that don't support health and well-being, including smoking, binge drinking and drug and alcohol misuse; supporting work across the Prosperous, Aspiring and Healthy themes to tackle underlying multiple deprivation factors that militate against good health
- 2. Create easy access to sport and leisure** – making physical activity accessible, affordable, and an attractive lifestyle choice for everyone, linked to work on developing aspiration and making provision for walking and cycling as transport modes; securing provision of facilities for active leisure as part of planning applications for new development projects
- 3. Create healthy workplaces – investors in health** - working with employers to promote healthy working practices and workplace facilities, and recognise and spread good practice; promote workplace and school travel planning within transport programmes, linked to the health improvement agenda.
- 4. Tackle obesity in young people** – a co-ordinated approach, rooted in the Early Years stage and following through at primary and secondary levels, to improving both diet and physical activity amongst children and young people; promoting sports in schools and the wider community and addressing cultural attitudes to walking and cycling amongst young people
- 5. Promote emotional health and well-being** – recognising that happiness, fulfilment and well-being are central to the vision and the One Darlington priority, placing a focus on emotional health and well-being on work across all themes as well as specifically through mental health services; a key outcome of the whole plan, across the work of all sectors, is to enable people to be in control of their lives, have equality of opportunity and aspiration, have access to the information and support they need to

pursue their aspirations, to value their place in the community, and to treat one another with respect and dignity – these objectives underpin emotional health and well-being.

- 6. Plan for an ageing population** – specifically within this theme, continuing to adapt Adult Social Services and Health Service provision to meet the needs of a significantly growing population of older people during the life of this plan; but also linking to work across all themes to support good health and well-being for older people, rooted in healthy lifestyle choices earlier in life, and promote active and fulfilled lives for older people, with opportunities for work, active leisure, and making a positive contribution to the community through volunteering

GREENER DARLINGTON

The One Darlington and Perfectly Placed Priorities

One Darlington requires the following factors to be taken into account in work under the Greener Darlington theme:

- ‘Narrowing the gaps’ should include ensuring that everybody lives in a greener, cleaner environment, with well-maintained streets and access to attractive open spaces
- Accessibility is a critical issue in deprivation – transport networks should provide easy, affordable access for everybody to jobs, services and facilities
- Connecting up issues of health, low income and environmental sustainability through, for example, maintaining and improving the provision of allotments and supporting affordable local food production and distribution through the indoor and farmers’ markets
- Encouraging people to value and use the local countryside and urban green network for physical activity and relaxation
- Supporting people, with information, facilities and services, to incorporate environmental sustainability into their life choices – promoting sustainable living as a desirable aspect of people’s aspirations

The Greener Darlington theme plays a major role in delivering against the Perfectly Placed priority, with the following factors particularly significant:

- Maintaining and enhancing the attractive character and ambience of the town centre and the borough, and making sure that new development is well-designed and complements Darlington’s character
- Encouraging and promoting the development of ‘quality of life’ facilities such as restaurants, leisure, arts and cultural businesses
- Enhancing biodiversity in the borough through the expansion and improvement of the green network of parks, open spaces and semi-natural features
- Maximising Darlington’s contribution to national and global sustainability in terms of effective management of waste and reduction of CO₂ emissions
- Developing transport networks and services that maintain good accessibility for everybody, contribute to health and well-being and economic regeneration, and help to reduce CO₂ emissions

Where We Are

Darlington has strong environmental assets, and is well-placed to take effective action to both manage the quality and condition of the local environment, and to provide local responses to global issues, in particular climate change.

These assets include: over 900 hectares of open space within the urban area and the larger villages, amounting to almost 10 hectares per 1000 people, well above the national average. There are seven local nature reserves, and larger areas managed for nature conservation. Street trees are a feature of the western part of the town. Distinctive built environments include 16 conservation areas and over 500 listed buildings, whilst the attractive countryside ranges from the valley of the Tees to the magnesian limestone escarpment around Heighington and the historically interesting Ketton area.

Darlington has a good record of developing brownfield sites and limiting development outside built-up areas, although in 2006/07 the percentage of new dwellings built on previously developed land fell from 76.45% to 65.67%. We must ensure that we contribute to the pressing national need for more housing, whilst minimising harm to the environment and identifying opportunities to enhance the local environment for biodiversity and recreation access.

In 2006/07 Darlington residents generated 51,250 tonnes of household waste, of which 22.49% (11,529 tonnes) was recycled or composted. A new waste disposal contract will be operational from 2009. This, combined with a review of our recycling arrangements, will ensure that, as a minimum, we achieve ongoing government targets for diversion from landfill, with a recycling target of 40% in 2009/10.

The Local Motion and Cycle Town programmes have achieved significant shifts from car to sustainable travel modes between 2004 and 2006, with a 9% reduction in car driver trips, a 15% increase in walking and 65% increase in cycling (starting from a low base). Darlington is now a lead area in the UK on implementing voluntary travel behaviour changes. These changes are already saving 6000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually.

The government strategy, 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System', reflects the findings of both the Eddington Transport Study, on the need for efficient transport systems to support future economic growth, and The Sterne Report on the economics of climate change, and will provide the national context for future transport planning within a low carbon economy.

The Tees Valley Footprint Report published by the Stockholm Environment Institute found that Darlington has the highest carbon footprint in the Tees Valley (11.12 tonnes per capita compared to an average of 10.85 tonnes; the UK average is 11.87 tonnes). The Tees Valley Climate Change Strategy sets city-region reduction targets for carbon dioxide emissions of 8.75% from 2006 to 2012, and a further 27% from 2012 to 2030.

Our One Darlington focus highlights the disparity in environmental quality across the urban area – an attractive environment should not be conditional on location or relative prosperity. Car ownership is relatively low (61.6% of households have cars, compared to an average of 67.6% for England and Wales) and is still an aspiration for many that outweighs consideration of climate change.

Several parishes have now prepared Parish Plans. These address a range of issues specific to their localities, but transport is a common theme. Poor accessibility to shopping, work, health and leisure facilities for non-car owners/drivers is a particular issue in our rural communities.

Northeast residents spend 6% above the national average on heating their homes. This is partly due to climatic factors, but poor home insulation is also a factor, particularly for people on low incomes and older people living in older houses. Contrastingly, the measured thermal performance of the borough's council houses (SAP rating) is in the top 25% nationally.

Local housing market issues have been highlighted in the Prosperous Darlington theme, but are equally important in an environmental context. The housing market in Darlington is strong and viable, in the context of the northeast region, but development needs to be steered to address local needs in terms of affordability, choice, environmental sustainability, and the needs of an ageing population, as well as bringing forward further brownfield sites. Our bid to be a Northern Housing Growth Point will, if successful, enable appropriate interventions to be made.

The duty to conserve biodiversity must be integral to our environmental programmes. The well documented recent national loss of biodiversity has also been reflected in the Darlington area. This is in danger of undergoing yet another phase of loss brought about by climate change. Legislation and national policy now promotes the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity through the full range of human activities, from farming to the design of new housing estates.

What You Told Us

The vision and the One Darlington and Perfectly Placed priorities are based on the results of consultation and the enquiry group process. The Environment and Transport Enquiry Group emphasised the importance of raising awareness of the environment within Darlington, building eco-footprinting and sustainability appraisal into this plan, working towards being a low carbon borough to reduce the local causes of climate change, protecting and enhancing the green network for biodiversity, health and well-being, increasing the sustainability of Darlington's transport network and using engagement and social marketing to raise awareness and promote behavioural changes

Citizens' concerns are focused on more localised environmental issues, compared to the primarily global perspective of the Enquiry Group, and our priorities need to synthesise and reflect both these approaches. Maintaining clean and attractive neighbourhoods is most important, with most concern for clean and well-maintained streets, parks and open spaces, protecting and enhancing parks, open spaces and natural habitat, and improving the appearance of the built environment.

On the transport front respondents want more effective and affordable bus services, with a particular emphasis on rural needs emerging during the consultation on the draft plan, making it easier for people to travel around Darlington using different modes of transport, and reducing traffic congestion. Turning to the town centre, the consultation told us that people want better public facilities (seats, toilets, etc), and to investigate the potential for 'Park and Ride'.

Although not scoring highly in the overall survey, disabled people gave highest priority to ensuring good accessibility for disabled people in the town centre. The highest single priority for the town centre was for the provision of better car-parking. This needs to be addressed holistically with the other transport priorities to achieve the optimum balance between car use and other transport modes.

Long-Term Outcomes and Performance Measures

The core greener outcomes that must be delivered to enable the One Darlington : Perfectly Placed vision to be achieved are:

- Reducing CO₂ emissions in the borough through effective spatial planning, the design of new buildings, improved insulation of existing buildings and improved transport networks
- Ensuring we are prepared to manage risks to individuals, communities and businesses from a changing climate, and to make the most of new opportunities
- Reducing waste generation, and increasing the re-use and recycling of waste

The following performance indicators selected from the National Indicator set will be used to measure progress towards delivering these outcomes:

NI 186: Per capita CO₂ emissions in the local authority area

NI 188: Adapting to climate change

NI 192: Household waste recycled and composted

Short and Medium-Term Work Strands

The consultation results and Enquiry Group findings, fed into the plan through the vision and the two vision priorities, resulted in the identification of five strands for work within this theme in the short to medium-term.

1. **A low carbon borough tackling climate change** – reducing Darlington's energy consumption through improved housing and street lighting, tackling fuel poverty, promoting renewable energy sources, increased resource efficiency through reuse and

recycling and lifestyle and building adaptations to alleviate the impact of climate change; utilising these initiatives to reduce living costs and achieve health improvements for people on low incomes and the vulnerable, including older people.

2. **A sustainable transport network** – supporting the One Darlington priority by opening up safe and accessible transport choices for all; continuing the focus of the Local Motion programme by marketing alternative modes of transport and seeking to reduce vehicle use and emissions; ensuring that transport networks support sustainable economic growth and regeneration; working with bus operators to improve public transport, and with the City Region to promote the Tees Valley Metro project; tackling congestion and improving accessibility for all, and expanding walking and cycling networks.
3. **Greener, cleaner Darlington** – ensure that an attractive, liveable environment is available to all residents, and especially people living in deprived areas; expanding the green network to improve biodiversity and provide walking and cycling corridors, and make Darlington a greener place; supporting informal leisure and health and well-being by reclaiming open space for community use, providing allotments and delivering programmes to promote enjoyment of the green environment.
4. **Well-designed Darlington** – maintaining and enhancing the quality of the built environment as a vitally important asset supporting many aspects of our vision; making sure that the location and design of development contributes to sustainability; enhancing sustainability by ensuring housing development meets local needs and aspirations whilst reducing emissions and energy use; promoting the regeneration of run-down areas like the town centre fringe and along the River Skerne; and working with the private sector to improve the appearance of premises
5. **Engagement and partnerships for change** - effective action to achieve sustainable environmental benefits requires commitment and contributions from all sectors of the community – it cannot be achieved by the strategic partners without community support. Under this strand we will pursue programmes to raise awareness and promote sustainable business practices and lifestyle choices. This will include the promotion of long-term behavioural changes in relation to transport choices, linked to strand 2 above, so that Darlington becomes more like some places in continental Europe, where affluence is not synonymous with increased car use.

SAFER DARLINGTON

The One Darlington and Perfectly Placed Priorities

The Safer theme is critical to the delivery of One Darlington, and the following factors should be considered in decision-making:

- Ensuring that people in all parts of Darlington can be safe, and feel safe, from the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour
- The need to increase tolerance of our fellow citizens, particularly young people, who are often perceived unfairly to be a problem or threat, as one of the foundations of a strong cohesive community
- Linking actions under this theme with the Healthy, Aspiring and Prosperous themes to address the multiple deprivation factors that often underlie offending and anti-social behaviour, and particularly in relation to the harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol
- Protecting people from those few individuals who pose a significant risk to the community through their criminal behaviour
- Protecting people in their homes from violence or abuse from family members

The Perfectly Placed priority carries the following aspects of our vision forward into the Safer Darlington theme:

- Ensuring that all neighbourhoods enjoy the same high levels of safety and quality of life, and that the local environment is valued and treated with respect
- Making the environment safer, in terms of road safety, travel safety and accessibility for people with mobility impairments
- Working with businesses involved in the night time economy to ensure that the town centre and main radial roads remain safe and attractive places for everybody 24/7
- Designing new development, and adapting the existing environment, to minimise opportunities for offending behaviour and to help enhance feelings of safety

Where We Are

Darlington today is a safe place. Residents feel safer and satisfaction around community safety has improved. The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership is tackling concerns about crime and making in-roads into addressing anti-social behaviour.

There were 100 fewer crimes committed in Darlington in 2006/07 compared to 2003/04. The introduction of National Crime Recording Standards has impacted on the performance data.

During the last year the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership has achieved marked reductions in crime and performance continues to improve. Between April-September 2007 there was a 19% reduction in total crime compared to the same period in the previous year.

In January 2007 the Home Office set the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership a target to reduce 10 priority crimes by 6% by October 2007. A reduction of over 15% was achieved and performance continues to improve.

Criminal Damage, Damage to Vehicles, Theft from Motor Vehicles and Violence Against the Person accounts for the highest volume of total crime; a pattern which remains the same today as in 2003/04.

Incidents of anti-social behaviour have increased from 2003 levels, with rowdy/nuisance behaviour being the most common issue. National Recording Standards for Incidents have also been introduced which have affected performance data in this area. The percentage of residents feeling safe after dark and during the day has remained relatively high and stable in recent years. Domestic Abuse and the harm caused by the misuse of drugs and alcohol remain a concern.

The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership has invested significant resources tackling crime: additional PCSOs have been recruited to provide high visibility, the development of the Uniformed Warden Service has continued, a dedicated team to address Domestic Abuse has been established and further resources invested in providing support and intervention to those engaging in anti-social behaviour. CCTV has been further expanded with coverage into Darlington parks and cemeteries.

Programmes of proposed work included the Safer Schools Partnership being recognised as a means to engage with young people and to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour whilst promoting good citizenship. Eastbourne Academy provides the venue for Darlington's first Safer Schools Partnership, bringing together key partners to support young people, their parents and the wider community.

The Safer Darlington focus extends beyond issues of crime and anti-social behaviour. A wide range of services is directed towards making the environment in which we live and engage with each other safer. These include ensuring that food is safe, that noise and pollution do not threaten public health, that trading practices are fair, licensed premises and taxis are appropriately regulated and that public sporting and entertainment events are properly organised and controlled. The emergency services have a vital role to play in both reducing the risk of accidents and in responding to emergencies.

The issue of road safety is particularly important in the context of this theme. Darlington continues to make excellent progress, in line with government policy, in achieving its ten-year casualty reduction targets, covering the period 2000-2010. Programmes being implemented range from traffic management schemes and speed reduction measures to cycle and pedestrian training for young children. The One Darlington perspective requires us to ensure that everybody can travel safely around the borough, with risk of accident and injury minimised, irrespective of where they live or the modes of transport available to them.

What You Told Us

The vision and the One Darlington and Perfectly Placed priorities are based on the results of consultation and the enquiry group process. The Enquiry Group was concerned with four main factors; behaviour that has negative influences, the number of incidents of crime, young people involved with crime and the association with truancy and absence rates from school. Five priorities for action were identified: promoting community ownership of crime and anti-social behaviour problems; enhancing understanding and tolerance of others; strengthening parenting skills; recognising the importance of aspiration and mentoring; and designing out crime.

Focused work experience was also identified as key, needing to make work experience more useful for employers and students alike, linking with the Prosperous and Aspiring Darlington themes. Greater involvement of offenders in community based restorative justice programmes and identifying the need to ensure that the design of new buildings encouraged positive community activity was also proposed.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour was the most supported theme across all consultation groups. Setting aside the views of the Citizens' Panel, the theme was slightly ahead of Economy and Education as the three leading themes. However, the theme dominated Citizens' Panel views so that, overall, it is the outstanding priority. Partners voting at the Darlington Assembly gave more weight to the Economy theme.

Across the community the outstanding priorities within the theme focus on diversionary activities for young people, and increased use of restorative justice within the community. Partner organisations emphasise these, whilst the Citizens' Panel supports diversionary work combined with more policing and other security measures. Rural residents and disabled people give priority to policing. More discipline in schools is supported by the Citizens' Panel, (an issue picked up in the Aspiring Darlington theme) whilst partners also support initiatives to reduce drug and alcohol misuse.

Long-Term Outcomes and Performance Measures

The core safer outcomes that must be delivered to enable the One Darlington : Perfectly Placed vision to be achieved are:

- Dealing effectively with offenders to minimise the number who go on to commit repeat offences
- Tackling domestic violence to minimise repeat incidents, and reducing the number of alcohol-related violent incidents
- Reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, and narrowing the gap between people's perceptions and actual levels of offending behaviour in Darlington

The following performance indicators selected from the National Indicator set will be used to measure progress towards delivering these outcomes:

NI 130: Re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders

NI 132: Repeat incidents of domestic violence

NI 17: Perceptions of anti-social behaviour

Short and Medium-Term Work Strands

The consultation results and Enquiry Group findings, fed into the plan through the vision and the two vision priorities, resulted in the identification of five strands for work within this theme in the short to medium-term.

- 1. Anti-social behaviour** – actions taken under through this strand will support the delivery of initiatives to tackle those issues of greatest importance to local communities, improving public confidence and feelings of safety; this will involve partnership working across the community to ensure effective gathering and sharing of intelligence, and the development of sustainable solutions through prevention, early intervention and enforcement, combined with improving inter-generational tolerance – this will include working with partners across the themes of this plan, including the work under the Aspiring Darlington theme to address parenting skills and to promote aspiration and mentoring.
- 2. Reducing offending** – work within this strand will aim to reduce offending across the borough by ensuring the appropriate services are in place to reduce the risk of offending and to deal effectively with those offenders who pose the greatest risk to local communities; there will be a focus on intervention with those individuals on the cusp of offending or engaging in anti-social behaviour, combined with a robust approach to managing offenders within the criminal justice system and the provision of effective support services to stop offenders re-offending, including access to appropriate drug and alcohol services.
- 3. Domestic abuse** – working to ensure that children, women and families are protected and kept safe, reducing the opportunity for domestic abuse and violent crime to occur and dealing effectively with perpetrators; the approach will include raising awareness of

the incidence and impact of domestic abuse, increasing reporting rates, making appropriate interventions against perpetrators, and providing support to victims.

4. **Violent crime and disorder in the night time economy** – actions within this priority are aimed at addressing alcohol-related violent crime in the night time economy; this will involve partnership working with the business community, learning from the Tackling Violent Crime Programme, to raise awareness of the harm caused by misuse of alcohol and to develop effective preventative measures.
5. **Public Reassurance** – involving work with partners and the community to improve support to victims promote public confidence and improve peoples feeling of safety; enhancing tolerance and understanding of other people; continuing to develop the local mechanism for engaging and communicating with communities about crime and disorder issues; and promoting community ‘ownership’ and responsiveness to crime and anti-social behaviour problems.

From Vision to Reality

Darlington Facts

Give Us Your Views – Contact Details

We welcome your views on any aspect of the ONE DARLINGTON : PERFECTLY PLACED plan. It is a plan for the whole community, and you might want to think about how you can contribute to achieving the vision for Darlington through your workplace, school or community group.

For further information or to let us have your comments and views, please contact:

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Insert list/logos of Darlington Partnership Members here

Throughout this document the phrase 'ONE DARLINGTON : PERFECTLY PLACED' is set in Gill Sans typeface. Inspired by the Johnston typeface used by London Underground, Gill Sans was designed by sculptor Eric Gill in 1927 to be the ultimate legible typeface. It came to national prominence, especially in Darlington and the northeast, when it was adopted in 1928 as the brand typeface of the London and North Eastern Railway. It was used throughout the network for locomotive nameplates and numbers, station name boards, restaurant car menus, timetables, tickets and advertising posters. Perhaps the most famous surviving example is the number 4472 on the cab and LNER on the tender of the Flying Scotsman. Gill Sans went on to be used by, amongst many others, British Railways after nationalisation, by Penguin Books in the classic early imprints, and by the BBC in its current corporate brand adopted in 1997.