
OVERVIEW OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken under the Regeneration and Planning Portfolio :-
 - (a) **Hundens Lane Allotment Relocation** – Consideration was given to the relocation of the six Hundens Lane allotment tenants with horses to an alternative site off Westmoor Road, Darlington during September 2006. The alternative site has the benefit of natural vegetation to two sides and a railway line to the third, which will be fenced to ensure a secure site. Funding of the relocation is to be made by One NorthEast through Tees Valley Regeneration with no direct costs to the Council. Tenants affected by the proposals have been consulted and subsequently been served written notice of termination of current tenancies on September 2005.
 - (b) **Taking Forward the Darlington Gateway** – In order to research future economic opportunities for Darlington and develop future Darlington Gateway projects we agreed the release of £48,000 Single Programme funding. This work needs to be undertaken to develop the detailed evidence base and extensive preparatory studies required to support the next generation of Darlington Gateway projects. Investing in this work will enable the Council to influence funding providers and embed our aspirations in future strategies and delivery plans.
 - (d) **Darlington Planning Forum** – I chaired the meeting of the Planning Forum held on 30th November, 2005 at which a lively and interesting debate took place.
 - (e) **Faverdale** – conditional contracts have been exchanged with Easter Developments Limited for the development of 170,000 sq ft of industrial space on land to the south east of Argos. Subject to planning permission, works are due to start in spring 2006.
 - (f) **Westfields House** – conditional contracts have been exchanged for the sale of the former care home and redevelopment is expected to start in early 2006.
 - (g) **Central Park** – works have commenced on the off-site highway scheme and into drainage works. Tees Valley Regeneration have begun the process of marketing the site to select a developer, following the successful outcome of the planning application, as described in the Leader's Overview report.

- (h) **Access for All Awards** – Building Control Section, in partnership with Darlington Association for Disability (DAD), have had another successful year in the Access for All awards when the Art Shop and Darlington Football Club Stadium were joint winners. The Dr Piper House Walk-In Centre gained second place and the Gala Bingo Hall came third.
- (i) **Building Control Section Working in Partnership with Amdega Conservatories** – Building Control Section, working in partnership with Amdega Conservatories, processed 350 Building Regulations applications for conservatories throughout England and Wales since the start of their partnership two years ago.
- (j) **Geneva Woods** – The Friends of Geneva Woods local Nature Reserve have been successful in receiving two first place awards for their work in helping make safe and improving this increasingly popular local green space. The two awards from a panel of judges from organisations such as Durham Wildlife Trust, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust and npower, are both aimed at recognising the excellent contribution local people are able to make to improve their local green spaces as havens for both wildlife and people. The Council's Countryside Service has been working with the group for two years in order to improve this six hectare, former railside revival site, transforming it from an area of anti-social behaviour concern into a woodland for walking and appreciating wildlife. The Friends Group along with the Countryside Team have carried out works that have enormously reduced the level of abuse taking place on the site. This has included erecting motorcycle barriers, erecting suitable fencing and signage as well as taking an active role in the volunteer rangers service. This has enabled the Countryside Team and the steering group to stage many successful events in the woods in recent months including Easter egg hunts for the under five's, path building and fencing, practical days for local volunteers as well as a story telling festival together attracting over 100 people. Seeing the area transformed in this way has been wonderfully rewarding for local people and is a fine example of the way the Council and local people can work together to really make a difference to their quality of life.
- (k) **Darlington Gateway** - Work has commenced on a major study into 'Taking Forward the Darlington Gateway'. Consultants BDP and King Sturge are undertaking detailed research into how the current critical mass of development in Darlington can be continued, and what non-physical support is required to maximise its impact on the economy.

The Darlington Gateway has been very effective as an economic concept and has successfully driven regeneration efforts over the past few years. This has meant that all of Darlington's major regeneration projects are either underway or have the relevant funding in place to begin their delivery stage. A strategy is therefore required to build on this critical mass of development and generate a new programme of major projects or economic initiatives. The work is expected to be completed by June 2006.

- (l) **BAT Legacy Group** - The BAT Legacy Group, which handles the fund left by BAT when they closed in Darlington, met at the end of November and received a progress report on the first year's activity to date. The Group also discussed various suggestions around what Darlington needs in terms of support for new businesses and skills development in relation to potential activity for the second year of the programme. Further details are now being prepared before the Group makes a decision at the next meeting.

- (m) **Pedestrian Heart** – Following the end of the Christmas shopping and sales period, construction of the Pedestrian Heart is now being accelerated in the central parts of the town centre. A liaison officer has been appointed for this stage to ensure there is good communication, and that issues for individual businesses and others are anticipated and resolved as far as possible. The construction work is on programme.

Councillor David Lyonette
Regeneration and Planning Portfolio