
**DARLINGTON LOCAL PLAN 2016 - 2036: CONSULTATION
FEEDBACK AND PREFERRED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT LOCATIONS**

Purpose of the Report

1. The attached draft Cabinet report sets out the background and progress made against the Local Plan process timetable, and is scheduled to be submitted to Cabinet on 8 November 2016.
2. Place Scrutiny are requested to review the attached report.

**Ian Williams
Director of Economic Growth**

DRAFT CABINET REPORT

**CABINET
20 OCTOBER 2016**

ITEM NO.

**DARLINGTON LOCAL PLAN 2016 - 2036: CONSULTATION
FEEDBACK AND PREFERRED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT LOCATIONS**

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris McEwan,
Economy and Regeneration Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To set out the background to and progress made, against the Local Plan process timetable.

2. To endorse the Local Plan Consultation Statement (**Annex 1**) including details of the Stage 1 consultation process and responses (**Appendices 1 to 8**).
3. To highlight the main issues arising from the consultation which will need to be considered in developing Stage 2 of the Plan.
4. To explain the 'Call for Sites' process and set out the results.
5. To endorse the draft strategic Vision, Aims and Objectives for the Local Plan.
6. To explain the process for identifying preferred Strategic Development Locations and endorse them as a basis for the Stage 2 detailed assessment.
7. To outline the next steps in the Local Plan process
8. To enable Place Scrutiny Committee to consider and scrutinise the above matters.

Summary

9. In April 2016, Cabinet approved various documents as the basis for beginning to prepare, and consult on, a new Local Plan for the Borough. These included the Local Development Scheme (LDS), the Draft Statement of Community Involvement, a Housing Requirement Technical Paper and the Strategic Options and Scoping Paper. The LDS set a challenging three year timescale for getting the Plan adopted. The first stage, to consult on Issues and Scoping and identify strategic locations for development to be considered as the plan progresses will be reported to Cabinet in November, within the deadlines set out in the LDS.
10. The Local Plan 2016-36 Issues and Scoping report was the subject of consultation throughout the summer. Three main methods were used to engage a wide variety of people, businesses and interest groups – direct consultation, key stakeholder events and through the use of multimedia. The details of the consultation process are set out in the Consultation Statement at **Annex 1**.
11. It is a requirement to set out the Vision and associated Aims and Objectives of the Plan, that will provide the framework for the land allocations, policies and proposals. As part of the consultation process respondents were asked to consider to what extent, if any, the existing Core Strategy Vision and Objectives remain relevant. In addition, a Visioning event was held with local groups and organisations to understand what they value about the Borough and what it could look like in 20 years' time. The output from the workshop has been considered alongside the written representations to help produce a new vision, and associated aims and objectives.
12. The consultation also set out the Council's current position on planning policy issues in terms of the most up to date evidence and the strategy taken in previous adopted and draft policy documents. Stakeholder's attention was also drawn to areas where the updated evidence indicated that a different approach would be required in future, particularly in relation to allocating land to support the provision of jobs and housing. This report summarises the Council's existing position, any

significant emerging issues, stakeholders responses to those and the Council's next steps in developing new planning strategies and policies.

13. As expected the consultation generated a range of views and comments both pro and anti-development. Although there is a general recognition that the plan should pursue a growth agenda, this should not be at the expense of maintaining the distinctive cohesive character, and quality of life, provided in the Borough. Some respondents question the housing need figures generally and raise particular concerns about the potential impact of new development in the villages. Others, mainly developers and landowners, support the scale and approach to meeting housing needs. Common concerns/issues raised include the impact of new development on the transport network, achieving sustainable travel, and the need to ensure other physical and social infrastructure such as schools, health services and community facilities are provided. There is strong support for protecting the natural and built environment, recognising the important role green infrastructure, biodiversity, and industrial heritage play in making places people want to live and work in.
14. A key element in preparing a new Local Plan is to establish what land is available for development within the Borough over the plan period. As part of the consultation process therefore, the Council asked landowners, agents and developers to submit details of their suggested sustainable and developable sites through a 'Call for Sites' process. Submissions range in size from relatively small extensions adjacent to existing villages through to a large expanse of land to the west of the A1, an area put forward as a potential new settlement. Elsewhere, the submitted sites form major clusters at the urban fringe, concentrated to the west, north west, north and north east of the town (**see map at Annex 2**)
15. As previously described to members, it has been identified that a significant increase in housing delivery will be required to meet the Borough's housing needs, particularly over a longer time period than was previously being planned for. Given the constraints and other opportunities present in the Borough, and support for such an approach at the national level, options for large scale, strategic development sites to deliver this housing were explored as part of this consultation. The Council also publicised its intention to take a master planning approach to securing delivery on a strategic site (or sites over the plan period This report sets out the views received in response to this proposal, and begins to set out how these strategic options will be selected and developed. Officers will present their initial findings on their preferred options for strategic locations at the meeting.
16. The next stage of Local Plan preparation will begin in November using project management techniques to ensure key tasks, milestones and deadlines to meet the timetable agreed by cabinet. A key element of the work will be the detailed analysis and assessment of the strategic development locations through master planning techniques, and the assessment of individual sites, through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) process, to inform the evidence for housing allocations. The Council will need to refresh the evidence base to demonstrate the plan is compliant with regulations, the National Planning Policy Framework, and meets the Vision and Objectives.

17. Where necessary, other evidence will be refreshed or updated to support policy development, although much of the evidence available from the Making and Growing Places document remains applicable. There will be ongoing consultation with greater emphasis on more focused engagement on particular topics and geographical areas. Bespoke engagement plans will be developed again with emphasis on making information available online with regular updates on the Local Plan Microsite and links also provided on the Council's existing Social Media Channels.

Recommendations

18. It is recommended that Place Scrutiny Committee make representations to Cabinet to the effect that it :-

- (a) Notes the progress achieved against the Local Plan timetable.
- (b) Endorses the Consultation Statement at **Annex 1**.
- (c) Endorses the Strategic Vision, Aims and Objectives set out in this report as the framework for establishing the policies and proposals within the Local Plan.
- (d) Endorses the approach to identifying preferred Strategic Development Locations as the basis for further detailed assessment work under Stage Two of the Local Plan process.
- (e) Endorses the next steps process as described.

Reasons

19. The recommendations are supported by the following reason:-

- (a) That Place Scrutiny is satisfied that the work so far undertaken is a sound basis for Cabinet to make the next step decisions in the process of developing a Local Plan.

Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

Background Papers

- i. Cabinet Report April 2016
- ii. Local Development Scheme 2016 - 19
- iii. Statement of Community Involvement (2016)
- iv. Darlington Local Plan 2016 – 2036: Issues and Scoping (May 2016)

Steve Petch 6476

S17 Crime and Disorder	The Local Plan has a role in reducing crime through the design and location of development.
Health and Well Being	A key objective of Local Plan policies will be to improve people's health and wellbeing by protecting and improving the economic, social and environmental conditions in the Borough.

Carbon Impact	A Sustainability Appraisal will be carried out on the strategic issues and options. Achieving sustainable development will be a fundamental objective of the Local Plan.
Diversity	An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out on the emerging Local Plan. A key objective of the plan is to be inclusive and to benefit the whole community.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	Work on the Local Plan has been carried out within existing budgets. The Local Plan will ultimately form part of the Council's Policy Framework and will influence the Council's growth ambitions that both increases the Council's tax base but also introduce additional demands for services
Key Decision	Yes
Urgent Decision	
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Local Plan will represent the spatial expression of the overarching aims of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed.
Efficiency	The proposed timetable aims to be the most efficient way to produce the Local Plan having regard to the legislative and engagement requirements.

MAIN REPORT

Background

20. In April 2016, Cabinet approved various documents as the basis for beginning to prepare, and consult on, a new Local Plan for the Borough (Min. ref. C141 (2)). These included the Local Development Scheme, the Draft Statement of Community Involvement, a Housing Requirement Technical Paper and the Strategic Options and Scoping Paper.
21. This report aims to set out the outcome of the consultation process undertaken over the summer looking at the vision, aims and objectives of the Local Plan and consideration of strategic growth areas. Consultation with statutory consultees, members of the public and other interested bodies has enabled us to develop a strategic vision for Darlington over the next 20 years that meets the requirements of national planning policy but with local aspirations reflected. Consultation material consisted of an Issues and Scoping Report setting out the councils initial findings on the scope of a new local plan which linked to our Interim Planning Position Statement (IPPS) issued in April 2016.
22. This is just the first stage of the process but this work has been key to guiding the further development of the plan. This report concludes with an outline of the next steps in the developing a plan.

Consultation Process – Overview

23. Details of the Stage 1 consultation process and responses are set out in the Consultation Statement at **Annex 1**. Copies of the original e-mails/letters received are available on the Council's website. When complete, with the inclusion of the Stage 2 process, this document will form part of the evidence submitted to the Examination in Public.
24. Three main methods were used to consult a wide variety of people, businesses and interest groups on the Local Plan Issues and Scoping document – direct consultation, key stakeholder events and through the use of multimedia.
25. At the start of the consultation an email or letter was sent directly to some 400 contacts on the Local Plan public consultation database, explaining that all of the information relating to the consultation could be seen at the Council's new Local Plan microsite (www.darlington.gov.uk/localplan) and that comments could be provided online, by email, or by post until the 15th August 2016. A total of 64 responses were received from a variety of correspondents, including local residents, landowners, parish councils, community groups and statutory bodies.
26. Under the Duty to Co-operate statutory consultees and adjacent authorities were consulted via e-mail. In addition, officers have met with neighbouring authorities to identify strategic issues of mutual interest.
27. Officers attended various existing group meetings (Association of Parish Councils; Healthy New Towns workshop; Town Centre Board; Darlington Partnership; Darlington Youth Partnership; Property Forum and the Tees Valley Nature Partnership) and organised additional events (Darlington Business Summit; Housing Delivery Event; Visioning Event) in order to gain the views and opinions of a variety of key stakeholders.
28. A Housing Delivery Event was organised by the Council and included invitees who had submitted sites as part of the 'Call for Sites' as well as relevant local land owners, developers, agents and other allied professions. The purpose of the event was to engage these groups of people in discussions about the housing need in Darlington over the next 20 years in order to ensure that there is sufficient land available across the Borough to meet its needs. Attendees heard presentations on the progress of the Local Plan and the Council's strategy for delivering housing sites, place making in Darlington, ATLAS' master planning approach and current HCA funding schemes, as well as attending workshops to give their feedback on the Council's approach to delivering housing over the plan period.
29. The Planning Policy Team also organised an event targeted at local organisations and community representatives, as well as interested members of the public. This event included presentations by members of the Planning Policy Team and representatives from ATLAS, followed by workshop sessions to explore residents' priorities for the Borough and to understand the aspects of the town they most valued. These workshops produced detailed notes which have informed the vision and objectives for the new Local Plan.

30. Having identified that the existing Council webpages relating to planning policy had become complex and difficult to update as well as navigate, officers developed a bespoke website for the new Local Plan. This included pages relating to the timetable for the plan's production, all the consultation documentation and materials, news, frequently asked questions, the 'call for sites' submission forms and a comments portal. The micro site will continue to be developed as the plan progresses providing interested parties with up-to-date information and opportunities to get involved.
31. Social media was used to publicise the consultation, and the Cabinet Portfolio Holders held a live Facebook / Twitter question time session. The local press carried various articles/stories on the Local Plan covering the issues raised and some of the events and feedback. Similarly, articles highlighting the Local Plan issues and opportunities for involvement were included in the One Darlington Magazine. Information about the Local Plan consultation was included in Members Newsletters.
32. Criticism was received from some residents that the consultation was not sufficiently widely publicised and they had not received sufficient notification. However, the Planning Policy Team has reflected on the consultation activity and engagement undertaken and concluded that it both met the relevant regulations and produced numerous relevant and useful consultation responses. The Local Plan microsite (www.darlington.gov.uk/localplan) will continue to be updated regularly with Local Plan updates, alongside information being published in One Darlington as appropriate as the plan progresses. Concerns were also raised about the consultation material provided; suggesting the process was designed to be 'opaque and confusing'; and arguing that the 'Issues and Scoping Report' is too vague in relation to housing sites. As such it did not provide sufficient detail and information to effectively consult.
33. Consultation on Stage 1 of the Plan was aimed at understanding high level strategic locations and issues and therefore did not include the level of detailed information that will be generated through the next phase of the plan making process. Given the small level of objection to the consultation process itself, officers are satisfied that it was robust and captured the pertinent points for consideration at this stage. Where lessons can be learnt from the exercise they will be.
34. One suggestion on the process going forward is to establish grass root sub-groups to engage in discussions about how people would like to see their local areas developed. The Council is committed to involving the local community throughout the Plan-making process, and subject to available resources, and other commitments, this could include the establishment of sub-groups to represent the views of local people where significant proposals are being considered.
35. In line with comments made, officers accept the document itself needs to be easy to navigate for the non-specialist with clear headings and sub-headings throughout, and a glossary of terms.
36. Contrasting views have been submitted on the proposed 20 year timespan for the Local Plan. Some comment that 15 years is more appropriate as this provides more certainty on delivery and, anyway the Plan will be reviewed in 5 years. Others

support the 20 year timescale. Officers have taken the view, based on the OAN evidence base to 2036, the added certainty for housing supply and supply chain activities, and the alignment with potential long term strategic infrastructure projects, that a twenty year plan is appropriate. Furthermore, the nature of the Borough and its sites are such that a longer term and bolder plan is required if the accompanying infrastructure is to keep pace with development.

37. Using criteria to make choices about where development should occur has been supported for bringing clarity, certainty and transparency to the process. Similarly, the use of master planning as an approach to achieving attractive places is acknowledged. However, this should not, it is argued, place onerous expectations on developers bringing forward sites. If Members accept the recommendations in this report, officers will draw up a specification for master planning to achieve fairness and consistency in the content of those plans.
38. Finally, despite general support for the need to prepare a Local Plan, a couple of respondents have suggested the time and effort involved is a waste of Council resources. Another has pointed to the lack of control over housing proposals in the interim until the plan is adopted. Members will be aware that national policy requires Local Authorities to prepare a Local Plan and officers have aimed to achieve process efficiencies where possible, within resource constraints. Whilst the new plan is being prepared, housing proposals will be considered against the National Planning Policy Framework, the adopted Core Strategy and the Interim Planning Position Statement. It is acknowledged that when adopted the new local plan will provide greater certainty and control.
39. The Stage 1 consultation has focused on identifying strategic locations and issues. Some respondents have submitted detailed comments/objections on specific sites. Where appropriate these detailed comments have informed officer's considerations, otherwise they will be carried forward to Stage 2 of the plan preparation where site specific assessments will be carried out.

Policy Issues and Development

40. As identified in the Issues and Scoping Consultation, the Local Plan 2016-2036, will encompass a wide range of planning issues, excluding only Minerals and Waste issues as these have been dealt with jointly by the Tees Valley authorities in a separate Core Strategy and Site Allocations documents.
41. The Council's approach to the majority of local planning issues is set out in the Interim Planning Position Statement agreed by the Council in April 2016. Whilst this statement is not statutory planning policy, it is built on the evidence and extensive public and stakeholder consultation undertaken to inform the Making and Growing Places DPD, withdrawn earlier this year. As it was not envisaged that there would be substantial changes from the approach taken to most issues in the Making and Growing Places DPD, this formed the basis of the Issues and Scoping consultation in those areas.
42. The comments made in response to the Issues and Options consultation on wider policy areas are set out below (see para 34); they were not numerous or expansive. However, in reviewing these topics and the evidence upon which conclusions were

based, it has become apparent that in some cases, the data collected and conclusions reached may need to be updated to reflect both changing circumstances and the longer plan period.

Vision, Aims and Objectives

43. A fundamental element of the new Local plan will be the overarching Vision and associated Aims and Objectives, which will provide the framework for the land allocations, policies and proposals. These issues were explored in detail at the 'Darlington 2036 - planning a better place for all' visioning event held in August 2016 and described in more detail in **Appendix 4(h) of Annex 1**.
44. As stated in the Issues and Scoping document, the existing Core Strategy includes a Vision (see below), and part of the recent consultation asked whether that Vision is still the right one, or needed to be changed in light of changing circumstances, issues and opportunities.

'..... Darlington will be a more sustainable community, where a real step change has been achieved in enhancing the quality of life and local environment, and expanding local opportunities for work and for sustainable travel. Those who live in, work in or visit the Borough will enjoy the opportunities and vibrant life of an ambitious city, but within the fabric of a friendly, historic market town with a distinctive atmosphere, surrounded by attractive countryside and villages'.

45. In general, the consultation responses support the existing Vision as a valuable starting point for the new Local Plan, although some key messages have come forward, from a range of respondents, which look to either add to, or change the emphasis of, some parts of the Vision as currently stated. Suggestions included:-
- (a) reaffirm the need to develop around existing resources where there is most need;
 - (b) more emphasis on preservation of the countryside and villages;
 - (c) more emphasis on resilient economies and communities able to respond to climatic, economic and social changes;
 - (d) reference to conservation and enhancement of natural and historic environment and landscapes;
 - (e) need to reflect changing lifestyles as well as proposed physical changes proposed;
 - (f) greater emphasis on housing delivery to meet the needs of all sectors of the current and future population, to deliver sustainable communities;
 - (g) quality housing in places people want to live;
 - (h) need to be more ambitious in terms of economic growth drawing on the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan and Darlington's Economic Strategy;

- (i) more emphasis on building on recent economic success, and reputation for innovation and technology; and
 - (j) support for the significance of the Boroughs sporting/leisure facilities and further investment to create healthy lifestyles.
46. Comments received also note that the Plans objectives will need to be amended to reflect changes to the Vision where appropriate. An example being the suggestion to include reference to the need to maintain a continuous 5 year supply of housing.
47. A Darlington 2036 - planning a better place for all visioning workshop, facilitated by ATLAS (HCA's strategic development support and advisory service) was held in August to give local groups, organisations and individuals the opportunity to identify and discuss the issues facing the Borough, what they value about the Borough and what it could look like in 20 years' time.
48. The workshop groups, containing a cross-section of interests, were asked to consider issues around 'Planning for the Whole Borough', 'Local Planning Matters', 'Social and Community Issues' and 'Environmental Issues'. Not unexpectedly there was much common ground among the groups although some more 'individual' views were also put forward. The detailed feedback notes, included in the Consultation Statement at **Appendix 1**, are summarised below.
49. The attendees generally recognised the need for development, both in terms of housing and employment, to underpin sustainable economic growth, but also highlighted their concerns about the potential impact on Darlington's distinctiveness. The workshop identified aspirations for development to meet a range of aims around quality, choice, connectivity, accessibility, social cohesion, and health, with a view to creating 'communities' not just housing estates.
50. The output from the workshop has been considered alongside the written representations to help inform the following proposed new vision:-

'Building on our ingenuity, cherishing our quality'

'In 2036, Darlington Borough will have maintained its identity as a cohesive historic market town situated amongst countryside and villages, whilst developing its reputation for ingenuity and its status as an economic driver. Its coherent community, natural and historic environment will continue to be cherished protected and celebrated. The opportunities available in Darlington and its links with other centres will make the Borough an attractive place for both residential and commercial investment, with the Borough's needs for housing, jobs and other development being met, supported by new and improved infrastructure and community facilities. Together with excellent national and regional connectivity and accessibility, these characteristics will mean Darlington continues to be a really good place to live, work and invest.

51. To achieve the above Vision, the following draft Aims and Objectives are proposed.

(a) **Overarching Aims**

- (i) Deliver sustainable development to meet the Borough's needs through a cohesive plan which makes the best use of land and resources
- (ii) Protect or enhance the quality of Darlington's built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life
- (iii) Direct large scale new development to emerging strategic growth zones that can help to deliver infrastructure and support clusters of economic activity in the context of the Tees valley Strategic Economic Plan and the Council's Economic Strategy

(b) **Specific Aims and Objectives**

- (i) **Facilitating Economic Growth** – facilitate sustainable economic growth of up to 6,000 new jobs within the borough. To achieve this aim, our objectives are:-
 - a) Create the conditions to attract and retain investment, with a range and continuous supply of employment development opportunities in sustainable locations.
 - b) Provide a choice and range of sites capable of delivering this growth. These will include established areas of existing economic development but also be flexible enough to be responsive to accommodate growth industries or the changing needs of established sectors.
 - c) Promote Darlington Town Centre as the main location for shopping, leisure, culture and employment and strengthen its role as a regional centre for such activities.
 - d) Diversify the rural economy to support businesses and existing communities whilst also protecting the boroughs valued open countryside.
 - e) Facilitate the delivery of strategic infrastructure that supports economic growth, including the supply of appropriate housing.
- (ii) **Meeting Housing Needs** – enable the development of at least 10,000 new homes in order to meet the housing needs and aspirations of those living and working in the borough. To achieve this aim, our objectives are:
 - a) Maintain a supply of land for new housing developments that meets the needs of the growing number of households.
 - b) Achieve and maintain a 5-year supply of housing land.

- c) Provide a range of housing products providing types and tenures of homes suitable for all people, including people who are unable to access housing on the open market and for the boroughs aging population.
 - d) To have a portfolio of sites of different sizes, different housing products and delivery rates for the short, medium and long term.
- (iii) **A Well Connected Borough** – to capitalise on Darlington’s excellent existing connections to the national strategic transport network and seek improvements to regional connectivity across the borough. New development that supports delivery of key infrastructure and a sustainable pattern for growth will be supported. In order to deliver this aim we have the following objectives:
- a) Ensure that new development is in places where it will be reasonably accessible by public transport, cycling and walking.
 - b) Maintain and improve transport links between communities within the borough and further afield.
 - c) Support development that enhances regionally and nationally important transport links including those offered by Banktop Station, Durham Tees Valley Airport and Teesport.
 - d) Delivery of communication infrastructure, including broadband, to enhance business and social interaction.
- (iv) **Create Cohesive, Proud & Healthy Communities** – create and support cohesive communities through good place-making to achieve lively, well located and distinctive places with an increased sense of civic pride. To achieve this aim, our objectives are;
- a) Protect, maintain and enhance Darlington’s identity as a historic market town, set amongst countryside and surrounding villages with strong links to Railway, Quaker and industrial heritage.
 - b) Maintain a vibrant, attractive and safe market town centre that embraces its historic character whilst functioning as a modern centre offering retail, culture, leisure, tourism and employment opportunities.
 - c) Secure provision of necessary infrastructure to support growth including improvements to existing services.
 - d) Ensure convenient access to local goods and services
 - e) Ensure schools have sufficient capacity to support new developments within the borough and where necessary provide new provision in sustainable locations;

- f) Improve access to green spaces for leisure and recreation.
 - g) To build healthier homes and environments that support independence at all stages of life.
 - h) Tackle unhealthy environments by creating walkable neighbourhoods, delivering radically improved infrastructure for safe, active travel and more accessible public transport.
 - i) Create connected neighbourhoods, strong communities and inclusive public spaces that enable people of all ages and abilities from all backgrounds to mix.
 - j) Design healthy workplaces, schools and leisure facilities that make the most of opportunities to encourage physical activity, healthy eating and positive mental health and wellbeing.
- (v) **Protect and Enhance the Countryside and Natural Environment** – maintain and enhance the biodiversity, character and appearance of the countryside and wildlife habitats. In order to achieve this aim, our objectives are:-
- a) Development within and around existing urban areas will be expected to protect, and add to, the boroughs rich and accessible existing Green Infrastructure network.
 - b) Improve the amount of quality accessible greenspace where deficiencies in provision are identified;
 - c) Protect and enhance bio-diversity across the Borough
 - d) Mitigate flood risks through environmental and ecological improvement of the River Skerne and River Tees
- (vi) **Protecting our Climate and Reducing Energy Consumption** – support the continued move towards a low carbon community by encouraging efficient use of resources, good design and well located development. In order to achieve this aim, our objectives are:-
- a) Manage flood risk from all sources.
 - b) Maximise opportunities to generate and use renewable energy in all developments
 - c) Encourage energy and water efficient design in new development
 - d) Locate development in areas not susceptible to flooding and encourage flood resilient design where necessary.

52. The vision aims and objectives will inform the development of the Local Plan and be used to measure its effectiveness over the plan period. Members are, therefore, asked to consider them and suggest amendments/additions as appropriate.

Developing Local Plan Policies

53. Comments were received on numerous aspects of the content of the 'Issues and Scoping Report' a summary of these responses can be viewed at **Appendix 2 of Annex 1** or on the Local Plan Microsite. The following section looks at these responses in topic areas reflecting the Local Plan Aims as detailed above. For each area a summary of the following will be provided:-

- (a) The Council's position at the time of consultation;
- (b) Key Comments Received;
- (c) Next Steps (including alterations to existing position or additional work required);
- (d) Any Duty to Co-operate matters.

54. Local Authorities have a 'Duty to Co-operate' with various statutory bodies and adjacent authorities, to ensure cross-boundary/strategic issues are considered by all relevant parties. At this early stage in the plan process, formal comments have been limited to identifying some areas of mutual interest, for example the potential impact of major development on the strategic road network, the future accommodation of Gypsies and Travellers, and future housing requirements and market assessments. Officers will continue to liaise with the relevant bodies and organisations as the plan progresses. They will also be involved as neighbouring authorities prepare their own local plans.

Facilitating Economic Growth

55. Places and communities need jobs to thrive and be successful. This is why economic growth is a priority nationally, and locally. In Darlington, we need to build on our recent successes attracting and retaining businesses like the DfE, CPI and Modus, and securing new investment like at Feethams, Lingfield Point and Central Park. We are planning to sustain this level of success for the next 20 years.
56. Darlington has a choice of land and premises for new or expanding businesses in a range of locations across the Borough, but there are likely to be shortages in particular sizes, types and quality for the businesses growing in Darlington now and those likely to be attracted here in the future.
57. The future demand and availability of business land and premises was last reviewed in 2013. This information needs updating to take account of any new or different requirements of likely end users and gains/losses in the supply, and to roll forward the demand forecasts to 2036. A robust policy position to safeguard valuable employment land from other uses will also be needed, to respond to national planning policy that requires its suitability for housing to be considered.

58. The approach in the interim planning policy statement will be the starting point for developing a new policy. The priority locations for encouraging new employment development will be reflected in the emerging policies for the growth zones (Central, Eastern and North West).
59. The IPPS updates the Darlington town centre boundary and primary and secondary shopping frontages shown on the 1997 Borough of Darlington Local Plan Proposals Map. As this update reflects significant recent research and takes account of feedback from consultations, we proposed taking these forward into the Local Plan, unless trends in the way town centres are used dictates otherwise.
60. The Council proposed retaining and protecting the existing hierarchy of district and local centres set out in the IPPS and the Core Strategy, but it may be necessary to identify new/expanded one(s) if significant new housing is planned in an area not already well served by existing shops and services. It also proposes to keep the local requirement on developers to provide retail impact assessments for proposals for out of centre development as long as it continues to accord with national planning policy.
61. There is general agreement amongst respondents that economic growth needs to be high on the Council's agenda, including creating the right employment opportunities. However, some responses suggest that the economic growth aspirations need to be revisited post 'Brexit'. There is some support for the approach towards employment sites, including safeguarding employment land from other uses; however one respondent considers that DBC should not go against the policies of the NPPF on avoiding long term protection of sites where there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for that purpose. There is general agreement that employment and housing should be aligned fully with the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan and the Council's Economic Strategy.
62. There is support for the 'town centre first' approach and ensuring the town continues to attract business and maintain the vibrancy of the centre. Equally, there is a need to be aware of the changing role of town centres and to be able to adapt where appropriate.
63. There is agreement that developers should have to provide retail impact assessments for out of centre proposals and support for the retail policies within the Interim Planning Position Statement.
64. Stage 2 of the plan will consider the above issues in relation to ensuring a sufficient choice and supply of employment land to accommodate the envisaged growth across different sectors, but also the potential to allocate the land for other uses on underperforming sites. A review of the employment sites and premises study will also be required, as part of the HELAA.
65. The changing role and function of the town centre will be a key element of the new Local Plan. In particular, the contribution it can make to the broader tourism economy and growth ambitions of the borough.
66. Economic growth will always have some cross boundary implications with movement of workers between administrative areas. There are existing links with

employment uses to the North of the Borough in South Durham and also with Stockton but other industries also have associated supply chain businesses. Retail activity also has cross boundary implications so the council proposes to have ongoing dialogue with neighbouring authorities on the linkages between areas.

Meeting Housing Needs

67. Darlington's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2015) and subsequent work on setting a housing requirement identified a need for around 10,000 dwellings to be built in Darlington by 2036. Many of these homes will be delivered on sites with deliverable planning permissions, or sites which were identified as sustainable and suitable through Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy (adopted in 2011) and the Making and Growing Places DPD (MGP) Revised Preferred Options consultation in 2014 – the last public consultation before the document was officially withdrawn. However, additional sites will be required to meet the Borough's housing needs.
68. The Issues and Scoping consultation proposed that a policy setting out the annual housing requirement and, how its delivery will be phased, should be included in the Local Plan, alongside site allocations policies which will ensure that the most sustainable sites are developed over the plan period. The Council's research has also identified that additional land will also need to be allocated to ensure the housing target is met even if some sites do not progress, or progress is slower than expected.
69. The Issues and Scoping consultation referenced the 45+ sites identified in the IPPS, which have already been the subject of public consultations, are within or on the edge of the main urban area of Darlington and are considered suitable for sustainable new housing developments in the next five years. These sites will be reassessed as part of the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) to confirm their status. Also, given that the plan period will extend beyond that previously planned for, and that the circumstances of land, land owners and developers could have changed since information was gathered for previous plans, the Council also issued a new call for sites as part of the consultation process and sought opinions on drawing up the criteria that would be used to decide which additional sites to allocate for housing in the new Local Plan.
70. A number of comments questioned whether the number of dwellings identified was accurate, expressing concern about whether the number of new homes was too high with particular reference to the availability of jobs and the impacts of the country leaving the European Union. It was noted that the relationship to economic growth targets would need to be monitored closely, and that any updates to the sub national population projections would need to be taken into account as the plan went forward. A number of stakeholders with an interest in developing land within the Borough commented that the SHMA and related studies, including evidencing a five year supply of deliverable housing sites and the types of housing required (such as affordable homes, starter homes, self-build homes and homes suitable for older people), would require further work and updating as the local plan progresses. It was noted that a wide range of sites (in terms of size, market and location) would be required to maintain delivery rates over the plan period.

71. Alongside concern regarding the accuracy and currency of the objectively assessed housing need evidenced in the SHMA, some respondents also commented on how this would be translated into a housing requirement. There was concern that the Council should not over plan for housing, because this would flood the market with planning permissions resulting in less certainty regarding deliverability. Conversely, a number of development industry stakeholders considered that flexibility should be built into the housing requirement to ensure the need for dwellings is met over the plan period, with the requirement being viewed as a minimum rather than a ceiling and any backlog being dealt with as soon as possible.
72. Numerous local respondents commented on the design and layout of new housing, with particular reference to ensure that Darlington retains its distinctive character, rather than encouraging estates of houses which could be located anywhere. It was also considered important that there was scope to include affordable dwellings, homes for first time buyers and homes for older people within housing schemes.

Call for Sites

73. A key element in preparing a new Local Plan is to establish what land is available for development within the Borough over the plan period. The Council has been made aware of numerous potential development sites through previous evidence gathering such as the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the Employment Land Review. These sites have been explored in detail and in some cases, they have been included in draft policy documents as potential site allocations, the Council's Interim Planning Position Statement or have progressed to planning applications out with the development plan process.
74. Given that the plan period was likely to extend beyond that previously planned for, and that the circumstances of land, land owners and developers could have changed since information was gathered for previous plans, the Council issued a new call for sites as part of the consultation process. Landowners, agents and developers were asked to submit details of their suggested sustainable and developable sites using an online form including, a plan and basic site details.
75. The map at **Appendix 3 of Annex 1** shows the scale and distribution of the sites submitted as potential housing allocations. Many of these have been submitted and considered through previous plan making cycles, however others are new suggestions responding to the Council's suggestions for achieving strategic housing delivery over a longer plan period. They range in size from relatively small extensions adjacent to existing villages, through to a large expanse of land to the west of the A1, an area put forward as a potential new settlement. Elsewhere, the submitted sites form major clusters at the urban fringe, concentrated to the west, north west, north and north east of the town.
76. In considering the potential Local Plan housing site allocations, the Council will consider these submissions alongside sites already identified for consideration through previous planning exercises, mainly the SHLAA 2015 which provides an assessment of the Borough's ability accommodate housing development over the Local Plan period. Previous work on the Local Plan Making and Growing Places housing allocations, now included in the Interim Planning Position Statement, are also shown on Map 1. The Council will need to assess all these sites to inform

decisions on the Local Plan allocations needed to meet the housing requirement. The first part of that assessment is a high-level sift to identify the preferred strategic development locations.

Selecting a Location for Strategic Scale Development

77. The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) promotes sustainable development and encourages local planning authorities to plan positively for their area, preferably for a 15 year plus period, and to take account of longer term requirements. In order to do this, the Council must objectively assess its development needs and set out how they will be met, including identifying strategic priorities for the Borough and defining broad locations and/or specific sites where development will be promoted.
78. Core Strategy Policy CS10 proposed that significant numbers of new dwellings would be delivered over the plan period in the urban area, the Town Centre Fringe, the North Western Urban Fringe and the Eastern fringe. However, as has been described in previous reports to Members, the Council must explore a new approach to meeting its additional housing requirement.
79. As reported through the Issues and Scoping consultation, the Council considers that, given the opportunities and constraints present in the Borough, a strategic housing site may be the most sustainable way in which to deliver the housing required. Paragraph 52 of the NPPF supports this approach stating that 'new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale developments, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities'. The Council has identified master planning as a useful tool for quality place making on a strategic scale. In this context, master planning is a process where various interested parties work together to set a vision for an area and to set out a strategy for achieving that vision. At later stages, this will involve the production of drawing and documents. However, master planning is best understood as a process of setting aims and objectives for sustainable development, before gathering information and evidence about the best way to achieve them. This is then collated into a strategy which sets out how the vision will be implemented, including details of design, implementation and delivery. Where this is successful, it will go on to form part of the evidence for a site allocation and related policies in the Local Plan.
80. In order to achieve delivery in this way, it will be necessary for the Council and other stakeholders to undertake work over and above that required for delivering smaller numbers of houses and/or smaller discrete sites. This could include securing strategic infrastructure such as new road links or utility provision, but also onsite arrangements such as access points, schools and health care which require multiple land owners and developers to work together to produce the most sustainable places for the future. Initial discussions with developers and land owners on the principles of this approach have revealed their willingness to participate in and contribute to such an approach. With this in mind, the Council has engaged ATLAS, (the Advisory Team for Large Applications, part of the Homes and Communities Agency), to support it in exploring how a strategic site could support sustainable housing delivery and other key objectives in Darlington, as well as how deliverability and viability could be demonstrated over a 10 to 15 year

implementation period. It is anticipated that ATLAS will continue to support the Council through this process and that the approach can be extrapolated to other sites and potentially in neighbourhood planning areas.

81. Having identified master planning as a potential strategy for delivering strategic housing numbers, initial consideration of opportunities and constraints within the Borough was carried out through cross-departmental internal workshops, with input from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and ATLAS. This led to a number of areas of search for housing sites being identified around the Borough which formed the basis of the Issues and Scoping consultation in relation to housing. A number of areas or strategic options were identified as having the potential to accommodate residential development on a strategic scale. These were:-
- (a) An urban extension in northern Darlington
 - (b) An urban extension to the south west of Darlington
 - (c) Expanding Middleton St George village
 - (d) An urban extension to the south of Newton Aycliffe/ Heighington
 - (e) Create a new settlement within the rural area
 - (f) Extend existing villages
82. The Issues and Scoping consultation also raised the option of exporting some of the Borough's housing need for the period to adjacent housing market areas; however, the SHMA identifies Darlington as a self-contained housing market area, meaning that migration between the Borough and its neighbours is relatively limited. Exporting the housing requirement would also mean that the Borough would lose the benefits that new dwellings bring, including new infrastructure and economic activity. As there was no support for, or expressions of interest in, this course of action during the Issues and Scoping consultation, the scope for additional dwellings to be delivered within the Borough will be explored in full before this option is given further consideration.
83. Meeting the housing requirement through strategic sites received varying levels of support. A number of respondents emphasised the importance of protecting open and green spaces, the countryside and villages from further development. There was support for building on brownfield sites and resisting 'urban sprawl', as well as the potential to make better use of sites already identified through the plan process and as being in need of regeneration, vacant sites and properties within the town centre. A number of the strategic areas identified by the Council were supported by landowners and agents submitting sites within these areas to consultation, as well as additional areas being suggested – these are shown on the map at **Appendix 3 of the Consultation Statement (Annex 1)**
84. Maintaining the focus on existing regeneration sites and the sites adjacent to the existing urban area identified in the Interim Planning Position Statement received support, both in terms of site allocations and phasing policies which would support their delivery before new greenfield sites are taken up. There was also a

suggestion of using Council owned land to support housing delivery.

85. Respondents generally considered it important that areas of new housing should include infrastructure which would make them attractive, well-functioning places to live in their own right and, not impact negatively on existing settlements. Traffic congestion was noted as an issue in numerous locations, as well as concern about the impacts of increasing the capacity of the road network. In the north, reference was made to a potential need for a new link road between the A1 and Teesside. There was also support for locating new homes close to existing facilities and services, and spreading them across the area to spread the impact on infrastructure.
86. There was some support for a new settlement in a rural part of the Borough, including a site submission to the west of the A1. It was considered that this kind of strategic site would be attractive to the market, would reduce the impact of new housing on existing villages, could provide a mix of dwellings and fund new infrastructure. However, contrasting comments asserted that a new settlement would have a negative impact on the countryside and would require many new facilities, reducing its sustainability – particularly in the early years of the development.
87. Extensions to existing villages were not generally supported by local people, although those with land interests considered that they could support local infrastructure and facilities, increasing sustainability. Comments were received from representatives of Neasham, Middleton St George and Hurworth Parish Councils, expressing concern the villages would lose their character and form and that there would be a detrimental effect on the infrastructure in the villages. It was suggested by Middleton St George Parish Council that growth in the village is taking place in a piecemeal fashion and that a planned approach should be taken to any further development to ensure sufficient infrastructure was in place. At Neasham, the Parish Council considered that whilst there were some potential development sites within and around the village, they would need to be developed sensitively and with appropriate infrastructure. It was felt to be unlikely that they would make a significant contribution to the Borough's housing needs. Concerns about the impact on wildlife, landscape and the rural area's character were also expressed in relation to village development generally.
88. The proposal to create an urban extension to the north of Darlington town received support from the landowners in the area including a number of site submissions through the 'call for sites'. It was considered that this could utilise and build on existing infrastructure and services to provide an area of strategic growth. In contrast, others raised concerns regarding the large scale of the area being considered, building on floodplains, the potential impact development would have on wildlife, transport, and the potential loss of public rights of way and agricultural land. Numerous residents in the vicinity of the Muscar House Farm site commented on its potential development with concerns including transport issues, impact on habitats, loss of the open space and agricultural land and the impact on the historic environment.
89. Numerous responses to the issues and scoping consultation considered that the reuse of previously developed land within the existing urban area should be

prioritised above greenfield sites, including parts of the Town Centre Fringe and other vacant industrial sites. The NPPF also encourages the reuse of previously developed land where it is not of high value. Where these sites have been put forward by their owners or identified by the Council, they have been considered through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and included in the development plan process as appropriate. This will continue to happen as the Local Plan progresses. However, to be included in the housing supply, sites must be shown to be developable, which includes an assessment of their viability and attractiveness to the market. In addition, some sites may be valued in their current use (such as industrial locations), or be otherwise unsuitable for housing development.

90. The next step is for the Council to consider where investing in master planning will assist in securing the housing delivery required alongside other benefits for the Borough. Where new sites have been identified as being available for housing development, either by the Council or other parties, they will be assessed alongside those previously identified through the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment in 2016/17. After this, consideration will be given to their allocation in the Local Plan, either in isolation or in combination with other sites as the document progresses.
91. The Council has begun developing these strategic options through a series of conversations with key stakeholders about strategic objectives, site specific issues and thematic issues. In order to ensure the most sustainable and deliverable development proposals are brought forward, work will continue to focus on areas, or sectors, of the Borough, rather than specific sites which have been submitted to the Council for consideration – the boundaries of any master planning area, and the areas identified for different land uses within it will be explored through the master planning process. In order to plan effectively, determine which areas and sites will best achieve Darlington's Local Plan Vision and objectives, and deliver good planning outcomes, it is intended that potential areas for strategic scale development will be assessed against a number of criteria to determine whether they will be taken forward using a master planning approach. These have been based on draft Local Plan vision, aims and objectives outlined earlier in this report and the issues identified in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.
 - (a) The delivery of a distinctive place – a cohesive market town surrounded by countryside and villages, with a strong sense of community, heritage and an attractive environment
 - (b) Contributing to a sustainable pattern of development (connectivity and relation to the existing urban form, integration and cohesiveness of communities), both Borough wide and within the area itself.
 - (c) Enabling the local management of the transport network to reduce the impact of congestion as a consequence of growth.
 - (d) Facilitating the Tees Valley and Northern Power House wide/sub regional economy including improving east-west connectivity and accessibility.

- (e) Potential to enhance and deliver new infrastructure and amenities on a neighbourhood, local or regional scale infrastructure (including social)
- (f) Potential to deliver a significant number of dwellings between now and 2036 in an appropriately phased and planned fashion, including a mix of tenures, types and price of the type which would allow the borough to attract and also retain the population profile to needed in the area.

92. With this sectorial approach and the comments received in mind, the submitted sites which appear have the potential to contribute to strategic housing delivery have been categorised into the following areas of the Borough.

(a) **A new settlement to the west of the A1**

A significant area of land to the west of the A1 was submitted to the Call for Sites. Other sites in this location have not been identified as developable previously, however, Should this option be pursued, it seems likely that other landowners in the vicinity could become involved to make the area a more regular and logical shape for development.

(b) **South West Darlington**

A small number of medium sized sites have been promoted to the west of Darlington between the existing urban area and the A1. These run from the emerging development of the North West Growth Zone at West Park, alongside the existing urban area as far as the A67. To the south of the A67, some smaller sites around Low Coniscliffe have also been promoted.

(c) **South Darlington**

A small number of sites were submitted to the south of the Borough, some adjacent to the urban area, others relating to the villages of Hurworth and Neasham.

(d) **Middleton St George Village**

Four sites within or around Middleton St George were submitted to the Call for Sites. The Council is also aware of a number of other development sites in the vicinity which are being promoted through the Planning process.

(e) **North West Darlington**

Sites in the north west of Darlington were collected around junction 58 of the A1, with a large site submission extending from the A1 into the Faverdale area to join the existing urban area.

(f) **North and North East Darlington**

To the north and north east of Darlington, a range of sites were submitted which would extend the urban area to the north. This included one large site to the north east, with a number of smaller sites making a cluster to the north around North Road, the A167.

93. Officers will present their initial findings on their preferred options for strategic locations at the meeting. It is also intended to meet with key developer/landowner interests prior to making recommendations to Cabinet in November, to test the

proposals.

Gypsies and Travellers

94. The Issues and Scoping consultation proposed that the Local Plan would make provision for gypsy and traveller accommodation to meet the needs identified in the recent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment. As well as planned extensions/expansions to Honeypot Lane and Neasham Road sites, it was recognised that further land may be needed in the medium to long term. Additional needs are also likely to arise because we are now planning for 20 years ahead, and not 15 as previously.
95. Views expressed included a concern that sporadic development over recent years has affected the character of areas, and that there is a need for a firm, clear policy position, around any planned increase in provision. There was agreement that the current evidence needs to be reviewed and brought up to date.
96. The Council proposes to review the evidence of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs, taking into account sub regional issues and the Duty to Co-operate with other relevant bodies. The new Local Plan will include policies on plot and pitch targets for travelling showpeople and Gypsies and Travellers respectively, a five year supply of specific deliverable sites to meet needs, and broad locations for further provision beyond that.

A Well Connected Borough

97. New technical work is needed to understand the highway and other transport impacts of the amount of development being proposed over the next 20 years and the growth in travel that would occur even if no new development was planned. The work is also needed to help identify what new improvements are necessary to the local road network, bus and rail services, and cycling and walking infrastructure to support development, encourage sustainable travel choices and avoid significant road congestion.
98. The existing Parking Strategy (2014-26) will be the starting point for new policy development. It will be reviewed to take account of changes to existing parking following the completion of new developments in the Feethams area, and to understand and plan for more that is needed by 2036. The general approach to short stay, long stay, contract car parking and residents parking zones set out in the IPPS is likely to be retained, to support town centre vitality and manage demand.
99. We will work with the major utility providers to make sure that all new development can be readily connected to ICT, gas, electric, water supply and sewerage facilities without delay, and that this can be done without harming the delivery of these utilities to existing homes and businesses already in the Borough. To support local businesses and improve residents' quality of life, it is proposed to ask for superfast broadband capability for all new developments.

100. All this will be set out in an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, to be prepared alongside the new Local Plan.
101. Neighbouring authorities have advised further work will be required to understand the impact on the strategic road network. There is also some criticism that the consultation material at this stage offered no indication of likely highway mitigation measures.
102. Responses from residents indicate concern about levels of road congestion and identify that some of this traffic is caused by 'through traffic' coming to and from other areas. There is particular concern about the northern part of town although this is a common issue for all of the identified growth zones.
103. The importance of supporting and properly integrating sustainable transport into new developments is also a key theme in order to move away from a reliance on private motor vehicles.
104. Parking arrangements and the Town Centre Parking Strategy should be revisited in light of the additional development proposed.
105. The existing evidence base, at the strategic and local network levels, provides a well understood narrative around the potential impact and mitigation requirements resulting from major development over the next 10 to years. However more detailed work will need to be developed in the next stage of plan development to forecast impacts and potential mitigations for the later parts of the plan period.
106. Officers recognise the concerns about traffic levels and Stage 2 of the plan will identify strategic and local infrastructure requirements necessary to meet and mitigate the long term development ambitions of the Plan.
107. Officers will continue to pursue sustainable transport initiatives as part of the Local Plan policies.
108. Dialogue with infrastructure providers such as utility providers and broadband providers will be ongoing throughout the second stage of plan development to ensure new development is adequately served.
109. Transport will likely be a key duty to cooperate matter as policies are developed Darlington plays a key role as an access point to the Tees Valley for both road and rail transport and continues to provide the only airport facility in the Tees Valley all of which have a sub-regional role. There is also a key interaction between Darlington Borough and South Durham which will require ongoing dialogue.

Protect and Enhance the Countryside and the Natural Environment

110. The adopted Core Strategy identifies that the Borough is part of three strategic landscape character areas, whilst more detailed recent landscape character work (2015) identified ten distinctive local landscape character areas, and assessed the capacity of some areas to accommodate new development. It is proposed to retain the adopted policy approach identifying and seeking to safeguard the most valued landscapes in the context of the national presumption in favour of sustainable

development. This means that landscape character is most likely to be a factor in deciding how to design and plan new development (see IPPS), and only in very exceptional cases, is it anticipated that impact on landscape would be a show stopping issue.

111. The Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy (2013) provides comprehensive information to underpin local planning policy for all green space, except allotments, for which there is a separate strategy. Up to date information and trends will need to be collected to inform the policy approach to the latter. Again it is proposed that the existing policy approach, which protects key components of the identified green infrastructure network from losses, be retained and the approach to providing more green space, as broadly set out in the IPPS, is refined.
112. Biodiversity is an important indicator of environmental well-being. Whilst Darlington has relatively few nationally designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites, there is about 300 hectares of locally important wildlife friendly green space, including land along the river corridors and becks, Local Nature Reserves (e.g. Geneva Woods) and Local Wildlife Sites. Comprehensive up to date information is reflected in the Green Infrastructure Strategy. The 'conserve and where possible enhance' policy approach set out in the IPPS, the GIS and the Core Strategy is well developed and unless any national policy changes or significant changes to local circumstances warrant it, it is proposed to reflect the current policy approach in the new Local Plan.
113. There is a strong emphasis in the comments received on the protection of the natural environment of Darlington and its surroundings, particularly in relation to green infrastructure and enhancing the network already in existence. Protecting landscape character and the context of the existing villages within this landscape is also a key concern with a fuller understanding of landscape character encouraged.
114. Northumbrian Water have urged greater consideration of the core principles of flood risk and sustainable water management in preparing the plan in order to support the resilient future of healthy communities. This may involve updating of documents like the Tees Valley Water Cycle Study (2012) and Darlington SFRA (2010) and also that any new strategic growth areas within flood zones should be subject to sequential test. Regard to the Water Framework Directive and Northumbria River Basin Management Plan is vital. Evidence will need to be robust in relation to constraints so as to be able to test whether any harm to these constraints will 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits' of delivering the full OAN for housing.
115. Protection and improvement of the natural environment and landscape character of the Borough will be a key aim of the Local Plan. Officers acknowledge the comments received and will carry forward the points made into the next stage of the plan.
116. Cross boundary issues are picked up in the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy and where necessary will be discussed with adjacent authorities and Statutory Consultees.

Create Cohesive, Proud and Healthy Communities

117. Heritage and archaeology are at the heart of what makes Darlington distinctive. The Council proposes a policy to promote, protect and enhance its quality and integrity. Work on this is already well advanced, and is reflected in the Interim Planning Position statement. It covers heritage and archaeology that has already been formally recognised, as well as that which has not. Unless there are changes to national policy, it is proposed to retain the existing policy approach.
118. Access to local primary health and hospital facilities are significant local concerns, reflecting a national issue. The Council is not the provider of these services, but through the local plan, will work with the NHS and the Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group to help make sure that for any new facilities planned, land in appropriate locations, e.g. as part of wider new housing development, is kept free for that purpose.
119. There is a strong positive link between education and health. New housing often generates the need for more local primary and secondary school places, and new nursery places. The Local Plan can help make sure that when new housing takes place, the developer contributes to the cost of providing new school places, whether it is with new, altered or extended buildings, and/or by reserving suitable land within large new housing schemes.
120. Darlington is well provided with higher education opportunities now that Teesside University has a successful campus in the town, complementing Darlington College and Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College. The Council will find out about any future plans these and other establishments may have for development over the next 20 years, to ensure that it does all that it can to support it through the planning system.
121. Pubs and other community venues can be valuable local meeting places, enriching sensible users with a sense of well being and community belonging. The Council is considering including a policy in the new Local Plan that would ensure that any proposals for the loss of the last such facilities in any community are not permitted unless it is clear that efforts have been made to look at alternative ways of retaining it and/or the functions it performs.
122. Indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities, including sports centres, community halls, playing fields and green space for childrens' play and informal recreation are essential to support healthy lifestyles. Compared to other towns, Darlington has a lot of open space for its population, but it is not all attractive to use, and may not all be easy to reach and accessible. The existing policy approach aims to safeguard and improve sport and recreation facilities from other forms of development in most circumstances, but with flexibility built in, so that the Council and other providers can adapt to new models of delivery. The Council currently seeks an appropriate level of new provision with new development, or asks for developer contributions to improve facilities nearby. It proposes to retain this approach, as it is based on recent sport and physical activity strategies. Any refinements will be to reflect more up to date evidence, such as for playing pitch needs, or any changes to national policy.

123. Consultation responses show strong support overall for the protection of Darlington's distinctive local heritage. There are a number of comments supporting the existing approach identified in the Interim Statement. Of particular importance is the protection of the character of the town centre and surrounding villages. The importance of the Stockton and Darlington Railway route and associated railway heritage assets has also been referenced by a number of respondents and they consider more should be done to acknowledge their importance. Loss of undesignated heritage assets (including the Arts Centre) should be avoided at all costs and a stronger policy stance is recommended in such cases. A thorough assessment of the all the boroughs assets is also advised. Some concern is raised by planning consultants that policies should be more positively worded so as to ensure developments impacting heritage assets can still be supported.
124. Comments received highlight the importance of safeguarding and protecting cultural and community facilities, and encouraging new provision, as part of sustainable development. Specific support for protection of pubs and other community facilities as valuable meeting places is balanced by comments that such an approach could result in buildings sat empty, subject to vandalism, etc.
125. Some respondents would like to see stronger emphasis placed on the Borough's sporting and leisure facilities and the benefits a successful sports team can bring to Darlington and the wider region. As such reference should be made to expanding the range of sports provision and giving support to diversification to support the longevity of sporting clubs and facilities.
126. A view put forward is the need to present need for community facilities transparently, stating clearly what DBC believes should be provided and the evidence which supports these requirements. Viability will also have to be considered as part of this process.
127. Respondents emphasised the need for integration of infrastructure within new developments including schools and health care. In order for Darlington to remain the 'gateway to the Tees Valley' without significant investment this could become a constraint on future growth. Superfast broadband provision also should be a key requirement alongside more traditional utilities.
128. The protection and celebration of railway, and other heritage assets, will remain an important element of the Local Plan vision and be reflected in policy development at Stage 2. Officers acknowledge that the scenarios around community and cultural facilities should be given careful consideration in writing the Local Plan. In addition, an Infrastructure Delivery Plan will be produced as part of the Local Plan and will be tested at the Examination in Public.
129. The former Stockton to Darlington Railway extends into Durham County Council and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council areas. Discussions will be held with both regarding the policy approach proposed.

Protect our Climate and Reducing Energy Consumption

130. Recent technological advances, changes to national planning policy and incentive schemes all indicate a full review of the Core Strategy policy approach is

needed. The review will also take account of the shift in how energy efficiency improvements in new development will be secured, away from the planning system to the building regulations regime.

131. Comments have been received relating to energy efficiency, carbon reduction including air quality and improved building standards. Some respondents seek significant improvement others request that such matters be left to Building Regulations.
132. National Policy requires Local Plans to be supported by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and develop policies to manage flood risk from all sources, taking account of advice from the Environment Agency and other relevant flood risk management bodies. In the next stage of plan development this work will commence.
133. Given the detailed nature of these issues and uncertain picture in relation to national standards relating to energy efficiency in construction, they will be considered later on in Stage 2 of the plan preparation process, when hopefully there will be greater clarity at national level.
134. Management of Flood Risk has the potential to be a duty to cooperate issue and we will continue to maintain dialogue with adjacent authorities in relation to such matters.

Next Steps

135. Over the next few months work will be progressing in a number of key areas to develop Stage 2 of the local plan. The Council will need to refresh the evidence base to demonstrate the plan is compliant with regulations, the National Planning Policy Framework, and meets the Vision and Objectives.
136. Where development sites are proposed, evidence will be gathered to meet the following seven questions:-
 - (a) Is there a clear objective/aim for what is intended to be achieved in the overall development?
 - (b) Can key site constraints be identified - both those that are fixed and those that need to be overcome or mitigated?
 - (c) Are all the different land uses/proposals that the site is to accommodate identified, together with an indication of their scale i.e. housing, employment, community facilities?
 - (d) What infrastructure is needed (e.g. transport, education, social and community services) to make that development an attractive, sustainable location?
 - (e) How will the infrastructure be provided and by whom – focussing on phasing and delivery, including funding and viability?

- (f) Is an implementation route in place? For sites to be delivered within 5 years: milestones for progression of the development, e.g. application submission and commencement on site, phasing and consequences if missed. For delivery of Broad Locations in 5 – 15 years: this could be left to a later development plan.
- (g) Is there a master plan in place or emerging? - For delivery within 5 years: is there a Strategic Framework Plan in place and will further detail be worked up in a more detailed master plan and/or site-specific SPD? - For delivery in 5 – 15 years: is it clear how the detail will be worked up later in the plan period, specifying timescales for delivery AND following this question through, especially relevant here where development is being planned for a longer term horizon how will that be secured and delivered ?

137. Project management techniques will be used to ensure key tasks, milestones and deadlines necessary to get a comprehensive Local Plan submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in early 2018, are met. They will assist in project managing the process of plan development, explain the governance arrangements supporting master planning and local plan processes, and set out requirements for stakeholder engagement.

138. All proposed housing sites will be assessed through the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment in 2016/17. After this, consideration will be given to their allocation in the Local Plan, either in isolation or in combination with other sites as the document progresses. However, in order to deliver strategic sites, it will be necessary for the Council and other stakeholders to undertake work over and above that required for delivering smaller numbers of houses and/or smaller discrete sites. This could include securing strategic infrastructure such as new road links or utility provision, but also onsite arrangements such as access point, schools and health care which require multiple land owners and developers to work together to produce the most sustainable places for the future. It is anticipated that ATLAS will continue to support the Council through this process. Work is to be commenced shortly to setup a new SHLAA steering group. An inception meeting for the new SHLAA process has been arranged for Thursday 27 October 2016.

139. Measures to inform the update of the Local Plan evidence base will be required. This will include:-

- (a) An update of the Objectively Assessed Needs Assessment (OAN) to reflect the latest demographic forecasts;
- (b) An update of the HELAA and 5 year land supply assessment;
- (c) Other specialist studies including updates of employment land reviews and traffic modelling work will also require commissioning.

140. Neighbourhood Planning could play a useful role in informing/supporting the local plan process, especially within the villages. Officers will provide support and advice to Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums where appropriate, to ensure any such plans conform with the emerging Local Plan policies.

141. As officers develop the plan there will be ongoing consultation with much greater emphasis on more focused consultations on particular topics and geographical areas. Bespoke engagement plans will be developed for these stages but owing to the success of new consultation methods so far there will be a greater emphasis on making information available online with regular updates on progress on the Local Plan Microsite with links also provided on the Council's existing Social Media Channels.