

## **Introduction**

### **Local Development Framework**

Darlington Borough Council is preparing a new Local Development Framework (LDF). It is a series of documents that will eventually replace the Borough of Darlington Local Plan, which was adopted in November 1997. When adopted its component documents will form part of the statutory development plan for the Borough along with the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East.

### **Core Strategy**

The Core Strategy will be the key, central document in the Local Development Framework. It will provide broad, spatial planning guidance on the scale and distribution of new development, the use of land and buildings and the provision of infrastructure in the Borough over the next 20 years.

It will set out 'higher level' planning policies for delivering the Regional Spatial Strategy and the new Sustainable Community Strategy vision for Darlington at a local level, guiding broad patterns of development and areas of restraint. Together with these documents and other plans and strategies prepared by the Council and other agencies, it will help coordinate the future development of Darlington, ensuring that investment decisions are not made in isolation but are properly coordinated, focussing on the principles of sustainable development.

The other documents in the Local Development Framework must be consistent with the Core Strategy and the Tees Valley Minerals and Waste Core Strategy and will set out detailed guidelines against which development proposals will be judged.

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

The Core Strategy aims to improve the overall quality of life for people living and working in Darlington in a way which will benefit future generations. An ongoing, independent sustainability appraisal is being fully integrated in the preparation of the Core Strategy to assess how well it meets local economic, social and environmental sustainability objectives. A copy of the ongoing appraisal is available from the Council or from the Council's website.

The key findings are shown in the Core Strategy but in general the options are generally geared towards accommodating new development as sustainably as possible; providing for affordable and diverse housing needs; reducing the need to travel; ensuring good quality urban design; reducing dependency on natural resources and protecting the countryside and biodiversity.

### **Habitats Regulation Assessment (Appropriate Assessment)**

The Core Strategy should help protect and enhance the environment of Darlington and should not have any negative impacts on its environment or elsewhere. An ongoing Habitats Regulation Assessment is being undertaken as part of the Core Strategy preparation to make sure that any adverse impacts on sites of international or European importance for wildlife and birds will be properly addressed.

### **Regional Spatial Strategy**

The Core Strategy does not start as a blank canvas as much new development and infrastructure is already in the pipeline. The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East indicates the numbers of new homes and the amount of employment land that should be provided in the Borough, provides a series of sustainable development targets including for renewable energy and previously developed land, outlines Darlington's role in the Tees Valley City Region and identifies priorities for improvements to major infrastructure. Further changes to the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy are expected in late 2007-early 2008 and the document should be approved in 2008.

### **Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and Climate Change Strategy**

It is also important that the Core Strategy addresses the aims of the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy which will set the vision for the future of the Borough and its delivery through the Local Area Agreement. The existing Community Strategy focuses on raising the quality of life in Darlington's communities through creating and sharing economic prosperity, providing a location for learning, achievement and leisure, a place for living safely and well and a high quality environment with excellent communication links. A draft Sustainable Community Strategy is available for consultation at the same time as this Core Strategy. Several joint consultation events are being held which will help highlight the links between the two documents. The complementary Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy seeks to address the inequalities between the 11 priority wards and the rest of the Borough. The Climate Change Strategy seeks to protect Darlington's community from climate change. Through its policies the Core Strategy seeks to address these aims.

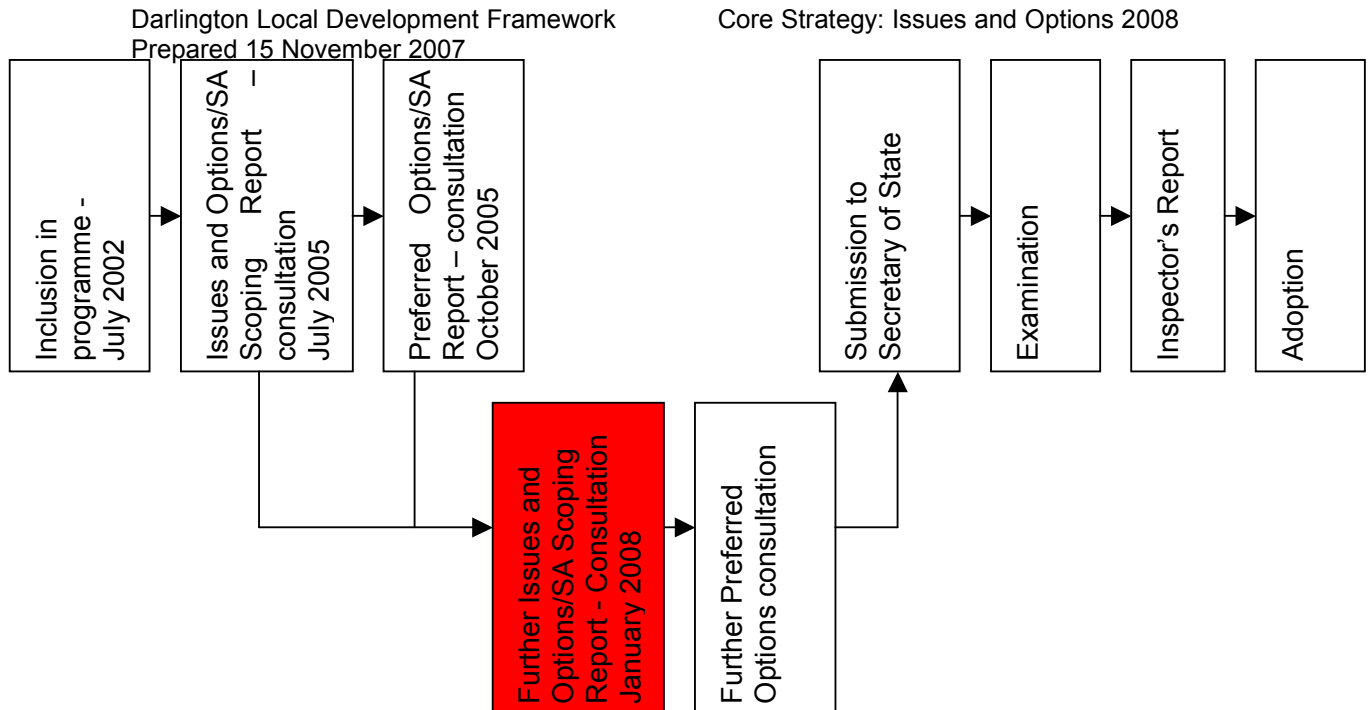
### **Other Strategies**

There are several other Council strategies and initiatives that will also play an important part in shaping the Core Strategy. These include the Local Transport Plan (including Accessibility Strategy), Taking Forward Darlington Gateway, Open Space Strategy, Social Inclusion Strategy, Crime, Disorder and Substance Misuse Reduction Strategy, Children and Young Peoples Plan, Primary and Secondary School Investment Strategies, Extended Schools Initiative and Locality Working. The Core Strategy will also address the spatial planning elements of other agencies strategies at a regional and sub regional level.

### **How We Got Here**

In June-July 2005 the Council consulted a variety of stakeholders and the local community on a wide range of issues for the original Core Strategy: Issues and Options 2005. The results of this fed into the preparation of the Core Strategy: Preferred Options which was consulted upon in October-December 2005. A Sustainability Report, setting out the outcomes of the sustainability appraisal, was published for consultation at the same time.

Since then, as well as changes to the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy and Sustainable Community Strategy, there have been a number of significant changes in national policy (particularly on housing and climate change), as well as changes to local strategies and the production of several new documents for the Local Development Framework evidence base. These are identified in the Annual Monitoring Report 2006-2007 available on the Council's website.



**Diagram: Core Strategy Preparation Process**

### Consultation

So the Council has decided to retrace its steps and reconsult on the Core Strategy: Issues and Options. The 2008 document has been prepared based on these new and emerging plans and strategies and also taking account of comments made following extensive public and stakeholder involvement for the Core Strategy: Issues and Options 2005 and the Core Strategy: Preferred Options 2005. It looks at the likely scope of the Core Strategy but does not pre-judge its content and only considers issues where there are genuine choices at a local level. The approach and level of detail varies between themes as a result of the difference in the issues and the degree and importance of choice as well as work already undertaken.

We would welcome your views on the Core Strategy's vision and objectives, the issues and options we have identified and any issues and options we may have missed. This is also an opportunity to comment on the sustainability appraisal.

There will be opportunities for further involvement throughout the preparation of Core Strategy and all other documents in the Local Development Framework in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and as required by legislation.

### Making Your Views Known

The consultation period for the Core Strategy: Issues and Options runs from the **7 January 2008 to the 15 February 2008**. All responses must be received in writing by the **15 February 2008**.

Please use the FREEPOST response form attached to the rear of this document to give us your opinions. We would like to know which option or combination of options you have chosen and the reasons for that decision.

Alternatively you can submit your comments on the Council's website or download a form and send it to us. Responses can also be sent to the

Strategy Manager  
Chief Executive's Department  
FREEPOST NEA2890  
Town Hall  
Darlington  
DL1 5QT

Further copies of the response form are available at the locations below. You can also attend one of the events that have been organised to give you an opportunity to have your say. Details are set out in the rear of this document, on the Council's website [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk) or in the local media.

The 2008 Core Strategy: Issues and Options is available with all of the documents described above at:

- Planning Reception at Darlington Town Hall
- Crown Street, Cockerton and the mobile libraries
- Neighbourhood housing offices at Branksome, Firth Moor, Red Hall and Skerne Park
- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Village Halls and Community Centres

If you would like more information, please telephone the Planning Policy Section on 01325 388644 or email [planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk).

### **The Next Step**

All the responses from this consultation will be used by the Council in identifying a 'preferred' Core Strategy for the long term development of the Borough. This will be accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal which will assess the social, economic and environmental effects of the strategy to ensure that it meets with sustainable development.

## **A Vision For Darlington**

*'By 2026 Darlington will be a more sustainable community providing those who wish to live and work in or visit the Borough with all the opportunities of a big city; a wide range of homes, businesses, service and recreational facilities linked by a comprehensive network of sustainable transport routes and green infrastructure, alongside the distinctive atmosphere generated by a friendly, historic market town ensuring the community benefits from an attractive, healthy, safe and sustainable environment providing a greater quality of life and equal opportunities for all.'*

### **Spatial Vision**

Over the next 20 years or so, Darlington will continue to develop as the physical and economic gateway to the Tees Valley City Region and North East England and as a key link in the chain of economic and social opportunity identified in the in the north of England. A range of previously-developed and greenfield sites, within and on the edge of its compact urban area, coupled with the Borough's accessibility and quality of life, will make Darlington an attractive location for a growing number of entrepreneurs building local businesses, and for new and expanding businesses keen to tap into a highly skilled local workforce and for leisure and tourism businesses. The principal growth sectors are expected to be financial and business services, health, civil engineering and construction-related businesses, logistics, retail, leisure and tourism generating economic growth which may not otherwise locate in the region.

Unused and underused land and buildings within the existing urban area will also provide the focus for accommodating population growth, and meeting the needs and aspirations of people living in and choosing to relocate to the western Tees Valley. The Borough will offer a high quality, healthy, safe, environmentally friendly and green living environment that is an attractive alternative to the Borough's southern and western rural hinterlands, and the local workforce and their families will benefit from the modern education facilities provided to help improve the skills of everyone.

The Borough will also continue to carve out its own unique identity and distinctiveness as an increasingly important player in the regional and sub-regional economic, retail tourism and cultural landscape. This uniqueness comes from the special character and quality of its established historic, open space and environmental resources, as well as from the distinctive, sustainable design of its new developments and open spaces that helps minimise the Borough's contribution to climate change. The distinct identities of neighbourhoods and settlements within the Borough will be continue as ever, but past disparities in local environmental quality, economic, social and recreational opportunities will be significantly reduced.

Comfort, ease and safety of access will characterise journeys to, from and within the main urban area, and to the rural areas particularly sustainable transport, reducing unnecessary private car travel and contributing to the high, healthy quality of life enjoyed by Borough residents, wherever they may live. There will be particularly marked improvements for those making trips by sustainable transport, for those with a mobility or sensory impairment, and for others who currently experience barriers to social inclusion.

The open character of the countryside to the south of the town will be protected to maintain visual links with the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors, but elsewhere, the Tees Forest, the continued expansion of the Community Forest and an improved rights

of way network will provide a softer, more accessible and valuable recreation resource at the urban fringe. New development in the Borough's villages and hamlets will be limited to small-scale developments that help sustain their vibrancy and reflect their individual character and appearance.

People will recommend Darlington to their friends and colleagues as a place to live and work in and visit because of its high quality, comfortable, low carbon living and working environments, its accessibility, educational provision, the opportunities for stimulating and rewarding work and after-work activities through its exceptional retail, cultural and leisure facilities. They will also be able to boast of the Borough's record and recognised credentials as the place where sustainable development happens.

### **Strategic Objectives**

The Core Strategy strategic objectives are based on the draft Sustainable Community Strategy and have been identified for each theme in this Core Strategy document. The aim of the Core Strategy is to:

1. Create an environment that encourages quality of life and promotes healthy, well educated and inclusive communities whilst supporting economic vitality for Darlington.
2. Ensure continued and sustainable levels of economic growth that provides a high quality, variety of employment for residents of Darlington and the surrounding area, supports existing businesses and encourages new businesses to set up in Darlington.
3. Enhance and promote the historic market town centre of Darlington as the hub for shopping, culture, tourism and civic administration whilst protecting and enhancing key commercial centres and accessible local commercial and community facilities for which there is, or is expected be, a continuing need.
4. Protect and enhance the separate identities and character of the town, distinctive parts within it and the villages, and promote development that is in keeping with the size, character and function of the location.
5. Promote developments that conserve natural resources, minimise the impact of climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, help to reduce waste and minimise the risk of flooding and pollution.
6. Encourage high quality, sustainable and safe design for places and spaces, in both the private and public realm.
7. Protect and enhance the Borough's natural environment, biodiversity value and its historic heritage whilst promoting its continued evolution and growth.
8. Promote development in locations which will be accessible by various modes of travel, including sustainable transport such as public transport, walking and cycling, optimise the use of existing infrastructure and minimise the need to travel.
9. Enhance the Borough's transport infrastructure by increasing permeability, maintaining existing links and removing barriers.

10. Contribute to social inclusion by recognising the various needs of different sections of the community, such as the needs of various age groups, ethnic groups, genders and disabled people.
11. Provide a continuous supply of previously developed land and greenfield sites in sustainable locations that will meet our strategic requirements for housing, employment, shopping, recreation, education and other services and minimise the loss of the countryside and agricultural land.
12. Develop an integrated and accessible open space, recreation, leisure, culture and services framework, to meet the needs of our residents and visitors.
13. Provide a framework to facilitate delivery of physical and social infrastructure to meet community and business and visitor needs.

**THEME 1: ACHIEVING A MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY****Linked Existing Community Strategy Themes and Aspirations**

- Improving the local economy
- Promoting inclusive communities
- Improving health and well-being
- Enhancing the environment
- Developing an effective transport system

**Linked Core Strategy Objectives**

- All objectives 1 – 13, see page 6

***These strategic options provide the starting point for the rest of the Core Strategy. Each strategic option will broadly set out the general issues for that topic and will relate to a set of options elsewhere in the document.***

A sustainable Darlington will be a place where people want to live, work and visit now and in the future. It would meet the different needs of existing and future residents and those who work in and visit the Borough, would be environmentally sustainable and promote developments that would reduce Darlington's carbon footprint for the future, promote the efficient use of land and would contribute to a high quality of life. A sustainable Darlington would have a strong economy, be well designed, safe and inclusive, well planned and offer equality of opportunity and good accessibility to and provision of services for all. These are also all key aims of the emerging Community Strategy for Darlington. The pattern of new development should try and provide all these different elements for the community.

Although there are many good spaces and places in the Borough there are some environments which could be improved. Development and environmental improvement schemes to support neighbourhood regeneration in the 11 priority wards initially are likely to be small-scale in the short to medium term, with larger projects coming forward where contributions for community benefits can be secured from developers or where funding becomes available to address a specific issue, such as crime and disorder or heritage regeneration. This will help everyone improve their quality of life.

**AIMS OF MAKING THE MOST OF DARLINGTON: THE PATTERN OF NEW DEVELOPMENT**

The main priorities for achieving a sustainable community in Darlington are to:

- Achieve economic growth in sustainable locations
- Provide a mix of type and tenure of homes for all
- Maintain and enhance Darlington town centre as a destination for high quality business, retail, leisure and tourism
- Protect and enhance the natural and built environment
- Generate enhancements to the priority wards to improve residents access to a range of facilities providing a higher quality of life
- Encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport
- Increase renewable energy generation and use



- Reduce vehicle use
- Move towards sustainable patterns of development and sustainable construction
- Locate developments where they best meets their function and needs
- Appropriate mixed use development to reduce the need to travel and to support the development of sustainable commercial public transport

## KEY FACTS

- The Borough has a population of about 100,000, which is slowly rising
- Darlington has an increasingly elderly and dependent local population
- Over 85% of the Borough's population live in the Darlington urban area
- The Borough centres around the town centre and urban area but there are a number of other settlements in the Borough that vary in size and function including three service villages at Heighington, Hurworth/Hurworth Place and Middleton St George/Middleton One Row and the main villages of Bishopton, High Coniscliffe, Piercebridge and Sadberge.
- The service sector provides over 81% of employment in the Borough.
- In the urban area there are pockets of deprivation in 11 priority wards (Bank Top, Central, Cockerton West, Cockerton East, Eastbourne, Haughton East, Lascelles, Lingfield, Northgate, North Road and Park East).
- 31% and 45% of people live in wards that rank in the 10% and 25% most deprived wards in the country (2005-06)
- Commuting in and out of Darlington is increasing, with more residents travelling to higher paid jobs elsewhere with others travelling in to lower paid jobs.
- The amount of people commuting into Darlington is increasing faster than those who commute outside the Borough
- Almost half of all carbon dioxide emissions (a greenhouse gas) in the United Kingdom are associated with domestic buildings and transport. The more greenhouse gases emitted the greater the impact on the greenhouse effect (the Earth's natural heating system) causing climate change and global warming.
- By 2080 in the North East of England there could be higher annual temperatures in summer and winter, with up to 20% more rain in winter and 30% less rain in summer.
- Darlington's carbon footprint is 11.12 tonnes per capita (Stockholm Environment Institute)
- Darlington relies on imported energy for most of its power consumption.

## ISSUE 1 Darlington's Sub Regional Role

The Borough occupies a key location at the 'gateway' to the Tees Valley City Region and the wider North East with its excellent national and international transport links. The town centre and the railway station is 3 miles east of the A1 (M) and 6 miles west of Durham Tees Valley Airport. The railway station has frequent direct trains to Newcastle and Leeds as well as further afield to London and Scotland. Darlington town centre is a sub regional centre providing employment, shops and services for large parts of North Yorkshire and south and west Durham and the western part of the Tees Valley, being the fifth largest shopping centre in North East England. The Borough's unique location and its market town environment has the potential to attract employment and commercial development such as shops and services, tourism and leisure and other investment that might otherwise not be attracted to the region.

The role Darlington has within the wider area is important to the way it is perceived by those wishing to move to the area to live and work and by those considering investing in the Borough.

## Which sub regional role should Darlington promote?

### OPTIONS

#### 1A Sub regional centre within the Tees Valley?

**Promote the town as a sub regional centre and a key part of the Tees Valley sub region, attracting development to meet the needs of Tees Valley.**

Would generate economic investment in certain key locations and attract people to live and work in the town. Could lead to increase in-commuting. May not provide enough opportunities to meet the needs or aspirations of existing residents and those who work in the Borough.

#### 1B Sub regional centre, with other investment to meet residents needs only?

**Deliver developments to meet the needs of the existing and future residents of the Borough only, promoting only the town centre and key employment areas as key locations for growth and investment serving the wider area.**

Would remain a sub regional centre but would focus economic growth in the Borough to meet the needs of the residents and those who work in the Borough.

#### 1C Key centre within the Tees Valley City Region?

**Strengthen links with North Yorkshire, County Durham as well as the Tees Valley.**

Darlington could enhance its role as part of the Tees Valley, and provide more opportunities to meet the needs and aspirations of residents and local employers. Would encourage more development of the town centre and main employment areas. Achievement of required levels of economic growth would be more challenging.

### SA Recommendations

**Option 1A** – positive economic impact but may have negative social (from potential lack of affordable housing for residents) and environmental impact (from increased commuting)

**Option 1B** – potential for limited positive economic impact

**Option 1C** – very positive economic impact, positive social impact but could see slight negative environmental impact (from increased commuting)

### Definitions

**Tees Valley** – Stockton, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland, Darlington and Hartlepool

**Tees Valley City Region** – Tees Valley with parts of County Durham and North Yorkshire including East Cleveland, Durham Coalfield

Communities area and the surrounding rural area including market towns of Barnard Castle and Guisborough

## ISSUE 2 Planning for Growth

There are different projections available that predict how the population will change in Darlington in the future. They range from a slight increase to an increase of around 10% by 2026. The different projections reflect various assumptions of social and economic change and can help us to develop options for housing, employment and service growth and for the overall settlement pattern in the Borough over the next 15 to 20 years. But

the Core Strategy must be robust enough to accommodate any unexpected changes that could occur with the different population projections.

## How much growth should there be in Darlington?

### OPTIONS

#### 2A Accommodate natural population change only?

Based on maintaining balance between the numbers of people moving in and out of the Borough. May lead to an ageing and falling population in the medium-long term, with possible negative social and economic impacts. Would involve modest levels of housing and employment growth, possibly from existing commitments.

#### 2B Accommodate increased population and economic growth?

Would involve continuing to promote development that would attract people to the area to live and work. Could lead to a better balanced and more self sustaining community in the medium-longer term, meeting the needs and aspirations of the local community.

#### 2C Constrain development growth?

Would limit the supply of land for development and could require higher levels of planning obligations from new development. Restricting further development could result in a static or falling population in the longer term. Stronger possibility that the economy could stagnate, resulting in younger people in particular leaving the Borough.

### SA Recommendations

**Option 2A** – potential for negative economic impact (ageing and decreasing population) and social impacts (pressure on social infrastructure)

**Option 2B** – positive social impact (promoting strong, inclusive communities) but balanced against potential negative social impact (pressure on social infrastructure)

**Option 2C** – potential negative economic impact (limited employment opportunities) and potential negative social impact (social inequalities)

## ISSUE 3 Accessibility For All

Accessibility for everyone, regardless of age, health, income or physical ability, is an important part of creating a sustainable community. Good access to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities, open space and the countryside and other services is essential to Darlington's prosperity and every resident's quality of life. New development needs to be located where it will be well served by a choice of means of transport, accessible to the whole community, not simply people with cars.

31.24% of households in Darlington do not have access to a car. Promoting accessibility by a wide range of transport promotes social inclusion and strengthens local communities, reduces congestion and the need for costly highway works, reduces pollution and contributes to a healthy lifestyle from walking and cycling.

The number of people choosing to make trips by walking and cycling has increased since the start of the Local Motion sustainable transport project; with walking increasing by 15% and cycling by 65% between 2004-2006. Although some segregated cycleways

have been created as part of the Cycling Demonstration Town project, many people are still put off from cycling by the speed and volume of traffic. But as the cycle network expands, cycling will become increasingly attractive.

Darlington has excellent main-line rail links to the rest of the country and is served by the sub-regional branch-lines to Middlesbrough/Saltburn and Bishop Auckland. Although rail travel has increased significantly over recent years the majority of public transport in the Borough is from buses. Bus services in Darlington provide a standard of service that compares well with many other parts of the UK. Usage has been declining for many years due to rising car ownership, perceived unreliability and high fare costs and a lack of investment in modern buses. In 2006-2007 patronage stabilised due to changes to concessionary travel and a modest rise in trips amongst participants of the Individualised Marketing programme. The Council is committed, through the Local Transport Plan, to improving the quality of key public transport corridors to help improve reliability. The main bus operator in Darlington aims to increase bus patronage by making changes to routes and improving the quality of vehicles, the reliability of services and the information it provides.

Many of the detailed, operational, opportunities for widening travel choices lie outside the scope of the Core Strategy, and are promoted through the Local Transport Plan and the Local Motion project and through close working with neighbouring authorities to promote a major scheme of Bus Network Improvements with bus operators across the Tees Valley. But by shaping the pattern of future development and influencing the location, scale, density, design and mix of land uses, the Core Strategy can help reduce the need for additional journeys, and reliance on the car, and make it safer and easier for residents and others to access services and facilities by more sustainable means – walking, cycling and public transport.

## How can we provide accessibility for all?

### OPTIONS

#### **3A Promote new development in the most sustainable locations, particularly the town centre and near public transport nodes?**

Should result in reduced reliance on the private car. Could see an increase in cycling and walking.

#### **3B Promote more mixed use development including live-work schemes?**

Has potential to reduce the need to commute and make other journeys. Could see more localised walking and cycling trips and provide more public transport provision bus services by combining origins and destinations in the same area.

#### **3C Require new developments to adopt travel plans and promote walking, cycling and public transport?**

Providing alternatives to the car from the beginning might result in long term shifts in travel choice. Could be see a small increase in cost to developers.

### SA Recommendations

**Option 3A** – positive social and environmental impacts

**Option 3B** – potential positive environmental impact

**Option 3C** – positive environmental impact but may have negative economic impact (slight cost to developers)

**Option 3D** – negative social (increase social inequalities) and environmental impacts (increasing use of car)

**Option 3E** – a combination of 3A, 3B and 3C would have a very positive economic, social and environmental impact

### Definitions

**Sustainable Transport** – Non car modes such as public transport, walking and cycling

**3D Leave to the 'transport market'?**

Reliance on the car would be likely to increase. Would see little increase in cycling, walking and the use of public transport.

**3E Combination?****ISSUE 4 Degraded Landscapes and Townscapes**

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy seeks to address the inequalities between the 11 priority wards and the rest of the Borough. Through its policies the Core Strategy seeks to address these aims by helping to reduce the inequalities that exist in the Borough.

Visual amenity is important in maintaining a positive image of the Borough and of the areas within it. As the 'gateway' to the Tees Valley, it takes on a wider significance. Although the Community Strategy Action Plan found that 77% of people were 'fairly or very satisfied' with the Borough as a place to live there are a few places in the Borough where the quality of the physical environment could be improved. Many of these are in the 11 priority wards and would benefit from improvements providing a higher quality of life for their residents and would promote social inclusion and civic pride. Environmental improvements through a complementary, physical element of community regeneration would help provide equal opportunities for residents. These include provision of better quality, affordable housing and improved access to a wide variety of services such as community centres, libraries, leisure centres, schools, sport and leisure facilities and health facilities would. These issues are looked at in more detail later in the Core Strategy.

**Which of Darlington's poor and degraded landscapes and townscapes should we improve?**

**OPTIONS**

**4A Improve the appearance of the main road, rail and river corridors, access to the town centre, the airport and key gateway sites?**

Would revive poor quality landscapes, would give added prominence to the 'gateway' economic regeneration sites identified in the Tees Valley Vision, and other prominent sites in the Borough. But other poor and degraded areas would not be improved.

**4B Prioritise environmental improvements to specific sites/areas in the 11 priority wards?**

Would improve poor quality landscapes in the priority wards but large sites beyond defined areas would be excluded. Could see improvements to the quality and conditions of 'at risk' areas of private housing.

**SA Recommendations**

**Option 4A** – potential for strong economic impact (attracting new investment) and positive environmental impact

**Option 4B** – potential for positive social impact (community safety and quality of housing) and positive environmental impact

**Option 4C** – potential for positive economic impact (redevelopment of brownfield sites), environmental benefits but should be balanced against potential loss of biodiversity on brownfield sites

**Option 4D** – positive economic, social and environmental benefits in these areas only balanced against negative social and environmental impacts elsewhere

**4C Identify contaminated, unused or underused brownfield sites and prioritise for alternative uses?**

Would allow the redevelopment or re-use of these sites for suitable alternative uses. May require public intervention with site clean-up costs to make viable schemes possible.

**4D Promote heritage based regeneration schemes to improve the built fabric on Northgate/High Northgate and approaches to Darlington railway station?**

Significant improvements to the built fabric in targeted areas of the 11 priority wards but would not be widespread across the Borough

**ISSUE 5 HIGH QUALITY, SAFE DESIGN**

Securing high quality, inclusive design for new developments and public spaces helps create an attractive Borough and can help create sustainable communities by enhancing Darlington's local distinctiveness, enhancing the Borough's heritage and character, greening the environment, securing environmental improvement, improving community safety and the quality of life, the health and well being of residents and users of all ages and abilities and promotes civic pride. Unique design on key sites could help to provide a positive image of Darlington to potential investors.

The Borough benefits from high quality, sustainable design in several places, although some areas suffer from poor environments and misuse. Protecting the elements of local character that we wish new design to respect, identifying locations where we want to promote bold, memorable designs that enhance the image of the town and integrating sustainable development are all important in raising the overall quality of the design of new development.

**How can we promote high quality, safe design in new developments?**

**OPTIONS**

**5A Promote community safety in all new developments?**

Help provide increased sense of local pride from local communities, providing a better quality of life. May make new developments less interesting and distinctive.

**SA Recommendations**

**Option 5A** – potential strong economic and social impact balanced against potential negative economic impact (loss of design quality can affect investment)

**Option 5B** – high positive economic, social and environmental benefits Borough wide

**Option 5C** – potential positive economic and environmental impact in specific areas balanced against potential negative social and environmental impacts elsewhere (lower design standards)

**Option 5D** - more widespread potential positive economic, social and environmental impacts but could have a negative environmental and social impact on smaller sites

**5B Promote high quality design Borough wide that reflects and enhances the local distinctiveness of the area?**

Could improve the standard of design across the Borough. New developments would fit well with the landscape and improve their local environment, providing links to nearby open spaces, the urban fringe and the countryside, enhancing biodiversity and promoting a healthy lifestyle. May need more detailed design assessments which could be time and labour intensive with potential for additional costs. May discourage smaller developers investing in the town.

**5C Promote high quality, distinctive design on key sites to reflect the local character of the area?**

Would give added prominence to the 'gateway' economic regeneration sites identified in the Tees Valley Vision, and other prominent sites in the Borough. Design elsewhere may not be to the same standards. Could provide links to nearby open spaces, the urban fringe and the countryside, enhancing biodiversity and promoting a healthy lifestyle

**5D Seek high quality, distinctive design for all major developments to reflect the local character of the area?**

Could see high quality designed developments spread more widely across the Borough, but may result in missed opportunities on smaller, prominent sites, providing links to nearby open spaces, the urban fringe and the countryside, enhancing biodiversity

**ISSUE 6 Climate Change: Reducing Darlington's Carbon Footprint**

Climate change and sustainable development are issues that everyone, including Darlington's population must address. In line with national government, the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy sets out to 'contribute to mitigating climate change and assisting adaptation to the impacts of climate change'. Darlington will seek to reduce its impact on natural resources, by saving energy and by generating more energy from renewable sources such as solar power and wind power. This is now being referred to as reducing our carbon footprint; the amount of carbon dioxide emissions from buildings, generation of power, cars and industry.

Noise and fumes from traffic impair the environment for residents and businesses close to busy routes as well as contributing to wider problems such as global warming and climate change. It is possible to reduce the impact of transport on the environment, especially with regard to its effect on air quality and its contribution to climate change by reducing car use, encouraging the use of cleaner public transport systems and zero emission travel such as walking and cycling.

## Renewable Energy Generation

The type of energy we use and generate can have consequences for the environment, such as climate change and low level pollution. The Government promotes the need to minimise energy use and pollution and to move towards using more electricity from renewable sources. The Government wants to reduce the UK's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 60% by 2050. To do this sustainable development should minimise demand, use energy more efficiently, increase the amount of energy from renewable sources and reduce the reliance on fossil fuels.

The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy seeks to achieve 10% of the region's electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2010 rising to 20% by 2020 and Darlington is helping with this. Darlington's Climate Change Strategy sets out ways the Borough can help meet this target encouraging the use of a range of technologies from wind turbines to smaller applications such as solar panels, photovoltaic cells and energy crops.

### Which renewable energy facilities should we encourage in Darlington?

#### OPTIONS

##### 6A Biomass?

Requires suitable sites in accessible location close to market. Should be located away from residential areas as have potential for noise and smell.

##### 6B Wind energy?

Wind capacity directs potential for turbines to northern part of Borough. Limited wind development on industrial sites may be possible. Potential for landscape impact. Restricted use close to airport.

##### 6C Combination?

#### SA Recommendations

**Option 6A** – potential positive local economic impact and environmental impact balanced against potential negative environmental impact (transporting crops, impact on residential amenity)

**Option 6B** – potential for positive environmental impact in suitable areas balanced against the potential negative environmental impacts (visual impact on landscape, impact on biodiversity)

**Option 6C** – both generate positive and negative impacts depending on location but a combination of both could generate greater positive impacts.

#### Definitions

**Biomass** – burning of plant or animal material to provide heat or energy

**Solar power** - energy from the sun such as photovoltaic cells or solar panels

**Wind energy** - energy collected from wind power, such as wind turbines, micro wind turbines

**Combined heat and power units** – efficient way of generating electricity and heat together

**Ground Source Heat** – ground warmth collected by circulating water through pipes embedded a little way under the ground under or adjacent to a building is abstracted and condensed.



## On Site Renewable Energy Generation

Another way to help meet the Government target is to encourage renewable energy development from major new developments. The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy requires a minimum of 10% on site energy supply to be from renewable sources, but more than this can be achieved in appropriate developments. Darlington has huge potential for on site renewable energy generation such as from photovoltaic cells, solar panels and combined heat and power units to help provide for sustainable development in the long term, ultimately contributing to the protection of the environment for future generations.

### Which on site renewable energy facilities should we encourage in major developments in Darlington?

#### OPTIONS

##### 6D Solar power?

Suitable for most development, especially buildings facing south.

##### 6E Wind energy?

Limited wind development on industrial sites may be possible. Wind capacity directs potential for turbines to northern part of Borough. Potential for landscape impact. Restricted use close to airport.

##### 6F Combined Heat and Power Units?

Highly efficient, suitable for most developments, particularly small scale. Can be used for district heating.

##### 6G Biomass?

Requires suitable sites in accessible locations close to market. Should be located away from residential areas as have potential for noise and smell.

##### 6H Ground Source Heat?

Needs to be under or adjacent to a building, needs large enough area for pipes to be able to heat the development. Could make good use of space underneath car parks.

##### 6I Combination?

The use of one or a combination of renewable energy facilities will make a major contribution to reducing local carbon emissions.

#### SA Recommendations

**Option 6D** – highly positive environmental and economic option (emission free and relatively cheap to install)

**Option 6E** - potential for positive environmental impact in suitable areas balanced against the potential negative environmental impacts (visual impact on landscape, impact on biodiversity)

**Option 6F** – potential for positive social and environmental impact balanced against possible negative economic impact (uncertain fuel prices)

**Option 6G** - potential for positive environmental impacts against the possible negative impacts to residential amenity

**Option 6H** – potential for economic benefits but mainly for large scale commercial developments. Have positive environmental impacts have little impact on landscape.

**Option 6I** - all generate positive and negative impacts depending on location but a combination could generate greater positive impacts.

## What standard of provision should Darlington seek from on site renewable energy facilities?

### OPTIONS

#### **6J 10%?**

Minimum requirement in the Regional Spatial Strategy

#### **6K 10% to 2010, then 20% to 2020?**

Matches the overall renewable energy target in the Regional Spatial Strategy

#### **6L 20% or above?**

Higher target achieved from an earlier date. Would reduce Darlington's carbon footprint quickly. May see additional costs incurred on developers

### SA Recommendations

**Option 6J** – long term fewer environmental gains but incurs lowest economic costs on developers

**Option 6K** – achieves positive environmental impacts over the short and long term balanced against gradual economic impact for developers

**Option 6L** – has highest positive environmental benefits over a shorter period of time but incurs greatest negative economic impact for developers

## Sustainable Design In New Development

The Government proposals may require all new homes to be carbon neutral by 2016.

The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy requires new developments to be located and designed to minimise energy use and to achieve high energy efficiency so that they achieve sustainable building standards:

- BREEAM and Eco Homes 'very good' or 'excellent' rating for non residential development and redevelopment of existing buildings, or
- Code for Sustainable Buildings rating 1-6 for new homes. In the North East the Code is supported by a 'Checklist for Developers' which aims to ensure new developments in the region incorporate as many sustainability features as possible.

The Regional Renewable Energy Strategy targets reduction in the use of the car, the use of energy efficiency in the design of new development, the reduction in energy consumption and the sustainable generation of electricity as ways to meet the region's electricity consumption targets.

Darlington's Climate Change Strategy emphasises the importance reductions in energy consumption, partly through the sustainable design of new development can have to reduce the impact of climate change. Most sustainable design techniques can be incorporated at little additional cost through the use of high insulating materials, positioning buildings on a site so the living areas face south, proximity to sustainable transport nodes, incorporating recycling facilities, using energy efficiency and water efficiency measures and the use of sustainable drainage systems.

**What level of sustainable building standards should Darlington seek from new development?**

**OPTIONS**

**6M BREEAM and Eco Homes very good – excellent rating or Code for Sustainable Homes 1-6 and reduce the use of the car?**

Minimum requirement in Regional Spatial Strategy, should reduce the impact of transport and include sustainable transport provision such as new or enhanced links to footpath and cycle network

**6N BREEAM and Eco Homes excellent rating or Code for Sustainable Homes 3-6 rating, promote sustainable transport and reduce the use of the car?**

Higher rating than in Regional Spatial Strategy and would mean developments have a higher sustainability performance, should reduce the impact of transport and include sustainable transport provision and include demand management measures, car clubs

**6O BREEAM and Eco Homes excellent rating or Code for Sustainable Homes 6 rating, promote sustainable transport and alternative carbon neutral transport?**

Higher rating than in Regional Spatial Strategy and would mean developments are carbon neutral, should include sustainable transport provision

**SA Recommendations**

All options would have a positive environmental and social impact (reduce inequalities in health and well being) but Option 6M would have the most positive and social environmental impact but may have more of an economic impact (the highest costs in development)

**ISSUE 7 Darlington Settlement Pattern: Where Should Development Go?**

The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy sets out a sequential approach to the development of land encouraging the use of brownfield land and buildings in sustainable locations. In line with this the Core Strategy should give a broad indication of where all types of development including housing, employment sites, shops and community facilities should go. A key part of this depends on assessing the type, amount and density of new development required and the capacity of the built up areas to accommodate new development, particularly through the use of brownfield land. It is

important that new development is located where it will be well served by shops, schools, public transport, health facilities and by high quality pedestrian and cycle links. New development can also help support and improve existing facilities.

Over the last twenty-five years, most new housing development has been on brownfield land in the Darlington urban area whereas new employment development has been concentrated on greenfield land on the edge of the urban area at Faverdale and Yarm Road. The Darlington Gateway Strategy 2003 sought to reverse this trend, promoting brownfield mixed use development at Central Park, to the east of the town centre and close to the main railway station. Recent work on taking the Gateway Strategy forward suggests taking this further by promoting further linked mixed-use development in and around the eastern and northern fringes of the town centre.

It is also important that there is close coordination with the providers of physical and social infrastructure, particularly water supply, drainage, education, health and highways to ensure that the needs of the future population are planned for.

#### Definitions

**Darlington Urban Area** – includes all the built up area of Darlington, is capable of large scale and strategic housing, employment and retail development, includes the town centre. Good public transport to and within the area.

**Service Villages** - Heighington, Hurworth/Hurworth Place, Middleton St George/Middleton One Row provide a modest range of shops, services and community facilities, such as schools, good public transport to these villages.

**Main Villages** - Bishopton, High Coniscliffe, Piercebridge, Sadberge – varies between village but each provides a more limited range of either shops, services and community facilities such as schools than service villages. Limited public transport.

**Countryside** - other villages/hamlets/clusters of houses with few or minimal facilities.

**Sustainable Locations** - in or close to the town centre, the district and local centres, employment areas and in the priority wards near sustainable transport links

**Appropriate Greenfield land** – well-located and/or redundant, where suitable previously developed land is not available and where there are sustainability and/or regeneration benefits

#### SA Recommendations

**Option 7A and Option 7B** – several highly positive economic, social and environmental impacts (development concentrated in the urban area) but Option 7B has a slight negative environmental impact (use of redundant greenfield land). **Option 7C** has a negative environmental impact (use of redundant greenfield land and new greenfield land). All of these options have a negative economic, social and environmental impact as do not promote new development in the villages. The most positive approach is **Option 7D** which has several highly positive economic, social and environmental impacts (development concentrated in the urban area and villages) but should be balanced against negative environmental impacts from use of new greenfield land.

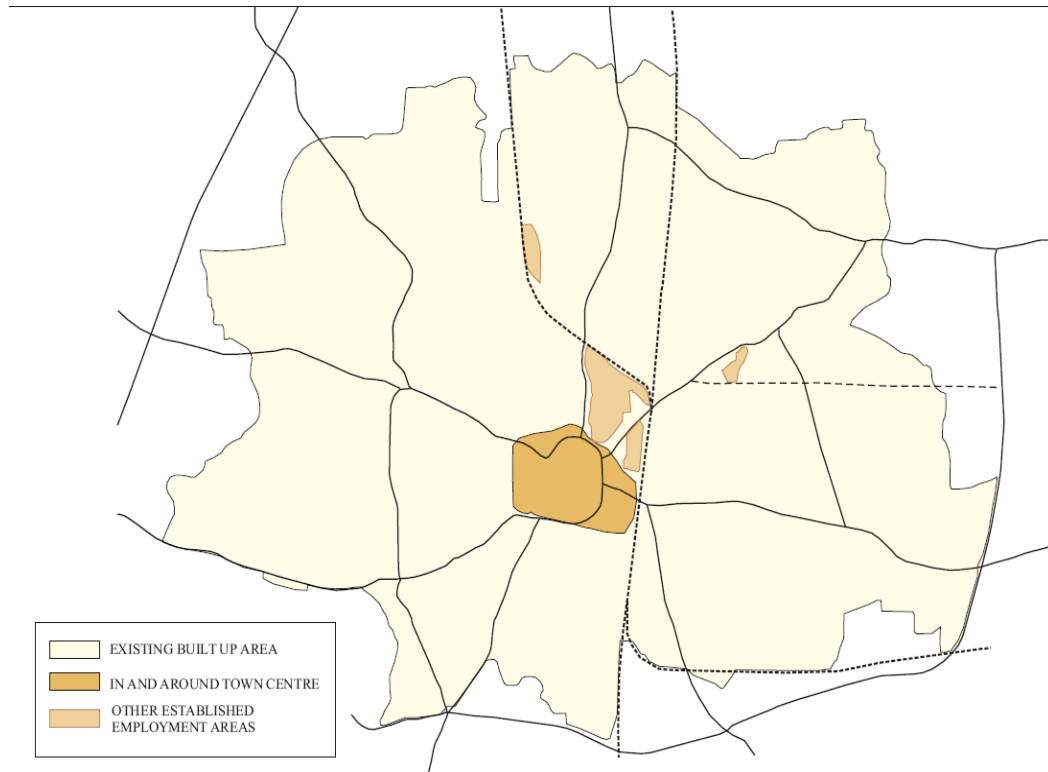
## Where should growth go?

### OPTIONS

#### 7A Sustainable brownfield locations within the Urban Area?

Development should be in sustainable locations in the urban area on brownfield land to achieve high development densities, particularly in and around the town centre. Mixed use schemes in some well established employment areas could also be developed. Greenfield land should only be developed where there are overriding sustainability and/or regeneration benefits. Elsewhere in the Borough development should be for local needs only.

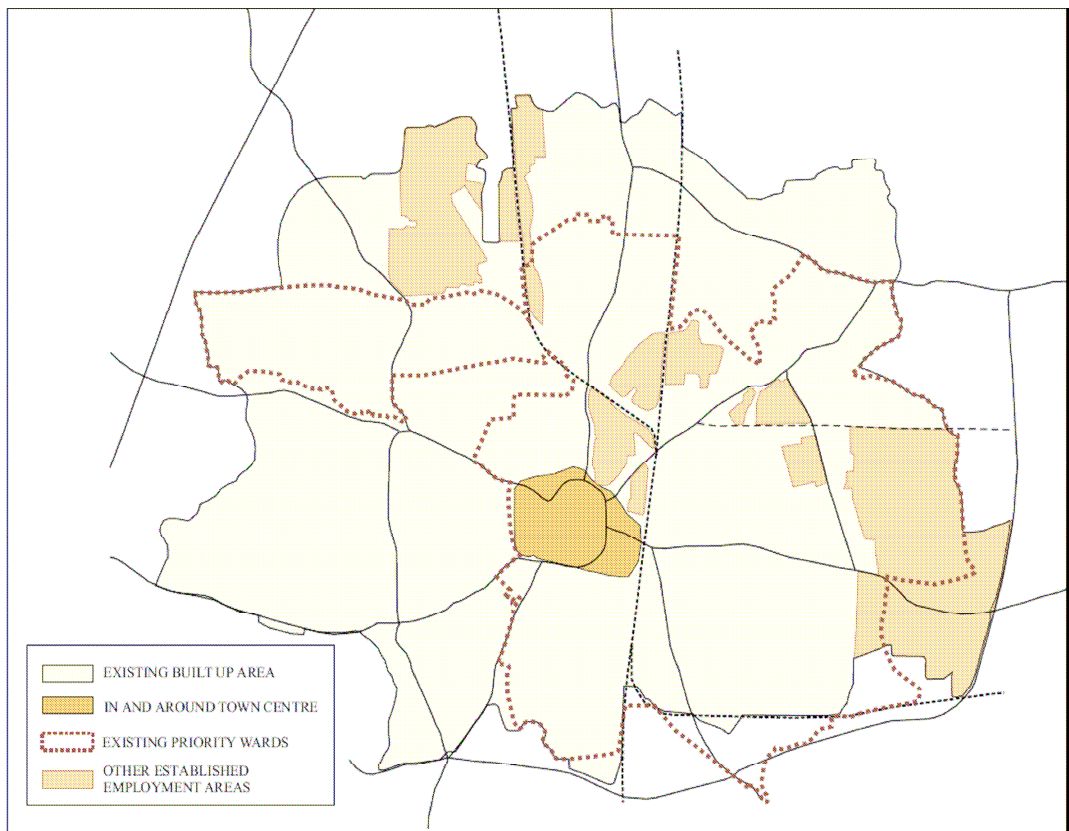
Would provide for limited growth which may meet local housing and employment needs and reduce inequalities. Could be the most environmentally sustainable option. Reuse of brownfield land could see incorporation of existing biodiversity features in new development. Some sites may need to incorporate flood mitigation or flood proofed site designs. Restricted development elsewhere could prevent the development of sustainable village communities. There could be a growing dependence on the urban area.



**7B Sustainable locations within the Urban Area?**

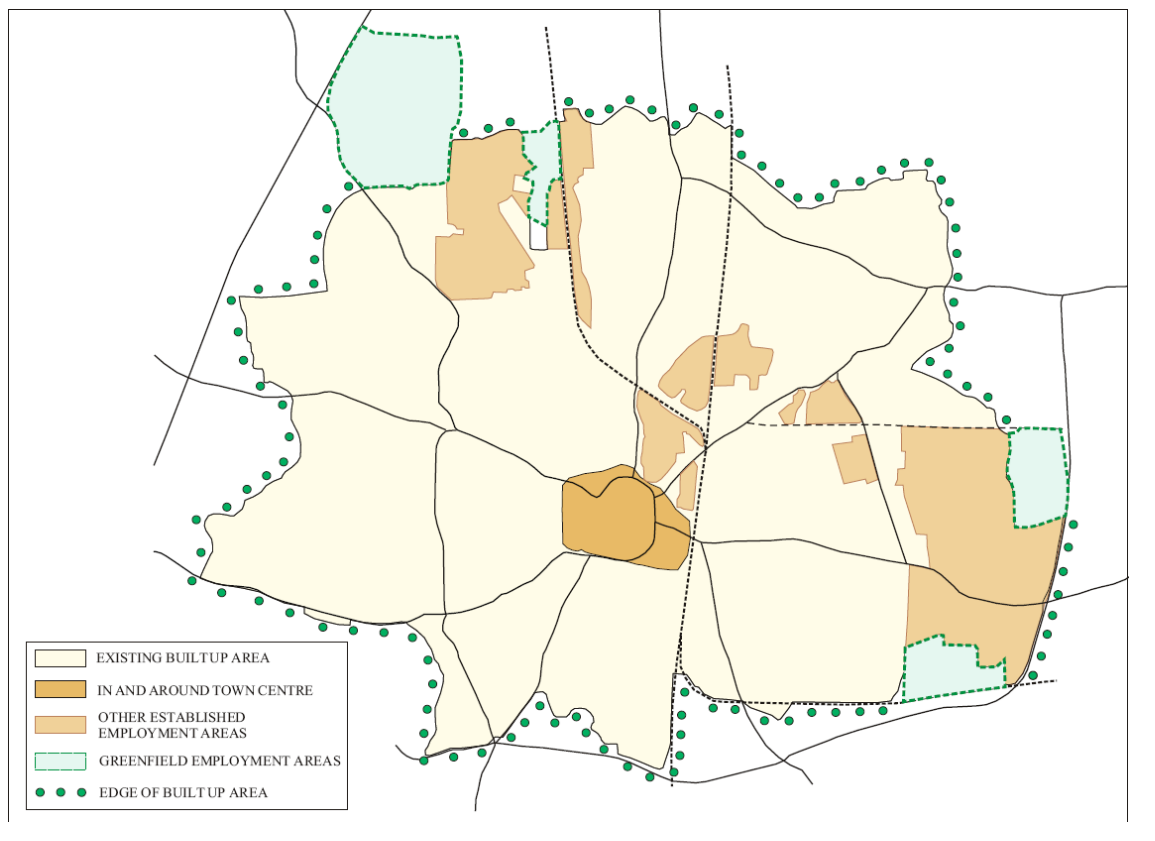
**Development in a wider range of sustainable locations in the Darlington urban area on brownfield land and some urban greenfield land of low amenity and biodiversity value in or close to the priority wards. Mixed use development would be encouraged in sustainable locations. Employment development should be in existing employment areas mainly in and around the town centre and well established employment areas. Elsewhere in the Borough development should be for local needs only.**

Would provide for modest growth and a robust local economy which may meet local housing and employment needs and reduce inequalities. Sees the development of some low amenity and biodiversity value urban greenfield land so could be less environmentally sustainable. Some sites may need to incorporate flood mitigation or flood proofed site designs. Could prevent the development of sustainable village communities. Could be a growing dependence on the urban area.



**7C Sustainable locations within and adjoining the Urban Area?**  
**Development in a wide range of sustainable locations in and/or adjoining the Darlington urban area on brownfield land and some urban and urban edge greenfield land of low amenity and biodiversity value. A greater amount of employment development would be in already allocated urban edge greenfield areas. Elsewhere in the Borough development should be for local needs only.**

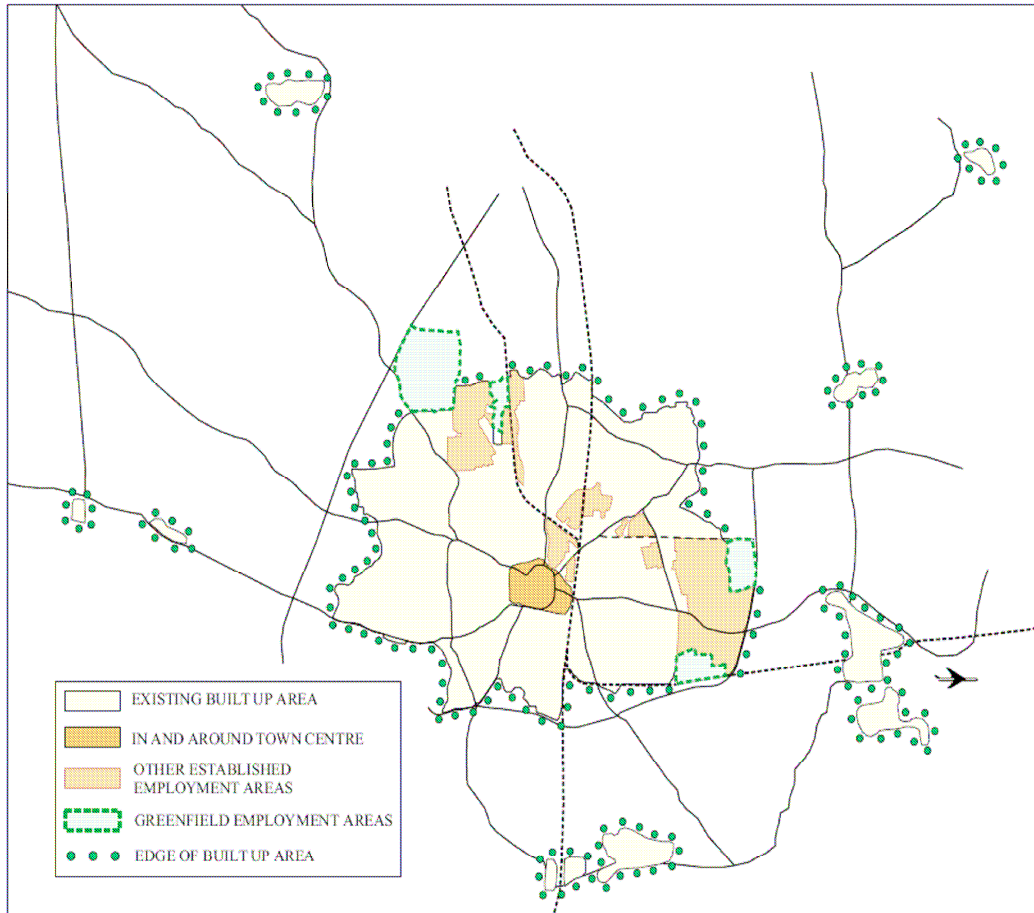
Would provide for a greater level of growth, a more robust local economy which may meet local housing and employment needs and reduce inequalities. Sees the development of more greenfield land perhaps on the edge of the urban area. Could see provision and enhancement of green infrastructure. Some sites may need to incorporate flood mitigation or flood proofed site designs. Could provide links to nearby open spaces, provide multifunctional spaces in the urban fringe and the countryside, enhancing biodiversity. Could prevent the development of sustainable village communities because of the limited opportunities for the development of sites in the development limits. Could be a growing dependence on the urban area.



### **7D Sustainable locations within and adjoining Darlington Urban Area and service and main villages?**

**Development in sustainable locations in and/or adjoining the Darlington urban area on previously developed land and greenfield land. Most new employment development would be in already allocated and some newly allocated urban edge greenfield areas. Some new development should be in or adjoining the identified villages. Elsewhere in the Borough development should be for local needs only.**

Would provide for high growth with the split of new development across the town and villages reflecting the settlement's size, existing level of facilities, role and its physical layout. Would encourage all settlements to grow or to strengthen their existing role reflecting the character of the settlements and their surroundings. Some sites may need to incorporate flood mitigation or flood proofed site designs. Could see a greater difference between the identified villages and other settlements in the countryside. Could see provision and enhancement of green infrastructure. Could provide links to nearby open spaces, provide multifunctional spaces in the urban fringe and the countryside, enhancing biodiversity.





**ISSUE 8 Paying for Development Infrastructure**

New development often places increased demands on local infrastructure and services and can change the local environment. The Council is sometimes able to secure planning obligations from developers to provide funding or to carry out works that provide community benefits linked to a new development. All planning obligations can either be used on a development site, off site but close to the development site or as a financial contribution for use in the area. The Council and infrastructure and service providers must work in partnership to ensure that these benefits are maximised in the interests of securing a fair and comprehensive approach to regenerating the Borough. The Government is considering changing the planning obligations system and introducing other ways of gaining funding from new development. Until these options are introduced the options for the Borough will be based on the current system.

**Which of the following benefits are most important for the Council to secure through planning obligations?**

*The obligations below are a list and are not set out in an order of importance.*

**OPTIONS****8A Affordable housing?**

Can be social rented and intermediate tenure housing. Helps meet the housing needs of the community and reduce social inequalities.

**8B Open space?**

Helps improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of open space needs of the community and reduce social inequalities. Helps maintain open space in the short term. Helps improve health.

**8C Children's play space?**

Helps improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of children's play space needs of the community and reduce social inequalities. Helps maintain open space in the short term. Helps improve health.

**8D Public transport improvements?**

Contributes to bus stops in accessible locations and improves the availability and frequency of local bus services.

**8E Convenient cycle and pedestrian links?**

Improves accessibility for the community, reduces need to use the motor car, reduces social inequalities, helps improve health.

**8F Travel plans?**

Helps provide more sustainable travel patterns.

**Definitions**

**Planning obligations** – legal agreements sometimes known as S106 agreements

**Tariff** – a set fee per house or per sqm for non residential developments

**Affordable housing** – Housing for those who cannot afford to buy houses on the open market.

**Education** – contributions for new buildings/improvements to schools or provides financial contribution to providing additional places for children, also libraries and nursery schools

**Community facilities** – community centres, village halls, waste recycling centres

**Public art** – sculptures and murals, festivals and events

**Public realm** – includes lighting, street furniture, CCTV

**Employment and Training** – developers fund employment and training schemes during construction and operation of new development

**Heritage Interpretation** – information boards, plaques, interactive displays, public access

**8G Education?**

Provides access to education for all the community, reducing social inequalities and helping to raise the standard of education provision in the Borough

**8H Other community facilities?**

Improves the amount, variety and quality of community buildings, reduces social inequalities across the Borough

**8I Sport and recreation facilities?**

Helps improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of indoor and outdoor formal open space needs of the community and reduce social inequalities. Helps maintain open space in the short term. Helps improve health.

**8J Protection and enhancement of biodiversity?**

Helps maintain and enhance biodiversity on a range of sites, including open space, nature reserves and informal recreation areas.

**8K Public art?**

Would give added prominence to sites.

**8L Public Realm?**

Helps improve the quality and safety of public areas

**8M Employment and Training?**

Helps provide a variety of local targeted recruitment and training for the local community at new employment sites

**8N Housing Improvement/Housing Renewal?**

Helps fund improvements to areas of identified older housing areas

**8O Regeneration?**

Helps fund mixed use development and/or improvements to specific areas of the Borough

**8P Heritage Interpretation?**

Helps encourage tourism and provides information on the local character and heritage of the Borough

**8Q Combination?**

**SA Recommendations**

All of the options score have high direct positive environmental and social impacts. Several (eg Option 8L) have direct economic benefits but indirectly have the potential to have economic benefits. But **Option 8Q**; a combination could secure greater positive impacts Borough wide applicable to the location of the site and need identified in that area.

## How should the Council secure planning obligations?

### OPTIONS

#### **8R Negotiate planning obligations on a site by site basis?**

Formalises current approach of individual negotiations with developers with commuted sums and agreements reached on a site specific basis. Creates a flexible, but ad-hoc system for developers. Lack of an overall strategy could hinder recovery of actual cost of infrastructure. Could impose an unfair burden on larger developments.

#### **8S Apply a standard tariff?**

Provides certainty for developers and ensures consistent contributions from all developments. Reflects the cumulative impact several smaller developments can have on infrastructure. Contributions are closer to actual cost of infrastructure. Easy to manage. May discourage smaller developments. Limits the opportunity for developers to provide contributions 'in kind'.

#### **8T Apply a standard tariff with 'in kind' contribution on or off site where appropriate?**

Provides the benefits of a tariff-based system but keeps the opportunity to secure direct on site improvements. Provides more flexibility to require additional contributions should the need arises for a specific development.

### SA Recommendations

All of the options secure positive economic benefits but **Option 8R** is the most positive option providing greater transparency and allowing financial contributions which will secure greater social and environmental benefits in the long term.

**THEME 2: HOUSING FOR ALL****Linked Existing Community Strategy Themes and Aspirations**

- Improving health and well-being
- Promoting inclusive communities
- Enhancing the environment
- Narrowing the inequalities gap
- Building community confidence

**Linked Core Strategy Objectives**

- Create an environment that encourages quality of life and promotes healthy, well educated and inclusive communities whilst supporting economic vitality for Darlington.
- Protect and enhance the separate identities and character of the town, distinctive parts within it and the villages, and promote development that is in keeping with the size, character and function of the location.
- Contribute to social inclusion by recognising the various needs of different sections of the community. such as the needs of various age groups. ethnic groups. genders

The right type and mix of good quality housing can make an important contribution to the creation of a sustainable community. The key issue for Darlington is how to provide a range of housing, in the right locations to meet the needs and support the aspirations of the people who wish to live in the Borough. There are planning permissions for a substantial amount of new homes at West Park and Central Park as well as several smaller sites, mostly in the urban area. The number of additional new homes in the Borough that the Local Development Framework should provide for will be guided by the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy and by a thorough assessment of the local housing market through a Strategic Housing Market Assessment and possibly through Housing Growth area funding. Improvements to small areas of former Council housing stock will help regenerate parts of the urban area, particularly the priority wards, to achieve decency standards.

**AIMS OF HOUSING FOR ALL**

- Provide a continuous supply of land for housing in sustainable locations that will meet strategic requirements.
- Provide a supply of housing that supports employment growth
- Ensure more people can afford to live in the Borough, in locations which could meet their needs
- Improve the quality of existing housing across all tenures
- Reduce the number of underused or out of date long term empty properties
- Increase the number of affordable houses provided, in particular through planning obligations.

**KEY FACTS**

- The number of households is growing at a faster rate than the population and is expected to continue to 2026 and beyond.
- Darlington has a strong housing market and attracts more households than it loses.
- House prices have risen in recent years, with good demand in all tenures.
- Darlington needs 1325 new affordable houses by 2010

- At April 2007 there were planning permissions for over 2700 homes, which would be enough housing to meet the Council’s housing targets until 2013, based on recent completion rates. But only about 5% of these will be affordable, although about 70% will be on previously developed land.

### ISSUE 9 Sustainable Housing Provision

The amount of housing provided will have an impact on the amount of land needed and the locations of new housing in the Borough. Household growth projections in Darlington for the next 15-20 years vary from an increase from 43,200 in 2003 to 49,600 (about 375 a year) in 2021\* to a more substantial increase from 43,000 in 2004 to 51,000 in 2021 and 53,000 in 2026 (about 450 a year)\*\*.

The Regional Spatial Strategy Panel Report proposes

- 480 additional homes a year 2004- 2011
- 325 additional homes a year 2011-2016
- 75 additional homes a year 2016-2021
- 310 additional homes a year 2021-2026\*\*\*

Sources	
*Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit	2003-based projections
**Government	2004-based projections
***Government's	Proposed Changes 2007 average 2004-2021

The Council is seeking increases to these figures so the Core Strategy must be flexible enough to accommodate a range of figures based on the numbers in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy, and the findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and possibly the Housing Growth Area bid.

### How much new housing should there be in Darlington?

#### OPTIONS

##### 9A Meeting the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy target only?\*

- **Approximately 500 net homes 2021-2021**

May not meet affordable housing targets, leaving areas of unmet needs, higher prices and movement to locations outside the Borough. May not meet employment growth, leading to more in-commuting.

##### 9B Meeting the wider housing market?

- **Approximately 500 net homes during 2011-2016**
- **Approximately 1000 net homes during 2016-2021**
- **Approximately 1000 net homes during 2021-2026**

Could achieve more mixed communities and reduce inequalities across the Borough but could still limit economic and social development in the medium to long term.

##### 9C Market-led housing growth?\*

- **Approximately 1000 net homes during 2011-2016**
- **Approximately 2000 net homes during 2016-2021**
- **Approximately 2000 net homes during 2021-2026**

Continues recent trends. Possible increase in out-commuting, if employment growth not maintained. May not reduce inequalities across the Borough.

*All figures are additional to 5000 completions 2004-2011 and planning permissions in 2011*

#### SA Recommendations

**Option 9A** – could see negative economic and social impacts (lack of affordable housing) in the long term

**Option 9B** – the most positive social and environmental option but needs to be balanced against the potential negative economic and social impacts (restrict growth in medium term)

**Option 9C** –potential for positive economic and social impact but balanced against negative environmental impact (using greenfield land and increase in commuting)

#### Definitions

**Local needs housing** - affordable housing, housing for young people, the elderly, ethnic minorities and accommodation for Gypsies and travellers  
Strategic Housing Market Assessment –  
Housing Growth Area -

#### Sources

\*Based on Regional Spatial Strategy Examination in Public Panel report figures

\*\*Based on indicative DCLG 2004-based household projections

## ISSUE 10 Providing Housing in the Right Place

The Core Strategy: Preferred Options 2005 anticipated that new housing to 2021 could be met from existing planning permissions and windfall sites. But new Government guidance in PPS3 and recent household projections suggest that a different approach may be necessary and that the Council may have to allocate land for housing after 2016 (windfall sites should not be included in housing targets until after 2021). The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy sets a target of 70% of new housing on previously developed land in the Tees Valley and in the North East by 2008, and 75% in the North East by 2016.

In the last ten years most new housing has been on former employment sites, and greenfield sites to the north and north-west of the urban area. It is likely that the main opportunities for additional new housing within the built-up area is likely to be as part of mixed use developments in the eastern and northern fringes of the town centre and some of the longer established employment areas, and on other surplus, unused or underused land of low amenity or biodiversity value.

### Where should new housing be located?

#### OPTIONS

##### 10A Limited growth in the Urban Area?

**Using unidentified windfall sites on previously developed land, including intensification of existing housing and change from other uses to achieve high housing densities.**

Limits opportunities for mix of type and tenure of housing, may not reduce inequalities across the Borough. May require housing allocations starting 2016 - 2021. Most likely to achieve emerging Regional Spatial Strategy previously developed land targets.

##### 10B Moderate growth across the Borough?

**Using existing planning permissions, unidentified windfall sites on previously developed land, some greenfield land in and at the edge of the urban area and some villages. Housing development in some mixed use areas linked to employment provision.**

Possible opportunities for broadening and improving the distribution of housing types, including affordable housing at the edge of villages, could achieve mixed communities and reduce inequalities across the Borough. May require housing allocations starting 2011 - 2016.

##### 10C Substantial growth across the Borough?

**Using existing planning permissions, unidentified windfall sites on previously developed land, a mix of small and larger greenfield sites in and at the edge of the urban area and some villages.**

Could broaden and improve affordable housing provision including in villages, reducing inequalities across the Borough. Raises wider environmental and social issues. May require housing allocations starting 2011 - 2016. Least likely to achieve emerging Regional Spatial Strategy previously developed land and housing density targets.

#### SA Recommendations

**Option 10A** – has high environmental impacts (use brownfield land) but could have negative social impacts (may not provide mixed communities)

**Option 10B** – has potential for most positive environmental and social benefits which should be balanced with the negative environmental impact of using a small amount of greenfield land

**Option 10C** – high social benefits (social inclusion) but has greatest environmental impacts (use of most greenfield land)

#### Definitions

**High housing densities** - above 30-50 dwellings per hectare set out in PPS3 in and around the town centre, district and local centres, and along key transport routes, top end of the 30-50 dwellings per hectare range elsewhere

**ISSUE 11 Housing Needs, Mix and Affordability**

It is important that the type, affordability and space provided by new homes, meets the needs of households over a lifetime and also promotes mixed communities, reducing the inequalities that may exist across different parts of the Borough. 265 affordable homes are needed each year to 2010 to help meet the lack of affordable housing in the Borough, particularly the identified acute need in the rural area, Darlington South West and Darlington North and the high to moderate need in the rest of the urban area. A variety of different types and tenures of affordable housing is needed across the Borough to meet identified needs. But existing planning permissions may only deliver a small proportion of the identified need by 2010. Affordable housing as well as other types of specialist housing can be provided at relatively little extra cost to the developer but may help achieve a sustainable community.

**What types of specialist housing should be provided?****OPTIONS****11A Affordable housing?**

**Include affordable housing from all housing sites, with no lower size threshold, with off site provision from smaller sites. Make provision for rural exceptions housing sites in and adjacent to villages.**

Strengthens current policy and creates a level playing field, providing more affordable housing to help meet needs. Help create mixed communities and reduce inequalities across the Borough. Help provide affordable housing in rural areas to meet local needs.

**11B Lifetime homes?**

**Require lifetime homes as a proportion of all new housing developments, relating to the scale, nature and location of the development.**

Could provide a better mix and type of housing in the Borough and will meet the needs of the growing elderly population.

**11C Live-Work housing?**

**Require live-work housing as part of major housing developments, mixed use developments and former employment sites.**

Could provide a better mix and type of housing in the Borough and may reduce the need for residents to travel to work outside the Borough.

**11D Combination?****SA Recommendations**

All options have strong positive social impacts promoting inclusive, mixed communities. Each option may generate a slight negative economic impact incurring additional costs for developers. **Option 11D** is the most suitable option as it would reflect the needs and aspirations of the part of the Borough where the site is located.

**Definitions**

**Affordable Housing** – housing for those who cannot afford to buy houses on the open market, includes social rented and intermediate affordable housing

**Lifetime Homes** – housing than is capable or can be adapted to meet the changing needs of its residents over a lifetime

**Live-work housing** – development that is designed for two uses; combining separate areas for housing and employment space

**ISSUE 12 Improving Older Housing**

Physical housing conditions in Darlington are generally better than the national average but there are some small areas of older, private, mainly rented housing that are in a poor condition, and some larger areas where the condition of the environment may be in decline. Some small areas of mainly rented Council housing, mainly in the priority wards, would benefit from selective improvement, demolition and replacement with new housing to provide for a higher standard of living. This would help provide regeneration by providing a broader mix of housing type and tenure and improving the living environment. Although the Council will continue to try and secure funding, in the short term Darlington is expected to receive little public sector funding for housing renewal or improvement so contributions from planning obligations and other funding are the main ways housing renewal or improvement could be achieved.

**How should improvements for older housing be secured?****OPTIONS****12A Through market intervention?**

**Attempt to boost market by limiting new planning permissions to reduce choice of alternative accommodation.**

Could see adverse effects from a distortion of the housing market. May not be effective in the short to medium term due to the large number of existing planning permissions.

**12B Through planning obligations?**

**Require financial contributions from new housing developments to be used towards improvements to older housing elsewhere in the Borough.**

Would help provide mixed communities over a wider area. Could see wider environmental improvements which could maintain the balance of existing communities.

**12C Cross subsidy provision?**

**Arms length developer-led or development company cross-subsidised package.**

Limited developer interest to date in Darlington.

**12D Combination?****SA Recommendations**

**Option 12A** – limiting planning permissions has the potential to generate negative economic, social and environmental impacts (reduces choice of housing available, condition of existing would remain, lack of investment in area)

**Option 12B** – would have a positive economic, social and environmental impact in areas where development is occurring but is restricted through location of development

**Option 12C** - would have a positive economic, social and environmental impact in areas where developers would otherwise be unlikely to develop

**Option 12D** – to maximise the benefits the most suitable option would be a combination of the two most positive funding sources Option 12B and Option 12C



**ISSUE 13 Providing for Gypsy and Traveller Needs**

Accommodation for gypsies and travellers compares favourably to similar areas, although there is not enough evidence to determine if it meets needs. Government Guidance seeks criteria to guide the allocation of Gypsy and Traveller sites to meet unexpected demand. A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment is ongoing and the results of this will identify if and where there is any shortfall in provision.

**Where should Gypsies and Travellers needs be accommodated?****OPTIONS****13A On existing Council sites and private sites only?**

**Continue to use sites at Honeypot Lane and Neasham Road and use a criteria-based approach to assess planning applications for other sites.**

Would update existing Local Plan policy but may not meet current local needs.

**13B On new or extended Council and private sites?**

**Continue to use sites at Honeypot Lane and Neasham Road but use criteria based approach to identify new sites or extend existing sites if additional needs are identified.**

Would increase the provision of gypsy and traveller sites in the Borough. May help meet unmet needs.

**13C On transit sites?**

**Continue to use sites at Honeypot Lane and Neasham Road but provide additional sites or extend existing sites using a criteria based approach to accommodate transient gypsies/travellers for short periods if the need is identified.**

This could reduce unauthorised transit camps.

**13D Combination?****SA Recommendations**

**Option 13A** – has a positive environmental and social impact (located in the urban area).

**Option 13B** and **Option 13C** both proposes extending or providing additional sites which has the potential to have negative environmental impacts but could generate positive social and economic impacts (health, well being). But the outcome of this depends on the findings of the Gypsy and Traveller Review. If a shortfall in provision is identified then **Option 13B** would be the most environmentally and social beneficial option.

**THEME 3: CREATING AND SHARING PROSPERITY****Linked Existing Community Strategy Themes and Aspirations**

- An Area Creating and Sharing Prosperity
- Improving the Local Economy
- Promoting Inclusive Communities

**Linked Core Strategy Objectives**

- Create an environment that encourages quality of life and promotes healthy, well educated and inclusive communities whilst supporting economic vitality for Darlington.
- Ensure continued and sustainable levels of economic growth that provides a high quality, variety of employment for residents of Darlington and the surrounding area, supports existing businesses and encourages new businesses to set up in Darlington.
- Protect and enhance the separate identities and character of the town, distinctive parts within it and the villages, and promote development that is in keeping with the size, character and function of the location.
- Contribute to social inclusion by recognising the various needs of different sections of the community, such as the needs of various age groups, ethnic groups, genders and disabled people.
- Provide a continuous supply of previously developed land and greenfield sites in sustainable locations that will meet our strategic requirements for housing, employment, shopping, recreation, education and other services and minimise the loss of the countryside and agricultural land.

The Borough's economy has undergone a transformation with employment in traditional industries (manufacturing) declining but specialised engineering remains a key strength providing high value jobs with good growth prospects. Growth has been seen in the newer service sector (business and professional services). Service sector employment dominates in the Borough and economic growth needs to continue to be developed if the Borough is to widen its economic base and provide a range of job opportunities across all sectors for its residents. It is also important that growth is sustainable and can be maintained in the longer term. Recent work has identified potential in health, business and professional services, logistics, financial services, construction and engineering/manufacturing, and also in the retail, tourism/leisure, creative industries, chemicals and renewable energy and the development of Darlington as a 'food town'.

**AIMS OF CREATING AND SHARING PROSPERITY**

- To provide and maintain a wide portfolio of employment sites across the Borough
- Give priority to development, particularly mixed use development on previously developed land in sustainable locations
- Provide for economic growth by focussing on high value engineering and knowledge business services and to encourage the broadening of the Borough's economic base, providing a range of job opportunities

**KEY FACTS**

- The town centre is the largest single location for employment in the Borough (7,000 people in 2003).
- Other key concentrations of employment in the urban area are at Faverdale and Yarm Road employment areas on the edge of the urban area with a smaller amount at older developments in the inner areas of the town.
- Outside the urban area the only substantial employment location is at Durham Tees Valley Airport.
- Employment in the Borough grew at a rate of 800 jobs per year 1999-2004.
- Unemployment is 2.7%, the lowest in the Tees Valley and is expected to decrease steadily over the next 5 years but there remain significant variations in unemployment levels within the Borough.
- 81.7% of employment is in the service sector. Employment in manufacturing, construction and primary industries is significant.
- Wages of residents are higher than the national average
- The majority of workers in the service sector are women many who have part time, low paid work.

**ISSUE 14 SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT PROVISION**

The Local Development Framework needs to ensure a supply of land in sustainable locations to provide for long term sustainable employment growth. Forecasts of future employment growth range from 330 jobs a year to 2015 followed by a rapid decline to continued growth at recent rates to 2020.

The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy sets out the provision of up to 205 ha of general employment land provision plus 30 ha for a strategic regeneration site at Central Park, giving a total supply of 235ha in Darlington. Land should also be provided at Durham Tees Valley Airport for airport related development.

Although the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy examination panel recommends the deletion of the allocated reserve site for employment at Faverdale (120 hectares), the Secretary of State has asked for more evidence on local circumstances before making a decision. The Council supports the use of this site for major logistics development.

**How much employment growth should we plan for in Darlington?****OPTIONS****14A Modest employment growth to 2015 followed by reduced growth?****Provide an additional 330 jobs per year to 2015, significant reduction after 2015**

Could see promotion of identified growth sectors such as health, logistics, business and financial services, engineering/civil engineering as well as other areas such as creative industries/digital media, retail, tourism/leisure.

**14B Maintain modest employment growth?****Provide an additional 330 jobs per year**

Could see promotion of identified growth sectors and expansion into employment areas such as creative industries/digital media, retail, tourism/leisure. Most likely to be sustained.

**SA Recommendations**

**Option 14A** – has the potential to have a negative economic impact

**Option 14B** – could see positive economic impact

**Option 14C** – could see positive economic impact but may not be sustained. Dependent on location sees movement across the town which could have a negative impact on the environment

**14C Maintain recent high employment growth?**

**Provide for continued recent rates of employment growth at approximately 800 new jobs per year**

Promote development opportunities as they arise, as well as targeting identified growth sectors. Although recent rates of growth may be difficult to maintain this would be the most flexible option.

**ISSUE 15 DISTRIBUTION OF NEW EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT**

Providing the right kind of employment sites in good locations at a suitable time is important to achieving a sustainable community and should make the most of the Borough's excellent national and international transport links to the Tees Valley, the North East and beyond. The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy promotes the regeneration and upgrading of existing employment land before allocating new greenfield land.

Historically the development of employment land has fluctuated dramatically, often being related to the amount of public sector financial assistance available. Over recent years Darlington has attracted a number of high profile schemes on greenfield land at the edge of the urban area; with offices at Morton Palms and distribution and industrial development at Faverdale East. Most current employment allocations in Darlington need infrastructure provision before they are ready for development. This raises the possibility of substantial variations in the future take up of employment land.

A review of the existing employment areas and allocations suggests promoting employment areas in the town centre for office and other town centre uses, at Faverdale for larger industrial uses and logistics, at Yarm Road and Lingfield Point for business, industrial and warehousing and some business park/prestige development and at Durham Tees Valley Airport for airport related uses. It identifies potential for continued employment development as part of mixed use developments in the eastern and northern fringes of the town centre and some of the longer established employment areas. In general existing employment areas elsewhere would remain unchanged.

**How should employment land supply be distributed?**

**OPTIONS**

**15A Restricted employment land supply across the Borough?**

- **Phased supply of approximately 45 ha of employment land in the town centre, east and north of the town centre, near the railway station and in accessible locations in the priority wards.**

- **Major office development, particularly for the visiting public, in the town centre.**
- **Mixed use development in the east and north of the town centre**
- **High quality and strategic business/industrial development and development requiring good external freight transport links within existing employment areas to the north west or south east of the town.**
- **Airport related uses at the airport.**
- **Other existing employment areas to provide for small scale business and industrial development.**
- **Countryside-based business and industry in suitable locations adjacent to the main or service villages**

Provides for economic growth and investment in highly accessible sustainable locations on previously developed land or redundant greenfield land and within priority wards. Difficulty in bringing forward suitable serviced land when needed. May not provide opportunities for Darlington to attract some types of jobs, for example in manufacturing and logistics, and could potentially undermine the possibility of attracting large strategic investment on the edge of the town.

### **15B Managed employment land supply across the Borough?**

**Phased release of existing allocations with up to 200 hectares to be brought forward by 2021 in the town centre, east and north of the town centre, in accessible locations in the priority wards and**

- **elsewhere to support development which may not be attracted to the area.**
- **High quality and strategic prestige business/industrial development adjacent to the existing employment areas to the north-west and south-east of the town centre adjacent to main transport routes.**
- **Development requiring good external freight transport links should be located to the north-west and south-east of the town, close to and with the potential for access to the trunk road and railway networks. Large-scale logistics development should be in the north-west of the town to reduce the need for cross-town movements.**

#### **SA Recommendations**

**Option 15A** – could have a negative economic impact (restricts growth) but would see the generation of several environmental impacts (use of brownfield land, mixed use development)

**Option 15B** – could have a positive economic, social and environmental impact, promoting economic growth in sustainable locations and priority wards (promotes social inclusion)

**Option 15C** – could promote positive economic impact in the short-medium term but may see negative economic impact in the long term as available sites will be reduced may see negative environmental impact (use and access to greenfield land), may see negative social impacts (jobs may not meet skills of local labour force)

- **Mixed use development in the east and north of the town centre.**
- **Other existing employment areas in the Urban Area to provide for small scale business and industrial development,**
- **Airport related uses at the airport.**
- **Countryside-based business and industry in suitable locations adjacent to the main or service villages**

Provides for economic growth and investment and for employment growth in sustainable locations and within priority wards. Continues provision for major inward investment and uses that would not be suitable in closer proximity to residential areas, Difficulty in bringing forward suitable serviced land when needed. Potential for negative environmental impacts as some locations may require access by car.

#### **15C Market led employment land supply?**

- **Unrestricted supply of existing allocations of more than 350 hectares without phasing for identified uses.**
- **Airport related uses at the airport.**
- **Countryside-based business and industry in suitable locations adjacent to the main or service villages**

Provides for economic growth and investment, although difficulty in prioritising and securing infrastructure improvements. Easiest and/or most attractive sites likely to be developed first. Potentially some negative environmental impacts with development at locations heavily reliant on the private car and the national road network.

### **ISSUE 16 LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT LAND AND RELOCATION OF BUSINESSES**

Employment land is coming under increasing pressure for redevelopment for other uses, particularly housing. This has mainly been isolated sites but recently has included larger established employment areas. It is essential to achieve a balance between maintaining allocations of good quality marketable sites and accommodating new uses. Some older employment sites in the inner areas of the town do not meet the needs of modern business whilst newer sites generally provide more space and the potential for better access to major roads.

## How can the Borough's existing supply of employment land be best used?

### OPTIONS

#### 16A Loss and relocation of employment land and businesses?

Only feasible if enough alternative provision at the edge of the urban area. Continue to see the loss of employment opportunities from the inner areas of the town but inward investment and job creation on the edge of urban area greenfield sites would remain.

#### 16B Redevelopment with new employment provision?

Redevelopment of suitable sites with an employment element would not be feasible for every site but could enhance existing employment sites and improve links between home and work within the town.

#### 16C Safeguard employment land?

Would keep the existing mix of employment provision but the safeguarding of employment land may push other land uses to less sustainable locations.

#### 16D Combination?

### SA Recommendations

**Option 16A** – could have negative environmental impacts (use of greenfield land, accessibility concerns) and may have a negative economic impact (impact on town centre)

**Option 16B** – is the most environmentally sustainable option, linking home and work, would have a positive economic impact (variety of sites available)

**Option 16C** – may have a negative economic impact (sites may not meet need)

## ISSUE 17 DARLINGTON'S TOURISM OFFER

Tourism brings benefits that contribute to the economic and social well being of local communities and to individuals. It can also be the focus of regeneration and urban and rural areas provide a catalyst for growth in an area, stabilising out migration whilst raising the profile and promoting the distinctiveness of the Borough. This growth will also attract leisure and tourism developers keen to exploit the subsequent increase in business tourism market via travel and visits to business for professional, recreational and domestic purposes.

Tourism can provide opportunities for retraining resident workforce and help to diversify over specialised economies. Tourism can also support and enhance local services, secure retention or enable upgrades to public services, public transport etc, deliver and support a broader and more vibrant community through cultural, sporting or arts events. All of which can ensure that the quality of the environment is constantly improved to the benefit of residents and visitors.

In addition whilst tourism relies on the natural and built environment it can also play a key role in helping to sustain and improve it, brings derelict buildings back into use, maintain and conserve assets through income generation via visitors and improve the overall visitor experience.

## How Should We Promote Tourism in Darlington?

### OPTIONS

#### 17A Gateway to the North East?

**Position Darlington as a key tourist destination and partner in the region. Identify and attract suitable developments, such as convention centre and hotels.**

Would raise the profile of Darlington as the Gateway to the Region. Could generate economic investment in certain key locations attracting people to visit the town for business, professional and domestic purposes and holidays or recreation. Lack of critical mass within the local area and sub region may make this unachievable. If successful could meet the aspirations of the regional and sub regional tourism strategies. Could enhance recreation, leisure and cultural needs of the residents and visitors.

#### 17B Gateway to the Tees Valley?

**Encourage links with Tees Valley, County Durham and North Yorkshire with Darlington as the sub regional tourism centre. Identify future development opportunities such as convention centre and hotels.**

Could attract people to visit the town for business, professional and domestic purposes. Meets current aspirations for future provision. Could create economic wealth and benefits for the residents.

#### 17C Position Darlington as a 'rural city'?

**Identify developments that will enhance the current provision creating a 'rural city' destination.**

Would only be successful if the Darlington tourism offer is strong enough to attract key developers and a volume of visitors. Successful strategy could see positive economic impacts and benefits to residents.

### SA Recommendations

All options would see positive economic impacts to a greater or lesser extent and would also see different degrees of positive social impacts from employment growth and new leisure and cultural facilities. Environmental impacts would vary as although **Options 17A and 17B** could see environmental enhancements through new development schemes there could also be a growth in car journeys into and out of the Borough. **Option 17C** would be the most environmentally sustainable as it would see the less growth and fewer new car journeys. On balance **Option 17B** would be the most positive option.

## ISSUE 18 EMPLOYMENT IN THE VILLAGES AND COUNTRYSIDE

Most of the Borough is attractive, unspoilt countryside with clear limits between the built up areas and the countryside. It is important that the character of countryside is protected but it is also vital that the countryside remains viable and prosperous for those who live and work there. There are few employment sites remaining outside the urban area and Durham Tees Valley Airport.



## How should we promote a viable countryside?

### OPTIONS

#### 18A Employment for local needs?

New employment development only for identified local needs, may give little support for farm diversification but protects the countryside from possible development.

#### 18B Farm diversification and local needs?

Farm diversification and new employment development only for identified local needs which may help the continued prosperity of the farming community but protects villages from new development. Could include variations in agricultural methods to promote local produce or materials. Economic and social objectives could sometimes outweigh the environmental objectives; which would ensure ongoing viability but this could marginally reduce protection in some areas.

#### 18C Employment development throughout the countryside?

Sustainable employment development in and limited development adjacent to, existing rural settlements which also encourages farm diversification. Could include variations in agricultural methods to promote local produce or materials.

#### 18D More protection of the best and most versatile farmland?

Gives additional protection for the Grade 2 and 3A 'best and versatile' agricultural land, but could reduce the protection of the wider countryside depending on land management practice used.

#### 18E Combination?

### SA Recommendations

**Option 17A** - least positive economic option (restricts expansion of rural areas, little support for farm diversification) but balanced against the mixed environmental impacts (protects the countryside from development) and the negative social impact (reliance on urban area).

**Option 17B** - slightly better economic option (local employment needs and farm diversification) and could have a negative social and environmental impact (reliance on the urban area)

**Option 17C** - most economically sustainable option (promotes sustainable diversification of the farming community and provides other economic development within and adjacent to rural areas). Will have a positive social impact (reduce social exclusion) and will have a positive environmental impact (reduce need to travel) but this should be balanced with possible development of greenfield land.

**Option 17D** - positive environmental option but this could restrict employment growth, being a negative economic and social option.

But to maximise the benefits the most suitable option would be a combination of Option 17A, 17C and 17D which provides a greater balance between the economic benefits and the environmental impacts.

### Definitions

**Local needs employment** – development providing employment for the rural community

**THEME 4: PROVIDING A HIGH QUALITY ENVIRONMENT****Linked Existing Community Strategy Themes and Aspirations**

- Promoting inclusive communities
- Improving health and well-being
- Enhancing the environment

**Linked Core Strategy Objectives**

- Create an environment that encourages quality of life and promotes healthy, well educated and inclusive communities whilst supporting economic vitality for Darlington.
- Protect and enhance the Borough's natural environment, biodiversity value and its historic heritage whilst promoting its continued evolution and growth.
- Develop an integrated and accessible open space, recreation, leisure, culture and services framework, to meet the needs of our residents and visitors
- Promote developments that conserve natural resources, minimise the impact of climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, help to reduce waste and minimise the risk of flooding and pollution.

Darlington contains a diverse and dynamic environment. There is a variety of natural and built landscapes and features that provide a high quality environment contributing to Darlington's history, culture and character. The Borough has a distinctive natural landscape with designated sites of special scientific interest (SSSI's), ancient woodland, and historic parks and gardens complementing significant areas of quality agricultural land. The built environment is equally varied including listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, conservation areas and many buildings that are of local interest. Although the protection of these areas is important, enhancement of these areas will add to the heritage and biodiversity value of the Borough. Together these features and landscapes provide a high quality environment for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Providing a high quality environment will also provide a high quality environment for the local community to enjoy, which will help improve safety, health and well being and promote civic pride. It will also protect the community and the environment from pollution. This will help provide a more sustainable future for the Borough.

**AIMS OF PROVIDING A HIGH QUALITY ENVIRONMENT**

- Continuing need to protect the Borough's heritage features
- Enhance wildlife and nature conservation
- Protect the countryside
- Reduce the impact of pollution in the Borough
- Increase the use of urban and rural space by all

**KEY FACTS**

- There are over 500 listed buildings of which 25 are identified 'at risk' in Darlington
- There are 16 Conservation Areas, 20 scheduled ancient monuments and 2 historic parks and gardens in the Borough
- The Borough has 4 SSSI's of which 58% are in favourable condition
- In the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan Darlington has 17 priority habitats

- In the last 40 years Darlington has lost many of its valuable habitats and species including 97% of its species rich grassland and 95% of its water vole population.
- In 2005-06 there were 49 days when air pollution was moderate or higher from PM10
- 100% of the rivers in the Borough rated good or fair in the Environment Agency's chemical and biological assessment

## ISSUE 19 Local Heritage

National legislation and policy seeks to protect the Borough's built heritage of Grade I, II\* and II listed buildings, conservation areas, ancient monuments and sites of national archaeological importance. There are also lots of buildings and built features in the Borough that do not have statutory protection but are important to the local built environment are a key part of Darlington's historic, distinctive character, including most of the remains of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. Although there have been notable successes in improving and protecting the Borough's built environment and heritage, some buildings remain 'at risk'. More needs to be done across the Borough to retain the irreplaceable local heritage of our neighbourhoods and streets and to conserve areas and buildings of historic or townscape value. Funding packages have recently helped to improve the quality of small parts of the town, such as Northgate but these have now stopped.

### How should we protect and enhance Darlington's heritage?

#### OPTIONS

#### **19A Only preserve and enhance the character or appearance of statutory historic and environment features and landscapes?**

Meets the statutory minimum requirements but spaces and buildings of local importance would suffer.

#### **19B Protect and enhance the Borough's key townscape, landscape and historic features?**

Protects and enhances a wider range of historic features and their settings as well statutory features and buildings. Could safeguard Darlington's distinctiveness. Spreads finances and skills resources more thinly.

#### **19C Promote heritage based regeneration schemes for improvements to specific parts of the town?**

Protects and enhances statutory features and buildings as well as a wider range of historic and environmental features. Only sees improvements to specific parts of the town

#### **19D Combination?**

#### SA Recommendations

**Option 19A** - meets minimum requirements so is a neutral option

**Option 19B** - very positive environmental impact and may have a positive impact on the local economy.

**Option 19C** - would see positive environmental, social and economic impacts in specific parts of the Borough but balanced against similar negative impacts elsewhere (inequalities across the Borough)

**Option 19D** - to achieve maximum widespread benefits a combination of all options should be promoted

**ISSUE 20 Urban Fringe**

Darlington's urban fringe is the area which lies between the edge of the urban area and the agricultural land beyond where houses and industrial units sit side by side with farm land and provides a vital link to the countryside. The urban fringe is largely agricultural land but the planning system has an important role to play in maximising its value for recreation, biodiversity, access and the production of local produce whilst ensuring that development stays within the boundaries of the urban area.

**How should we manage Darlington's urban fringe?****OPTIONS****20A Promote greater levels of access and informal recreation?**

Could see the development and improvement of the rights of way network. Could encourage the use of sustainable transport to local recreational venues rather than travelling by car to locations further afield. Could provide improved opportunities for exercise, informal recreation and help provide for a healthy lifestyle and a higher quality of life. Promotes social inclusion, with equal access for all.

**20B Promote multifunctional spaces?**

Could see development and extension of existing green infrastructure, enhanced biodiversity into more varied types of land use to meet local needs. Could encourage the use of sustainable transport to local recreational venues rather than travelling by car to recreation opportunities further afield. Promotes social inclusion, with equal access for all. Helps provide for a healthy lifestyle and quality of life.

**20C Encourage variation in agricultural practice that promotes a high quality landscape?**

Could encourage opportunities to promote small scale market gardens, community supported agriculture and provision of local produce. May change the traditional agricultural landscape into more varied multifunctioning spaces. Could promote economic and social inclusion and create sustainable communities.

**20D Encourage only high quality, small scale appropriate development that adds value to urban fringe?****SA Recommendations**

Overall all options provide many positive benefits. Options 20A, 20B and 20D would see positive impacts to the environment and see a high level of social inclusion whilst Option 20C promotes a high positive economic impact. Therefore a combination option (20E) is seen as the most beneficial option to take forward.

Could provide an enhanced environment through promotion of biodiversity in high quality landscaping plans as well as providing high quality design of development. Provides opportunities to restore poor landscapes, open spaces, historic sites and damaged habitats as well as improved access to a variety of sustainable recreational opportunities such as walking and cycling.

## 20E Combination?

### ISSUE 21 Biodiversity

A range of national, regional and locally important wildlife and geological sites are scattered across the Borough providing a varied and biodiverse rich, landscape. The planning system has a vital role to play in conserving local, regional and nationally important wildlife sites and countryside as well as encouraging more wildlife in urban areas. Part of the Borough is covered by the Tees Forest which has helped to expand woodland coverage and will improve recreational access to woodland and the wider countryside whilst widening the range and type of species present in the Borough. The Council supports the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan which helps protect the overall variety of species and habitats in the Borough. Footpaths, cycle routes and the Rights of Way network in the urban and rural areas provide green corridors which link the Borough together and also provide an opportunity to promote and enhance biodiversity.

#### How should we promote biodiversity?

##### OPTIONS

#### 21A Keep the current level of protection and promote biodiversity in new development?

Would enhance the existing network and would provide new opportunities to link into and expand the green infrastructure network through landscaping, open spaces, green corridors. Could create new wildlife resources within the design of any new development including the provision of bird and bat boxes, climbing plants on walls and green roofs.

#### 21B Keep the current level of protection and identify areas at risk to provide additional protection where needed?

Would enhance the existing network and would provide opportunities to protect under threat species and habitats. Could see provision and enhancement of green infrastructure, provision of multifunctional spaces in the urban fringe and the countryside, enhancing biodiversity. Targeted improvements for areas at risk, balanced against economic and social objectives.

##### SA Recommendations

All the options had a positive environmental impact.

**Option 21A** may have a negative economic impact (incurred costs for developers) but may have positive social impact (extension of green infrastructure network promote healthy lifestyle).

**Option 21B** is similar to Option 19A but would see a more positive environmental impact for areas at risk.

**Option 21C** may have positive social impact (extension of green infrastructure network promote healthy lifestyle).

**Option 21D** would have a significantly positive environmental impact but may have high negative economic impacts (extra costs of developing and maintaining a site).

**Option 21E** is a neutral economic and social option (maintains existing sites)

**Option 21F** - combination of all options would provide the most positive economic, social and environmental benefits.

**21C Identify and protect a network of sites and corridors, introduce improved management of the network for biodiversity?**

Careful management can enhance the environmental and biodiversity value of all areas, with no adverse impact on their social or economic objectives. Would provide a comprehensive approach to the management of biodiversity and the natural environment. Could see provision and enhancement of green infrastructure, the urban fringe and the countryside, enhancing biodiversity. Would involve a change of Council management priorities on existing sites and corridors and new landscaping guidelines for developers.

**21D Provide additional protection on all sites?**

Protection of environmental resources could take precedent over social and economic objectives of a site. Management resources could be high. Would provide a network of natural and semi-natural, biodiverse green spaces, enhancement of green infrastructure, the urban fringe and the countryside.

**21E Give priorities to local nature reserves, local sites, the Tees Forest and key, identified sites?**

Secures protection of the best of the local nature conservation resource. Results in a network of natural and semi-natural green spaces, sufficient to meet local needs. May not improve connectivity and corridors between sites. Would improve equality of access throughout the Borough.

**21F Combination?**

**ISSUE 22 Trees and Woodland**

Trees are a valuable landscaping and amenity resource and also consume CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. But formal planting can also have a negative impact on the landscape and dense woodland can make people feel unsafe. The condition of many rural woodland areas is declining which can be reversed through careful management.

## How should we enhance Darlington's trees?

### OPTIONS

#### **22A Only protect existing tree cover from loss or damage from new development?**

Provides the minimum safeguards for specified trees, groups of trees and ancient woodlands. Could result in a steady decline of trees if not complemented by replacement tree planting.

#### **22B Protect existing tree cover and support woodland planting on key brownfield development sites, along the urban fringe and major transport corridor sites, where appropriate?**

Would protect existing trees and would see more trees planted in new development. Could see the provision of new community forests at the urban fringe. Supports the aims of the Open Space Strategy.

#### **22C Maintain and protect healthy trees, promote replacement planting, community forest development and new planting in areas with low levels of tree cover?**

Comprehensive approach that safeguards valuable, mature existing trees, broadens the existing poor tree cover in parts of the Borough. Shows the Council's commitment to the Tees Forest programme and strengthens the Council's approach in the Open Space Strategy.

### SA Recommendations

**Option 22A** could have a long term negative environmental and economic impact (could retain trees in poor condition and could have implications for the overall layout of developments) but this should be balanced against the positive environmental impact of retaining trees and their habitats.

**Option 22B** incorporates the positive impacts of Option 20A but provides added environmental benefits (new planting, create new habitats) and has social benefits associated with enhancing green infrastructure

**Option 22C** will generate a number of significantly positive environmental impacts and positive social benefits as part of the Tees Forest education programme and social inclusion through the community forest programme

## ISSUE 23 Flood Risk

Historically, the majority of Darlington has been at little risk from flooding. The Environment Agency has identified over 1000 properties in Flood Risk Zone 2 having a medium probability of flood risk from a 1 in 100 year flood event from the River Skerne. But the main flood risk is likely not to be from Darlington's rivers but from surface water running off land, especially land covered in manmade surfaces, as well as from blocked drains and from water being unable to discharge into a river or stream. Surface water run off can create flood risk problems downstream unless runoff is properly managed. In most cases the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in new developments will reduce the speed and volume of surface water run off to an acceptable level.

## How can we reduce flood risk in Darlington?

### OPTIONS

#### **23A Require new developments to meet the Exception Test and provide a flood risk assessment?**

Meets minimum Government requirements. Could allow appropriate regeneration sites in Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3 in Darlington to proceed with mitigation measures. Provides balance between Darlington's aims for economic growth and homes with environmental objectives.

#### **23B Require sustainable drainage systems as part of all new developments?**

Would reduce the rate and volume of surface water run off and reduce the greatest flood risk in Darlington. Goes further than government guidance but would provide high quality, sustainable development in the Borough. May see slight increase in cost of development.

#### **23C Require all new development to have a layout and form that reduces flood risk and to include sustainable drainage systems?**

Would reduce the greatest flood risk in Darlington by reducing rate and volume of surface water run off. Goes further than Government Guidance but would provide high quality, sustainable development in the Borough. Could see improved design of new development. Could see greater levels of landscaping in areas with potential to flood which could enhance biodiversity value of a site.

#### **23D Combination?**

### SA Recommendations

**Option 23A** - positive impact providing a balance between economic and social prosperity, and environmental protection.

**Option 23B** - positive environmental impact but this should be balanced against the potential negative economic impact from the perceived higher costs to developers.

**Option 23C** has similar positive environmental impacts to Option 22B but goes further with the addition of landscaping which would help to improve the biodiversity value of some sites.

Option 23D is recommended combining Option 23A and Option 23D to balance the environmental benefits alongside the economic and social ones.

### Definitions

**Exception Test** – a test based on national guidance to allow large site to go ahead in Flood Zone 2 and 3 if it meets the 3 sustainability objectives.

**Flood Zones** – are part of the risk based approach to sequential development. Flood Zone 3 is an area of high flood risk, Flood Zone 2 is a area of low to medium risk and Flood Zone 1 is an area of little or no risk from flooding

## ISSUE 24 Protecting People And The Environment

There are many different types of pollution that can affect the community of Darlington to varying degrees. These include, air, noise and light pollution and contaminated land. This can affect people's quality of life as well as having an impact on the environment. The planning system can help reduce the impact of pollution by influencing the location and design of potentially polluting development in specific locations.



## **How can we improve the quality of the environment for residents, workers and visitors?**

### **OPTIONS**

#### **24A Develop strict guidelines over the location of new development which could add to air pollution?**

Provides additional safeguards on air pollution that should benefit the environment and protect the amenity of residents and businesses. Promotes social inclusion.

#### **24B Provide locational guidelines for developments that could cause vibration, noise and dust?**

Protects the amenity of existing residents and businesses. Promotes social inclusion.

#### **24C Develop appropriate controls for the development of contaminated, unused or underused brownfield sites?**

Allows the redevelopment or re-use of these sites for suitable alternative uses. Provides safeguards for future residents. Helps protect water resources. Improves landscape and townscape for residents. Helps regeneration of parts of the Borough, including priority wards. Promotes social inclusion.

#### **24D Combination?**

### **SA Recommendations**

**Options 24A and 24B** both could see positive social impacts from the location of polluting generation developments away from residential areas (health benefits). Option 23B has more significant benefits as it addresses a wider range of pollution generating developments. Impact upon the environment is neutral as these options do not address the levels of pollution generated. Could see negative economic impacts from constraining development in particular areas.

**Option 24C** will have positive environmental and social benefits (health) resulting from the clean up of contaminated, unused or underused brownfield sites. Could see economic benefits from development of sites help to improve the landscape and townscape and attract inward investment

**Option 24D** will see the benefits maximised for everyone and would be the most sustainable option.

**THEME 5: LIVING SAFELY AND WELL****Linked Existing Community Strategy Themes and Aspirations**

- Promoting inclusive communities
- Improving health and well-being
- Enhancing the environment

**Linked Core Strategy Objectives**

- Create an environment that encourages quality of life and promotes healthy, well educated and inclusive communities whilst supporting economic vitality for Darlington.
- Protect and enhance the Borough's natural environment, biodiversity value and its historic heritage whilst promoting its continued evolution and growth.
- Contribute to social inclusion by recognising the various needs of different sections of the community, such as the needs of various age groups, ethnic groups, genders and disabled people.
- Develop an integrated and accessible open space, recreation, leisure, culture and services framework, to meet the needs of our residents and visitors.
- Provide a framework to facilitate delivery of physical and social infrastructure to meet community and business and visitor needs.

Across the Borough there is a range of spaces and places that help the community live a healthy life. Darlington has a high proportion of open space within its main built up areas and the open spaces network contributes to the special character of the Borough. The network is made up from a variety of open spaces including formal parks, allotments, cemeteries, playing fields, local nature reserves, green wedges, village greens, the public rights of way network as well as areas of hard landscaped, civic spaces such as the Market Square. Darlington has a high proportion of open space within its main built up areas compared to other towns of its size. The availability of public open space is high although there are a few areas with poor access. The quality of open space varies greatly.

Without additional resources for management and maintenance, this level of provision is unsustainable. The Council's adopted Open Spaces Strategy sets out more detailed options for the provision, management and maintenance of open spaces in the main built up areas of the town and larger villages. The key issue is to make sure that open spaces of appropriate quality and accessibility are available in sufficient quantity to meet the identified existing and future needs of local people and visitors.

Darlington's open spaces are complemented by a wide range of sport and recreation facilities, including the Dolphin Centre, Eastbourne Sports Centre, Morrison Centre indoor bowls, and several community centres and village halls. National planning policy emphasises the value these facilities have for the community and their loss will be resisted unless an independent assessment shows that they are surplus to requirements.

**AIMS OF LIVING SAFELY AND WELL**

- Provide a network of quality open spaces, accessible to all
- Implement the Council's Open Spaces Strategy

### KEY FACTS

- In 2005-06 88% of residents were satisfied with access to publicly accessible green spaces
- All of the children's play areas in the Borough meet the minimum European standards
- In 2005-06 92% of residents considered sports and recreation facilities satisfactory

## ISSUE 25 Protecting The Open Spaces Network

Although the open spaces network is a valuable resource an aim of the Open Spaces Strategy is to improve open spaces and increase their value to people and nature and set out those open spaces that should be conserved. Not all open spaces are equally important in terms of their visual amenity and their sport, recreation and nature conservation value and some can be problematic, attracting anti-social behaviour. It may be beneficial to the overall open spaces network to dispose of the poorest sites which could allow funding to be spent on improving fewer sites.

### How should Darlington's open spaces be protected?

#### OPTIONS

#### **25A Only permit development of open spaces if identified as redundant in needs assessment?**

Protects Locally Important Open Spaces. Requires developer to demonstrate site is surplus to all open space, sport and recreation requirements. Allows development of poor quality, surplus open space to free resources for use elsewhere. Reflects the Open Space Strategy.

#### **25B Only permit development on locally important open spaces if ancillary to open space use and if improves the remaining part of the open space open space network and if identified as redundant in needs assessment?**

Improves quality of Locally Important Open Spaces. Requires developer to demonstrate site is surplus to all open space, sport and recreation requirements. Allows development of poor quality, surplus open space to free resources for use elsewhere. Reflects the Open Space Strategy.

#### SA Recommendations

**Option 25A** has a number of positive economic impacts; allowing a flexible approach to development of redundant spaces and targeting resources to needed sites. Could also see positive environmental impact from enhancement of remaining sites. **Option 25C** has similar benefits but has added positive environmental impacts as open space can only be developed with a regeneration proposal. This has a number of positive social impacts from new open space being provided in areas of need which would see positive social impacts (health) and a reduction of social inequalities.

**Option 25B** could also see positive environmental impact from enhancement of remaining sites, could see positive social impacts for community safety from increased development and activity nearby.

**25C Allow development of open spaces if for regeneration and equal alternative provision is made elsewhere?**

Requires developer to demonstrate site is surplus to all open space, sport and recreation requirements. Allows development of poor quality, surplus open space to free resources for use elsewhere.

**Definitions**

**Locally Important Open Space** – parks and cemeteries, local nature reserves, green wedges, Teesdale Way, community woodlands, Darlington Railway Museum and undeveloped sections of the Stockton & Darlington Railway trackbed, Market Place and High Row, village greens and strategic outdoor sports provision

**ISSUE 26 Playing Pitches**

There is increasing pressure on playing pitches, particularly associated with school closures in the built up areas and villages. Government advice requires a network of highly accessible sites to be available for local teams for regular use. The Open Space Strategy for Darlington supports this approach aiming to achieve 1.05ha of accessible playing pitches per 1000 people across the Borough. The use of school playing pitches by the community has helped provide more accessible pitches for teams but more needs to be done.

**How can we provide more accessible playing pitches?**

**OPTIONS**

**26A Encourage use of playing pitches to meet identified local needs, the active population and to use underused school pitches?**

Promotes the use of very accessible playing pitches to meet current and future needs of teams within the Borough, making the most of all existing pitches.

**26B Identify high quality strategic sites and lower quality local sites?**

Provides a mix of high quality, well managed sites and a network of lower quality but more accessible pitches to meet the needs of the community. Reflects levels of use.

**26C Require new or extended private playing pitches to have a community access agreement?**

Will improve existing resource but depends upon new development proposals coming forward.

**26D Combination?**

**SA Recommendations**

All the options have a positive environmental impact and a positive social impact upon health and well being and are relatively equal in outcome. The dual use of school playing pitches in **Option 26A** is significantly positive as these pitches are likely to be well accessible to the local community. This should be combined with **Option 26B** which scores positively on the hierarchy of playing pitches, but to add value should be based upon function, its customers and the quality.

**ISSUE 27 Open Spaces for Children and Young People**

The provision of good quality accessible children's play areas for under 12's and for young people consistently emerge as issues in community consultations. It is important that open spaces for children and young people are safe, attractive and clean and close to where children live. The best equipped play areas will be at South Park and North Park (strategic sites) with other sites providing a more limited range of equipment suitable for children. The Open Spaces Strategy aims to provide 1 equipped play area for every 450 children under 12 years old so that 85% are within 10 minutes walk of an area.

The over 12s can walk a bit further so the aim is to provide a site of 3\* quality for every 500 young people under 17 within 15 minutes walk homes in the main built up area and improve the quality of these sites.

**How can we provide an accessible, quality open space network for children and young people?****OPTIONS****27A Protect and improve existing sites?**

Provides a better quality open space network, but not necessarily in the locations where current and future demand is most likely to come from. Might not take account of changing population figures. May spread resources thinly.

**27B Identify high quality strategic sites and quality local sites?**

Promotes the best equipped play areas at strategic parks, and provides good quality local sites where there is an identified local need. Where possible, will reflect the play needs of the local community. Could improve accessibility  
Reduces social inequalities. Consistent with the Open Space Strategy.

**SA Recommendations**

**Option 27A** will have a very positive environmental impact upon the quality and function of open spaces and will have a positive social impact on the health and well being of the community as well as increased community safety through natural surveillance. Could see negative economic impact of maintaining sites in areas where there is little need.

**Option 27B** has the highest positive environmental impact by identifying high quality strategic sites and quality local sites in accessible locations. Could see very positive social impact on the health and well being of the community as well as increased community safety through more natural surveillance, will help to reduce social inequalities.

**ISSUE 28 Quality and Safety of Open Spaces**

People will not have good experiences using poor quality open space, and if they do not feel safe, they will not use them at all. It is important for a healthy lifestyle that all new open spaces are designed to a high standard, reflecting the needs of the community but making sure that they are safe. Contributions from public investment, partnerships and from planning obligations can help improve the quality and safety of Darlington's existing open spaces.

## How can the quality and safety of Darlington's open spaces be improved?

### OPTIONS

#### **28A Require all new open spaces to be designed to secured by design standards?**

Would design out crime and anti social behaviour, providing a better quality of life with people feeling safer in their community and being more confident in using open spaces.

#### **28B Make improvements to the quality and safety of existing open spaces from planning obligations?**

Use funding from planning obligations in new developments nearby to secure improvements to all open spaces.

#### **28C Use public investment and partnership funding to improve quality and safety of open spaces and planning obligations for children's play areas?**

Relies on public investment and partnership funding for improvements to the majority of the existing network. Continues existing policy approach and only allows planning obligations to be sought to improve childrens' play areas. Restricts investment in other areas of open space.

#### **28D Identify priority areas for public investment?**

Would achieve an equal distribution of high quality and safe provision throughout the town and main villages, with priority given to improving open spaces in the priority wards. Reduce social inequalities.

#### **28E Combination?**

### SA Recommendations

**Option 28A** - significant positive social impacts and will help to improve community safety and as a result may see increased use and a positive impact upon health and quality of life.

**Option 28B** - potential for positive environmental and social impacts from planning obligations funding to a wide range of open spaces and would see the overall quality of the environment improve, including safety and would benefit health

**Option 28C** - potential economic benefits (freeing up Council funds for other uses), environmental and social benefits (as above) and improved children's play areas balanced against the negative economic, social and environmental impacts that this would have with a lack of resources for other open spaces and the negative economic impact of only being able to fund works when public and private funds are available which would then have an effect on social and environmental conditions.

**Option 28D** - similar impacts to Option 28C but could be balanced against if funding were found there would be greater positive social and environmental impacts in the priority areas which would improve safety, health and reduce social inequalities.

**Option 28E** - more favoured approach as it collectively provides the greatest number of benefits to the Borough

## ISSUE 29 Open Space in Rural Areas

Rural communities also need open space for sport and recreation, though public rights of way may meet some of these needs. There is generally good accessibility to a range of open spaces in Middleton St George, Hurworth and Heighington but the quantity, type

and accessibility of the open spaces varies between settlements. It is important that the scale and type of provision is appropriate to the village but the local community will be expected to travel to the urban area to use strategic, key sites and facilities only justified by high use.

### **How can the quality, quantity and accessibility of rural open spaces be improved?**

#### **OPTIONS**

#### **29A Same policy for open spaces in villages as for the urban area?**

Application of a standards approach based on population may lead to a requirement to provide sizes of open space that are too small for the intended purpose, and an unrealistic expectation of levels of provision.

#### **29B Develop separate provision standards for the villages in consultation with the local community, taking account of population and access to existing provision?**

Provides realistic levels and types of open space provision that meet the recreational needs of village residents. Takes account of the contribution of open space to the townscape character. Could improve accessibility to sites and between sites in the countryside, urban fringe and urban area.

#### **SA**

#### **Recommendations**

**Option 29A** - scored negatively against many of the social and environmental impacts, it could lead to a size of open space too small for the purpose which in the long term could become unused and a target for anti-social activity and areas may not be accessible, widening the social inequalities.

**Option 29B** - positive social and environmental impacts with open space provision meeting local needs (health and well being) and would contribute to the townscape character.

## **THEME 6: A QUALITY TOWN CENTRE AND PROVISION OF LOCAL SHOPS AND SERVICES**

### **Linked Existing Community Strategy Themes and Aspirations**

- Improving the local economy
- Promoting inclusive communities
- Stimulating leisure activities
- Improving health and well-being
- Enhancing the environment

### **Linked Core Strategy Objectives**

- Create an environment that encourages quality of life and promotes healthy, well educated and inclusive communities whilst supporting economic vitality for Darlington.
- Enhance and promote the historic market town centre of Darlington as the hub for shopping, culture, tourism and civic administration whilst protecting and enhancing key commercial centres and accessible local commercial and community facilities for which there is, or is expected be, a continuing need.
- Protect and enhance the separate identities and character of the town, distinctive parts within it and the villages, and promote development that is in keeping with the size, character and function of the location.

Darlington town centre is a major sub-regional centre providing a comprehensive range of shops, services, arts, entertainment, leisure, recreation, evening economy and other facilities for the Borough and a wide area of south Durham and North Yorkshire. It is the fifth largest shopping centre in North East England and sits at the top of the hierarchy of centres in the Borough. It contains a diverse range and number of uses and functions, and serves and is accessible to the whole community. It is a major economic asset, generating considerable turnover and wealth and is the largest single point of employment in the Borough. It is an important historic asset and the focus of access routes, civic pride, tourism and social and leisure activity.

Smaller centres within the Borough also have important roles to play in providing residents with convenient everyday shopping facilities (particularly for food shopping) and local services such as chemists, banks, pubs and takeaways. Current local planning policy identifies six district and local centres, all within the urban area:

- Cockerton and North Road (around Morrisons) are defined as district centres;
- Whinfield, Yarm Road (around Aldi), Neasham Road (around Netto) and Mowden are local centres.

National planning policy protects these centres against development which might weaken their vitality and viability and encourages appropriate levels of investment and growth to be focused within them, appropriate to their role in the hierarchy and their catchment area.

Almost a quarter of the retail floorspace of the Borough lies outside these centres in a small number of large modern supermarkets and retail warehouses, with most found on the eastern side of the town at Morton Park and Darlington Retail Park. These developments are car-oriented and generally lack the broader accessibility and diversity



of established centres. Although important in their own way they are not regarded as centres for planning policy purposes.

Below the hierarchy of centres are local 'corner' and village shops, sometimes clustered into small groups. Although reduced in number over recent years, there are still about 200 shops and other small local commercial and community facilities that are important for those who do not have, or do not wish to use a car.

#### Definitions

PPS6, Planning for Town Centres, 2005, provides definitions of the various levels of centre:

**Town centres** in many cases will be the principal centre or centres in a local authority's area.

**District centres** will usually comprise groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library.

**Local centres** include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres might include, amongst other shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a pharmacy. Other facilities could include a hot-food takeaway and launderette. In rural areas, large villages may perform the role of a local centre.

**Small parades of shops** of purely neighbourhood significance are not regarded as centres.

**Existing out-of-centre developments** - unless they are identified as centres in development plans, should not be regarded as centres.

### AIMS OF A QUALITY TOWN CENTRE AND PROVISION OF LOCAL SHOPS AND SERVICES

- To safeguard and promote the vitality and viability of Darlington town centre
- To ensure wherever possible that residents have convenient, sustainable access to everyday local shopping (particularly food shopping) and services in district and local centres or small local shops.
- To bring up-to-date the status of the existing centres to properly reflect their roles and functions;
- To consider whether new centres should be defined and promoted.

### KEY FACTS

- Darlington town centre has around 250 convenience and comparison goods shops containing 90,000sqm of floorspace.
- Of the district and local centres **North Road** has the largest concentration of retail facilities although the majority of the floorspace is within Morrisons and B&Q which have a wide catchment area.
- **Cockerton** has less shopping floorspace but almost as many shops and a wider range of services and public facilities. It serves the north-west part of the town
- **Neasham Road** has a large amount of floorspace although the majority is within the Matalan store which has a wide catchment area. Local provision for food improved with the opening of Netto and Farmfoods.
- At **Whinfield** the large Asda store dominates and serves a wider, as well as, local catchment. The other facilities are small scale and localised.
- **Yarm Road** has recently expanded its floorspace with the opening of Lidl and the extension of Aldi. These serve the south-east part of the town as well as local households. Local services improved following refurbishment of the older part of the centre.
- **Mowden** is the smallest centre and has limited services and facilities serving a very localised area.

### **ISSUE 30 The Town Centre**

Increased mobility in society and the development of new technologies mean that established town centres can no longer rely on the loyalty of their catchment population. They have to compete more than ever for custom and business investment with rival town centres, purpose-built out-of-centre facilities and with the increasing number of services offered over the internet.

Outside the Borough, Darlington town centre's main competitors for retailing and leisure are Middlesbrough, Newcastle, the MetroCentre and Teesside Park. Significant amounts of household retail spending have also been spent outside the town centre in recent years in the large out-of-centre stores within the Borough (Darlington Retail Study 2004). Similarly, many office-based services have relocated elsewhere, in modern business parks within the Borough or outside it, such as Morton Palms, Lingfield Point or Stockton's Teesdale.

There was little investment in Darlington town centre for over a decade after the Cornmill Centre opened in 1992, with the result that the town centre lost trade, employment and functions; in the national ranking of shopping centres it slipped from 69th to 80th between 1999 and 2002 (Experian Goad).

Things are now changing, stimulated by the investment of the Council and One NorthEast into the Pedestrian Heart environmental and traffic improvements. New shopping and parking facilities recently opened at Crown Street, and The Oval, a major retail and leisure scheme at Commercial Street, is expected to bring a new department store, more shops, a cinema and further leisure attractions to the town centre to be open for Christmas trading in 2010. The Council and its partners are also currently working to bring forward proposals for the Feethams/Beaumont Street area of the town centre in a way which will take advantage of its central location and meet the aspirations of the people of Darlington for the area.

These developments, together with other site opportunities which are likely to arise within the inner ring road, mean that the town centre is expected to be able to accommodate the Borough's future growth needs for town centre, retailing and leisure uses over the Core Strategy period.

The greatest potential for future growth of the town centre, where it is required for uses such as offices not directly serving members of the public, is likely to lie on the fringes, between the ring road and the mainline railway. This would make use of the area's high level of accessibility, from outside as well as inside the Borough, and help link the railway station and the Central Park regeneration scheme with the town centre.

National planning policy has moved towards a 'town centres first' approach and promotes the vitality and viability of town centres by planning for the growth and development of existing centres and promoting and enhancing existing centres by focusing development in centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

## How should we safeguard and promote the vitality and viability of the town centre?

### OPTIONS

#### **30A Adopt a rigorous and pro-active approach to promoting the vitality and viability of the town centre?**

Would make the most of the town centre's strengths and address its weaknesses. Would recognise the centre as one of the key economic assets of the Borough, to be promoted with pride and protected from avoidable threats.

#### **30B Adopt a less rigorous approach recognising the potential benefits of some 'town centre-type' development elsewhere in the Borough?**

Investment outside the town centre may mean lower investment within it. Could see the town centre losing customers, functions and services to competing centres and locations. Reduces accessibility for the less mobile households and could increase social inequalities. The physical fabric of the centre could decline and this could have an impact on Darlington's image as an attractive town, good to live, work and spend time in.

### SA Recommendations

**Option 30A** would have a significant positive economic (improve vitality of town centre), social and environmental impact promoting sustainable access to the shops and services of the town centre for all.

**Option 30B** is likely to have a negative economic (investment outside the town centre may result in a decline in the town centre) should be balanced against the potential positive economic impact of attracting new business to out of centre locations or difficult regeneration sites. Could see a negative social and environmental impact (image of the town, reduction in accessibility by sustainable transport).

## ISSUE 31 THE HIERARCHY OF CENTRES

The present hierarchy of centres may need to be reconsidered based on up to date national planning policy guidance. The six district and local centres have experienced changes over the last 10 years with some losing shops and services with others gaining them. Although fairly well distributed and easily-accessible to a large proportion of the town's residents without the need for a car the presently-defined centres (including the town centre which plays a local role for central residential areas) still leave some gaps in the urban area and none of the rural area has easy access to a centre.

Over the past ten years, new residential areas have been created. The largest, West Park, is well equipped with retail and service facilities but other areas have fewer facilities.

Planning policy protects centres against development which might undermine their vitality and viability and encourages appropriate levels of investment and growth within them. Reducing or removing the status of a centre would affect the type and scale of future development which would be permitted within it. Upgrading a centre's status could see a different type and scale of shops and services encouraged to move to the centre.

There are few long-established locations within the urban area which could become new centres, apart from **West Park** where a 'village centre' is currently being created to serve the new housing. However, the small range of shops, services and facilities (a small supermarket, chemist, dentist, pub, school and nursery) may still be too limited by national planning policy standards to justify it being designated as a local centre.

In the villages only **Middleton St George** has a genuine range of shops and facilities: two small foodshops, chemist, hairdressers, betting shop, takeaways and some local public facilities are grouped around The Square. The recent growth of the village population may see appropriate and modest expansion of facilities being permitted in future to justify designation as a local centre.

#### *Existing District and Local Centres*

<b>Centre</b>	<i>Convenience and comparison shopping*</i>	<i>Retail &amp; non-retail services &amp; local public facilities</i>
District centre: North Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13,000sqm gross retail floorspace in 23 shops (inc. convenience: 4 shops with 7,600sqm).</li> <li>Main food: Morrisons superstore.</li> <li>Most non-food floorspace is within a B&amp;Q retail warehouse. Small non-food shops include a sub-post office.</li> <li>Pharmacy adjacent to centre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 retail services (5 of them hairdressers).</li> <li>Small range of non-retail services include: café, hot-food takeaway, bowls club &amp; social club.</li> <li>GP's surgery.</li> </ul>
District centre: Cockerton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3,000sqm floorspace in 21 shops (convenience: 8 shops with 2,000sqm).</li> <li>Main food: medium Somerfield supermarket.</li> <li>Wide range of small non-food shops, inc. sub-post office and pharmacy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 retail services (hairdressers, sandwich shops, travel agent, funeral directors).</li> <li>Wide range of non-retail services include banks, building society, estate agents, takeaways, pub, social club, betting office.</li> <li>GP's surgery, dentists, library, police station.</li> </ul>
Local centre: Neasham Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6,000sqm floorspace in 4 shops (convenience: 2 shops with 1,400sqm).</li> <li>Main food: medium Netto supermarket.</li> <li>Non-food: a large Matalan clothing store (4,200sqm) and a furniture retailer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Betting office.</li> </ul>
Local centre: Whinfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5,300sqm floorspace in 2 shops (all convenience).</li> <li>Main food: Asda superstore.</li> <li>Pharmacy nearby.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 retail service (hairdressers).</li> <li>Pub.</li> <li>GP's surgery &amp; primary school nearby.</li> </ul>
Local centre: Yarm Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3,900sqm floorspace in 6 shops (convenience: 5 shops with 3,800sqm).</li> <li>Main food: medium Lidl, Aldi and Iceland supermarkets.</li> <li>Sub-post office a short distance away.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No retail services.</li> <li>Veterinary surgery, betting shop, takeaways.</li> <li>Pub opposite.</li> </ul>
Local centre: Mowden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>900sqm floorspace in 5 shops (convenience: 2 shops with 500sqm).</li> <li>Main food: small Co-op supermarket.</li> <li>Non-food incs. sub-post office.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 retail services, inc. laundry.</li> <li>Takeaways.</li> <li>Pub adjacent.</li> </ul>

*Source: Darlington Retail Survey 2004 updated by DBC surveys Summer 2007. \*In contrast, Darlington town centre contains around 90,000sqm of retail floorspace in 250 shops, mostly for the sale of comparison goods.*

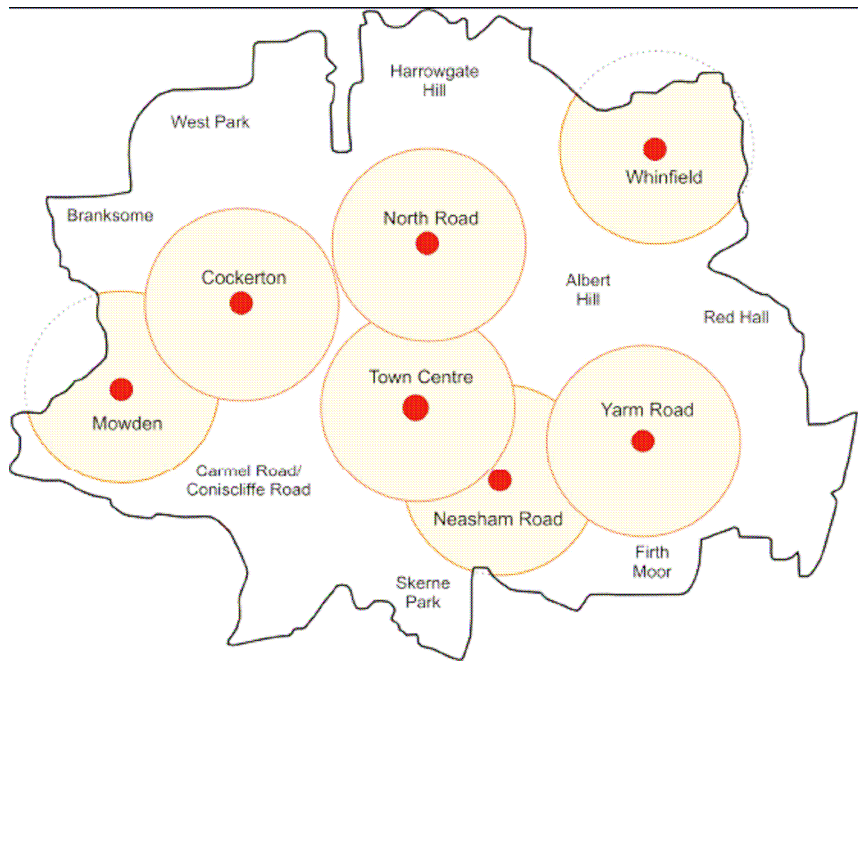
**Is the current hierarchy still appropriate or should it be changed?**

**OPTIONS**

**31A Keep the current hierarchy?**

- the town centre;
- two district centres at Cockerton and North Road;
- four local centres at Yarm Road, Whinfield, Neasham Road and Mowden.

Retains the status quo but possibly at the expense of not reflecting changed circumstances. Whilst Cockerton continues to meet the PPS6 definition of a district centre, the modest provision of non-retail services and public facilities makes North Road borderline between a district and local centre. Yarm Road meets the definition of a local centre but Whinfield and Neasham Road arguably do not. Mowden contains a small range of shops but provision has reduced in recent years and there are few other services. This makes it harder to argue that it is any more than a 'small parade of shops of purely neighbourhood significance'.



**SA Recommendations**

**Option 31A** may have a negative economic impact (reduced provision see a potential loss of local jobs), may also have negative environmental and social impact (decline of areas, effect safety and crime) but should be balanced against the positive social and environmental impact of easy sustainable access to facilities (social inclusion).

**Option 31B** and **Option 31D** would create a number of positive economic (fills localised gaps in provision, potential for new jobs), social and environmental impacts (easy local sustainable access) are identified.

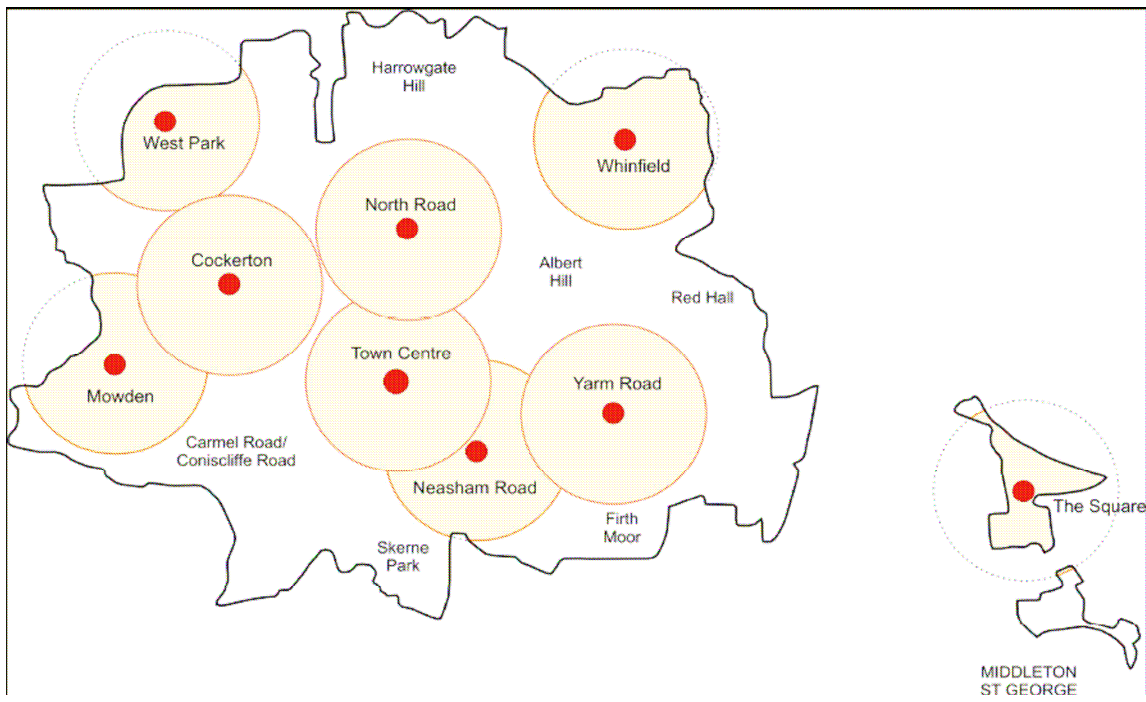
**Option 31C** would have positive economic impact for remaining centres (strengthen the vitality and viability) should be balanced against the potential long term negative economic impact (loss of facilities loss of local jobs) and the negative social and environmental impact (potential for increased access to facilities elsewhere by car).

### 31B Designate further local centre(s)?

Keep the current hierarchy but add another local centre

- at West Park and/or
- Middleton St George (The Square); and/or
- elsewhere

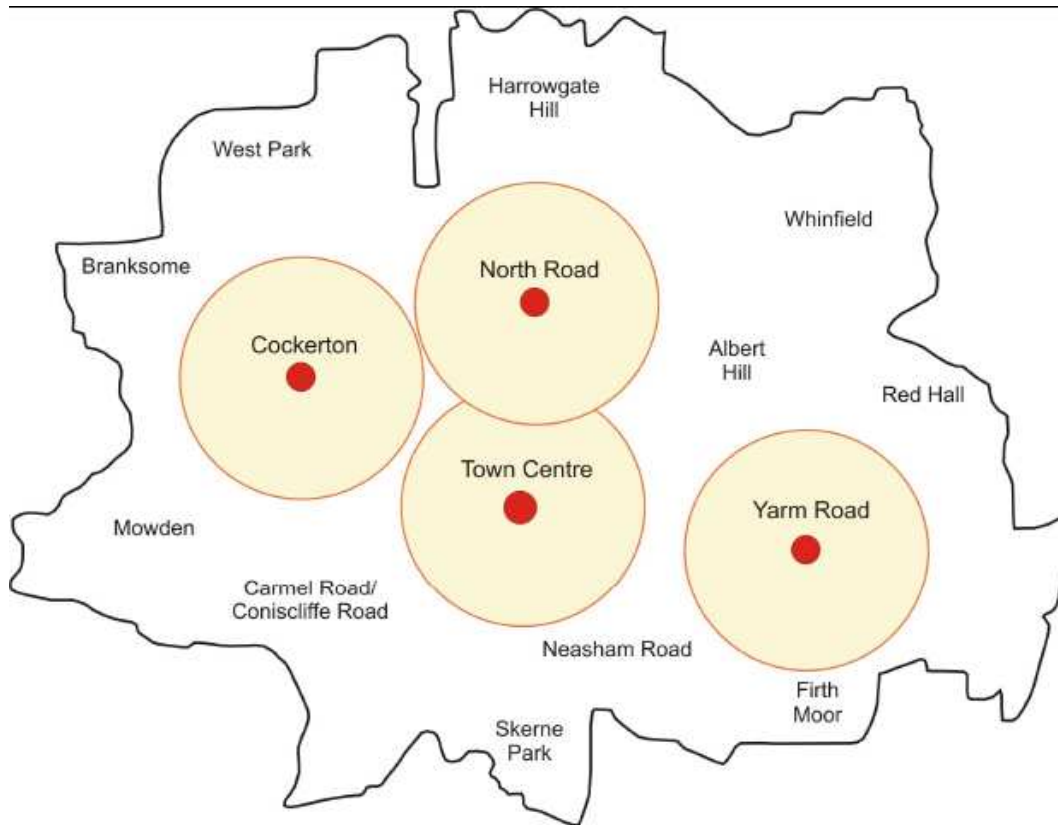
Retains the status quo and expands the number and geographical spread but risks failing further to reflect PPS6 as West Park and Middleton St George may not fully meet the definition of a local centre. Some options for the future settlement pattern may justify the promotion of a new local or district centre. As part of any major new housing development a new centre may be provided to help secure satisfactory provision of shops, services and local facilities for its residents.



**31C Amend the hierarchy to more strictly reflect current national planning policy (PPS6)?**

**Downgrade North Road to a local centre, and Whinfield, Neasham Road and Mowden no longer to be defined as centres.**

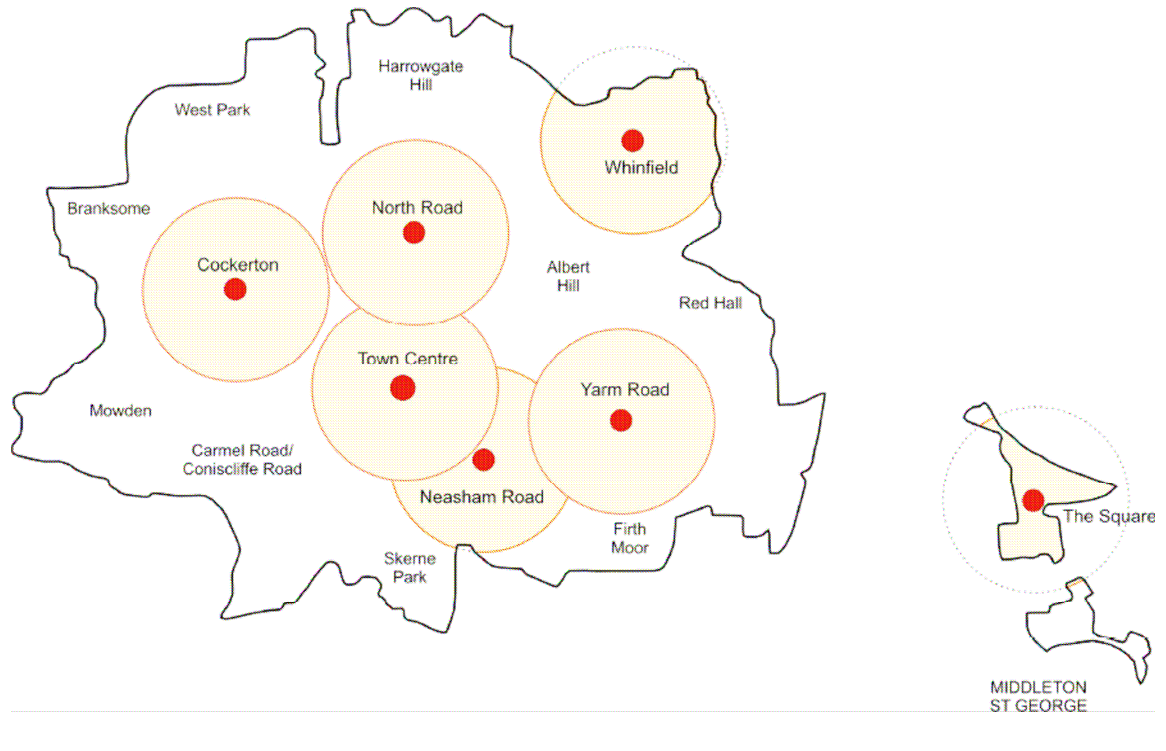
Accepts that a number of existing centres may not continue to be designated. The changes would restrict the opportunities for providing further everyday amenities near to the communities they serve. May not reflect local circumstances and would make it hard to justify new centres at West Park and/or Middleton St George.



### 31D Amend the hierarchy less severely?

**Mowden would not be a defined centre. The others would remain because local circumstances justify retaining their status.**

Could possibly justify designating Middleton St George as a local centre.



### 31E Change the hierarchy in a different way?

Please suggest an alternative hierarchy.

## ISSUE 32 Access to Local Facilities

Whether or not the hierarchy is changed, not everyone within the Borough will be within easy walking distance of a defined centre and scattered small local shops and services will continue to have a valuable role to play. Local shops and services enable people to meet their day-to-day needs, such as for 'top-up' food shopping, close to their homes, convenient for all ages and incomes. They reduce car use, reduce congestion and pollution and facilities such as cafes and pubs, can be an important focus for the local community.

Accessible, local shops, services and facilities have continued to decline over the last 10 years and without change, would seem likely to continue. The loss of some is inevitable, but others seem to be being lost through redevelopment of their sites for residential use rather than through any lack of viability or need. Others have lost viability by developments elsewhere which can cater for more mobile members of the community.



## How can we provide good access to local shops, services and facilities?

### OPTIONS

#### **32A Keep local shops, services and facilities which serve the needs of nearby residential areas and require sites to be set aside in new development areas?**

Would promote the retention and spread of facilities to meet the everyday needs of Borough residents in locations which would not require the use of a car. Would widen social inclusion. Requires good integrated sustainable transport network.

#### **32B Protect existing facilities from proposals elsewhere which would undermine their vitality and viability or from redevelopment?**

Would see a more proactive approach, working in partnership to identify and remedy deficiencies in existing provision. Would promote the retention and spread of facilities to meet the everyday needs of Borough residents in locations which would not require the use of a car. Would widen social inclusion. Requires good integrated sustainable transport network.

#### **32C Combination?**

### SA

#### Recommendations

**Option 32A** has a number of positive economic, social (promote social inclusion) and environmental impacts (increasing provision across the Borough will help reduce the need to travel by car)

**Option 32B** has similar positive impacts which should be balanced against the potential negative impacts of protecting existing facilities of poor quality where redevelopment could improve an area

**Option 32C** would bring together the benefits of both options and should be taken forward

**THEME 7: TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE****Linked Existing Community Strategy Themes and Aspirations**

- Improving the local economy
- Promoting inclusive communities
- Improving health and well-being
- Enhancing the environment
- Developing an effective transport system

**Linked Core Strategy Objectives**

- Create an environment that encourages quality of life and promotes healthy, well educated and inclusive communities whilst supporting economic vitality for Darlington.
- Promote development in locations which will be accessible by various modes of travel, including sustainable transport such as public transport, walking and cycling, optimise the use of existing infrastructure and minimise the need to travel.
- Provide a framework to facilitate delivery of physical and social infrastructure to meet community and business and visitor needs.

Traffic congestion occurs at peak hours on the main routes that move traffic in and out and around Darlington. This has significant economic, social and environmental impacts. On their own new roads cannot ease congestion, other than in the short term, and funding for new roads just to ease congestion is difficult to get from the government. In Darlington research highlights that 56% of car trips could be made by sustainable transport (Local Motion project). In the long term well planned, comprehensive, transport networks making the best use of a wide range of travel choices, including public transport, cycling and walking, are the best ways to reduce congestion, air and noise pollution, improve road safety and provide accessibility for all the community.

The Council with its partners are considering many different ways to reduce car use, ease congestion and promote the use of alternative sustainable transport. These include Park and Ride Schemes, the Tees Valley Metro, Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements and improvements to the A66 (T) Darlington bypass.

A Park and Ride scheme may help ease congestion on radial roads into the town centre but provisional land allocation(s) for parking may need to be made in the Core Strategy.

The A66(T) Tees Valley Gateway Study was published for consultation in December 2004. It considered a range of options to reduce congestion and improve safety on the A66(T) Darlington bypass. The Council considers that the entire A66(T) bypass should be upgraded to a dual carriageway in view of the international, national, regional and local importance of the road from coast to coast. The preferred option recommends upgrading the section north of the A67 Yarm Road junction to dual carriageway, by providing a bypass of the Great Burdon roundabout north of the Eastern Transport Corridor junction (currently under construction). In the mean time it is important to safeguard the possible land until the Government make a decision.

A review of the Tees Valley bus network has identified key routes linking areas of high demand and key destinations. The network is based on a hierarchy of services ranging from fast, frequent and high quality, commercially operated, urban routes to low frequency, financially supported rural services meeting social accessibility needs. The Tees Valley authorities are submitting a bid for funding for a major scheme of Bus Network Improvements, alongside this review.

Tees Valley Regeneration, acting for the local authorities in the Tees Valley, is seeking the government's support for a Tees Valley Metro light rail service, using the existing heavy rail line from Saltburn to Darlington (with a possible extension to Bishop Auckland). This would be likely to include new stations at Durham Tees Valley Airport and Morton Palms and may extend to Central Park and on into Darlington town centre. This would greatly improve non-car links within the Tees Valley and should have major accessibility benefits for Darlington. The Core Strategy and other parts of the LDF will need to ensure the safeguarding of corridors and sites when the proposals are firmer.

### **AIMS**

- Improve access for all
- Promote public transport, walking and cycling and reduce car use
- Ensure land use developments and sustainable transport support each other
- Reduce the need to travel by making facilities and services available locally
- Secure a reduction in the environmental impact of transport

### **FACTS**

- Darlington residents participating in the Local Motion Individualised travel marketing project in 2006 reduced their car use by 11% from 2004 levels when given advice on the alternatives. This equates to 9% if applied across the whole town.
- There was a modest rise of 2% in bus trips between 2004-2006 across the whole town
- Darlington residents participating in the Local Motion Individualised travel marketing project in 2006 increased their cycling by 79% and walking by 25% from 2004-levels, when given advice on the alternatives. This equates to 65% and 15% respectively, if applied across the whole town.

## **ISSUE 33 TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

Since the 1970s the Cross Town Route has been proposed to reduce congestion by carrying cross-town traffic, particularly business traffic, between the A66 bypass south of Great Burdon and the A1(M)/A68 at Faverdale. It was to run alongside the trackbed of the former Stockton & Darlington Railway line and also alongside the Bishop Auckland branch-line. In the 1990s a short section in the west was constructed to link to Faverdale and the eastern section to Haughton Road is being implemented as the Eastern Transport Corridor. Although the latter will ease congestion, on Yarm Road and Haughton Road and provide a parallel cycle and walking route it will also open up adjoining land for development.

However, the likelihood of the central section of the Cross Town Route between Haughton Road and Faverdale being built during the period of the Core Strategy, if at all, is increasingly remote. Since 1970 the emphasis in transport planning has changed to promote wider travel choices and reduce the focus on the construction of new roads. A

decision is needed on whether the Core Strategy should continue to safeguard the central section of the Route or to abandon it, allowing alternative uses to be identified and implemented.

## **Should We Continue To Provide Land for the Cross Town Route?**

### **OPTIONS**

#### **33A Continue to safeguard a line for the central section of the Cross Town Route, if supported by a detailed technical assessment?**

A safeguarding line should be retained if there remains a realistic prospect of the Cross Town Route being constructed. An assessment would give assurance that the Route is still a feasible scheme. Complex and expensive to construct (involving amongst other things a major bridge crossing of the main-line railway), be sensitive environmentally, and would open up relatively little development land.

#### **33B Remove the safeguarding line for the central section of the Cross Town Route?**

To retain a safeguarding line without a technical assessment showing it to be a realistic prospect would prolong uncertainty and prevent alternative development which could help regenerate this part of Darlington. However, a once-and-for-all opportunity to construct a route across town at some future date would be lost.

### **SA Recommendations**

**Option 33A** is likely to generate several negative economic (could have an impact on house prices in certain areas, could restrict regeneration opportunities in certain areas), social (severance of some communities) impacts. This should be balanced against the potential positive economic impacts that could occur if the route is delivered; open up development opportunities, reduce congestion but the negative environmental impacts that road building creates.

**Option 33B** is likely to have a positive impact as it would provide more certainty for residents and businesses within this area.