
**DARLINGTON LOCAL PLAN 2016 - 2036:
SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK**

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

Responsible Director - Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To set out the reasons for revisiting the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Framework for the emerging Local Plan.
2. To approve the revised Sustainability Appraisal Framework (**Annex1**).
3. To outline the next steps in the Sustainability Appraisal process.

Summary

4. In April 2016, Cabinet approved various documents as the basis for beginning to prepare, and consult on, a new Local Plan for the Borough. These included a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. In November 2016 Cabinet approved a Sustainability Appraisal Framework for the emerging Local Plan, incorporating comments submitted during consultation on the scoping report over summer 2016.
5. Following a review of the content of the Sustainability Appraisal Framework against the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), the framework document has been updated and added to ensure that it is fit for purpose. This includes revised sustainability objectives, an updated statistical baseline and a full review of relevant plans, policies and programmes.
6. Cabinet is asked to approve the revised Sustainability Appraisal Framework as the basis for the assessment of all development strategy, policy and site options for the emerging Local Plan.

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- (a) Notes the reasons for reviewing the Sustainability Appraisal Framework approved by Cabinet on 8 November 2016.
- (b) Approves the revised Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Framework (Annex 1) for publication.

Reasons

8. The recommendations support the need to meet the requirements of Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which requires local planning authorities to carry out a sustainability appraisal of each of the proposals in a Local Plan during its preparation. Planning Practice Guidance identifies that the scoping stage should set out the context, objectives and approach of the assessment; and identify relevant environmental, economic and social issues and objectives.

Ian Williams
Director of Economic Growth

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

James Langler: 6293

S17 Crime and Disorder	The Local Plan has a role in reducing crime through the design and location of development. The Sustainability Appraisal will consider the potential impact of sites and policies on crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	A key objective of Local Plan policies will be to improve people's health and wellbeing by protecting and improving the economic, social and environmental conditions in the Borough. The Sustainability Appraisal will consider the potential impact of sites and health and wellbeing.
Carbon Impact	Achieving sustainable development will be a fundamental objective of the Local Plan, assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal.
Diversity	An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out on the emerging Local Plan. A key objective of the plan is to be inclusive and to benefit the whole community.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All

Budget and Policy Framework	Work on the Local Plan has been carried out within existing budgets. The Local Plan will ultimately form part of the Council's Policy Framework and will influence the Council's growth ambitions that both increases the Council's tax base but also introduce additional demands for services
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Local Plan will represent the spatial expression of the overarching aims of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. The Sustainability Appraisal will consider the potential social, economic and environmental impact of all development strategy, policy and site options for the Local Plan.
Efficiency	The proposed timetable aims to be the most efficient way to produce the Local Plan having regard to the legislative and engagement requirements. The Sustainability Appraisal is being developed alongside the Local Plan.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Background

9. Sustainability Appraisal is a systematic and iterative process that identifies and reports on the likely significant effects of potential strategies, policies and development sites considered for the Local Plan to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with the principle of achieving sustainable development. Sustainability appraisals incorporate the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which implement the European Directive 2001/42/EC (the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive). The sustainability appraisal process ensures that the potential environmental effects of the plan are fully considered alongside wider social and economic issues.
10. In April 2016, Cabinet approved various documents as the basis for beginning to prepare, and consult on, a new Local Plan for the Borough. These included a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. In November 2016 Cabinet approved a Sustainability Appraisal Framework for the emerging Local Plan, incorporating comments submitted during consultation on the scoping report between 19 August and 23 September 2016.
11. The Sustainability Appraisal is an essential part of the plan making process which must be integrated in to each stage as shown on the diagram at **Annex 2**.

12. This report informs Cabinet of a review of the content of the Sustainability Appraisal Framework and requests that Cabinet approve a revised framework for publication to ensure that a robust foundation is in place against which to assess the Local Plan.

Review of Sustainability Appraisal Framework

13. Following a review of the content of the Sustainability Appraisal Framework against the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), the framework document has been updated and added to ensure that it is fit for purpose and covered all requirements of national guidance. This includes revised sustainability objectives, an updated statistical baseline and full review of relevant plans, policies and programmes.
14. A review of the sustainability appraisal objectives was undertaken to ensure that they sufficiently cover the full range of environmental, social and economic issues facing the Borough over the plan period, and that there is a reasonable balance between them. Consideration was also given as to whether the objectives address the environmental issues identified in Annex 1(f) of the SEA Directive. This was supported by a review of a number of recent examples of the sustainability appraisal objectives used by other local planning authorities that have been through examination and had their plans found sound. As a result of this work a number of changes were made to the objectives, these involved:-
 - (a) Creating separate objectives for the historic environment and landscape
 - (b) Introducing a new decision making criteria relating to waste
 - (c) Introducing new decision making criteria relating to trees
 - (d) Introducing new objectives relating to:
 - (i) safety and security
 - (ii) social/community cohesion
 - (iii) noise, vibration and light pollution
 - (iv) education and skills
 - (e) Reordering the objectives so that they are broadly grouped by objectives covering social, economic and environmental issues
15. Table 1 below sets out the revised Sustainability Appraisal Objectives in full, along with their associated decision making criteria which will assist officers in determining the likely effect each policy and site option will have when set against the objective.

Table 1: Updated Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

Sustainability Appraisal Objective		Decision Making Criteria
1.	Provide a mixture of affordable, well designed and sustainably located new housing, and improve the standard of existing housing, especially to provide for young people, families and older people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Will it deliver housing in sustainable locations with access to a range local services and facilities within easy walking and cycling distance? b. Will it provide good quality and safe connections to cycle and walking networks? c. Will it deliver market and affordable homes to meet identified Borough needs? d. Will it deliver adaptable housing to meet the lifelong needs of the population?
2.	Develop vibrant and cohesive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Will it reduce the potential for social isolation, with particular regard to disadvantaged and protected groups? b. Will it increase the availability and accessibility of community and cultural activities and facilities? c. Will it preserve, promote and enhance local community and culture?
3.	Improve the health and wellbeing of all, reduce health inequalities and promote healthier lifestyles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Will it encourage greater participation in healthy lifestyles, including nature based or outdoor leisure activities? b. Will it provide opportunities for people to get involved in sports and recreational activities? c. Will it ensure the whole population has easy access to health facilities? d. Will it increase local food production?
4.	Provide education and training opportunities to improve the skills and employment prospects of the resident population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Will it promote lifelong learning and help to widen participation in learning activities – supporting the development of local skills? b. Will it increase opportunities for vocational training via apprenticeships, internships and work experience? c. Will it help to address a shortage in primary school places?
5.	Improve the safety and security of people and property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Will it help to reduce crime and the fear of crime? b. Will it help to reduce and prevent crime and disorder through appropriate design measures? c. Will it help to improve highway safety?
6.	Achieve sustainable levels of economic growth and increase employment levels and access to sustainable and high quality employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Does it provide for opportunities to attract new business to the borough? b. Will it facilitate the expansion and development of existing businesses? c. Will it maintain the vitality and viability of the boroughs town and local centres?
7.	Encourage sustainable travel. Provide development which reduces reliance on private vehicles, maximising access to public transport and active travel modes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Will it reduce the distance people need to travel to work or to access services and facilities and will it prioritise development on well-located sites, especially the town centre? b. Will it provide access to a range of

		<p>employment, education, health service and leisure opportunities via a frequent public transport service?</p> <p>c. Will it increase congestion on the local highway network?</p>
8.	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the borough's resilience to climate change.	<p>a. Will it reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, including by encouraging energy efficiency?</p> <p>b. Will it increase renewable energy generation?</p> <p>c. Does it consider updated climate change allowances?</p> <p>d. Will it ensure climate adapted design and resilient infrastructure?</p> <p>e. Will it include a sustainable approach to water management?</p> <p>f. Will it facilitate the use of low carbon fuelled vehicles?</p>
9.	Make the most efficient use of land.	<p>a. Will it reduce contaminated sites and increase remediation?</p> <p>b. Will it maximise the use of brownfield land and minimising the loss of greenfield land to development?</p> <p>d. Will it lead to the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land?</p> <p>e. Will it increase the prevention, re-use, recovery and recycling of waste?</p>
10.	Minimise levels of noise, vibration and light pollution.	<p>a. Will it avoid unacceptable levels of noise, vibration and light pollution?</p>
11.	Avoid and reduce flood risk from all sources including fluvial, surface water and sewer flooding.	<p>a. Will it increase flood risk elsewhere?</p> <p>b. Will it include/encourage integrated drainage and rainwater harvesting?</p> <p>c. Will it increase the use of SUDS?</p> <p>d. Does it follow the sequential approach to avoiding higher flood risk areas?</p>
12.	Protect and enhance air and water quality and make efficient use of water.	<p>a. Will it contribute to reductions in air quality monitoring pollutants at monitoring locations across the Borough?</p> <p>b. Will it minimise the risk of contamination to ground waters and surface waters?</p> <p>c. Will it protect or contribute to improving the ecological quality of rivers?</p> <p>d. Will it minimise the risk of contamination to locally and nationally designated nature conservation sites?</p>
13.	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.	<p>a. Will it protect and enhance ecological networks and locally/nationally designated nature conservation sites?</p> <p>b. Will it protect priority habitats and species and provide for the long term management of important wildlife habitats?</p> <p>c. Will it increase the quality and quantity of woodland and tree cover?</p> <p>d. Will it promote and raise awareness of the enjoyment/benefits of the natural</p>

		environment and promote access to appropriate sites/the countryside? e. Will it avoid minerals safeguarding areas?
14.	Protect and enhance green infrastructure of all types.	a. Will it protect existing and / or enhance / create good quality green infrastructure? b. Will it promote increased access to green infrastructure?
15.	Protect and enhance the character and quality of Darlington's landscape.	a. Will it protect and enhance the quality and character of the landscape? b. Will it contribute to local distinctiveness and countryside character?
16.	Conserve and enhance Darlington's distinctive and valuable historic environment.	a. Will it conserve and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets, and their settings, and other elements of the historic environment? b. Will it promote good design? c. Will it maintain separation between the main settlements in the borough and those in surrounding districts?

16. Whilst the framework listed relevant plans, programmes and policies it did not summarise their content, relevant targets, potential implications for the Local Plan preparation/strategy. In addition, the framework did not include baseline data against which the likely impact (positive or negative) of policy and site options could be considered. The baseline consists of existing available data on the environmental, social and economic characteristics of the area and current identifies trends that are likely to continue
17. The statutory consultation bodies (English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency) that must be consulted during the preparation of a sustainability appraisal have been consulted on the proposed changes to the sustainability appraisal objectives and decision making criteria and their comments have been incorporated. The consultation bodies will continue to be engaged as the Sustainability Appraisal is developed, as required by the regulations.
18. The next stage for the Sustainability Appraisal process will be to apply the objectives, and associated assessment criteria, against all reasonable strategic development options for the Local Plan, and subsequently to all planning policy and development sites options. This will assist the Council in deciding on the most sustainable approach to the growth and development of the borough over the plan period to 2036. A Sustainability Appraisal report, setting out the results of this process, will be published alongside the publication draft Local Plan.

Financial Implications

19. Existing in-house staff are preparing the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan with no plans to use external consultants at this stage.

Legal Implications

20. Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to carry out a sustainability appraisal of each of the proposals in a Local Plan during its preparation. More generally, section 39 of the Act requires that the authority preparing a Local Plan must do so with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. This report explains the steps the Council are taking to ensure that the relevant legislative requirements and guidance are met in preparing a Sustainability Appraisal in support of the Local Plan.