
OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Economy and Regeneration Portfolio.

Ingenium Park

2. Cabinet received an update on Ingenium Parc which is a 40 hectare greenfield development site, the majority of which is in the ownership of the Council, adjacent to a number of established advanced manufacturing and engineering businesses and has been earmarked as a strategic employment site.
3. In order to open up the first phase infrastructure, works are required which include improvements to McMullen Road Roundabout, upgrades to Salter's Lane South and new access road and utility connections in the Ingenium Parc site. A funding package has been secured, with a significant contribution from Local Growth Funding administered by Tees Valley Combined Authority and contributions from Local Transport Fund and Department for Transport's National Investment and Productivity Fund.
4. This project will stimulate, promote and help to manage development of the area in line with the Local Plan, Employment Land Review and Interim Planning Statement; promote economic growth through opening employment land with the potential to create over 2000 jobs and will be a positive addition to the Council's inward investment sites portfolio.
5. The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources was granted delegated authority to enter into and seal such legal documents as required and the Director of Economic Growth was granted delegated authority to seek acquisition of third party interests at Ingenium Parc and to settle any compensation arising under any Tenancy Agreements.
6. Cabinet also agreed to the release of £4.95m capital funding upon completion of the Funding Agreement to deliver works at Ingenium Parc.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Part 2
Community Involvement in Planning Applications

7. In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Section 15, as amended by Section 111, Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to have an up to date Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Cabinet therefore gave

approval to the draft SCI, insofar as it relates to the Development Management process, and to the process and timescales for the adoption of the document.

8. The SCI sets out the Council's approach to consulting the local community and other stakeholders on planning matters and an updated SCI for the Local Plan process had been approved and adopted by Cabinet in April 2016.
9. The Development Management part of the SCI was considered to be out of date as a result of changes in processes, legislation and national policy since it was adopted in 2010 and a new SCI had been prepared for consultation.
10. Prior to adoption, the SCI should be published for consultation within the local community and other stakeholders and it is proposed that consultation take place over a six week period.
11. The Director of Economic Growth was granted delegated authority to agree the final SCI document, in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Regeneration and, if necessary, make minor amendments to the document following the six-week consultation period prior to adoption.

Feethams House

12. Cabinet approved the released capital from ERDF and TVCA to enable the construction of a new Grade A Town Centre Office Development. This will be an important contribution to the Town Centre economy and is in line with the Feethams Masterplan.

Investment and Funding Team

13. The Council has also been successful in securing £2,788,360 of Housing Infrastructure Fund, Marginal Viability funding from Homes England. The funding will be used to support the early installation of key infrastructure in order to enable the acceleration of delivery of new houses.
14. £3.2m has also been secured from TVCA to support the development of new Grade A offices in Feethams. The Council will enter into a risk and reward sharing agreement with TVCA for the Feethams development. We are currently in the process of finalising the information required to secure £2.04m of European Regional Development Fund funding towards the development.

Development Management

15. The Planning Applications Committee have recently granted planning permission for 44 dwellings and garages at Yarm Road, Middleton St George subject to a Section 106 Agreement and 59 dwellings at Carmel Road South.
16. The Committee has also approved 43 dwellings at Station Road, Heighington.
17. Key applications currently being considered include:

- (a) Outline planning permission for 370 houses at Coatham Mundeville 15/00804/OUT;
 - (b) Outline planning permission for up to 380 houses at Burtree Lane 15/01050/OUT;
 - (c) Outline planning permission for up to 226 houses Station Road, Middleton St George 16/00976/OUT;
 - (d) Outline planning permission for 280 houses at Lingfield Point 16/00985/OUT;
 - (e) Full planning permission for 20 houses at Woodland Road, Cockerton 17/00237/FUL; and
 - (f) Outline application for housing at Coniscliffe Park.
18. Further progress has been made in upgrading the ICT systems that support the planning service. The Idox 1App connector is now live to automatically create cases in the Uniform system when customers submit applications through the Planning Portal. Following a significant amount of data cleansing work on the planning data we are now utilising the Auto Constraint checking features, which is already improving the efficiency of the service and performance management improvements will follow. The Public Access software is still targeted for completion in the Summer and that will realise significant benefits for the public and Members. Mandatory training has also been completed with Members of the Planning Committee to enable them to continue to make informed decisions on planning applications.

Symmetry Park

19. A reserved matters planning application has been submitted for land east of Lingfield Point to accommodate a logistics and distribution facility with accompanying office space. The Business Park which in total extends to over 96 acres has the potential to create over 3000 jobs and the developers believe that the proposal will result in significant private sector investment and growth.

Local Plan

20. **Village Consultations:** Following the village consultations at Heighington and Middleton St George a summary of the responses has been published on the Council's Local Plan microsite. These responses will be considered when developing the Local Plan housing allocations and defining development limits for the settlements.
21. **Next Steps:** Having agreed an overall housing target of 9,840 dwellings over the plan period the next step is to ensure the Local Plan allocates enough deliverable sites to meet that target. A Draft Local Plan is being prepared and will be presented to Council for approval prior to engaging in a public consultation exercise in the Summer.

Economy Team

22. A number of pipeline investment enquiries being handled by the team have now converted into successes, including JTM Plumbing Ltd, which has completed on the purchase of a 2.2 acre plot of land at Faverdale. This has resulted in a net income of £290,000 for the Council for the sale of land. The company was also assisted in a successful application to draw down £100,000 grant funding from the SSI Task Force Capital Grant scheme.
23. A discretionary business rates relief scheme has been implemented to encourage occupancy of empty retail units in the Town Centre, by means of offering a discount to the first year's national non domestic rates (NNDR) bill. The scheme is being managed by the Economy Team, in conjunction with Revenues and Benefits, and is aimed at attracting independent business owners to set up in the Town Centre.
24. Recent successes for the Town Centre include Stable Hearth, Pizzeria and Enoteca, Duke Street and Restaurant Celebrus, Bondgate. Both companies have been offered support from the team, and have been able to tap into resource dedicated for the Town Centre.
25. The Team has been working closely with a range of intermediaries and partner organisations to encourage and attract further investment into Darlington. To date, five businesses in Darlington have been successful in securing investments from the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund (NPIF) monies, obtaining a total of £715k. Darlington is the only area in the Tees Valley where businesses have been successful in acquiring funding from the Equity Fund pot, part of NPIF.
26. Direct engagement with businesses is increasing through the Strategic Account Management programme. Recent site visits include Deep Ocean, Blackett, Hart and Pratt, Cummins and Zyro Fisher. All companies are in growth/scale up stages. Aldi's Faverdale site is nearing completion of its extension which will create a further 250 jobs, Cummins is expected to grow job levels on the basis of producing more engines at the Darlington site than in any previous years, currently with an average output of 300 engines per day. This level was at 100 per day during the recession. Everything Everywhere (EE) is also in growth mode and recruiting an additional 250 staff.
27. Employment levels are higher in Darlington than the North East as a percentage, with 73.5 per cent of all economically active people being in employment. This is against a North East figure of 70.4 per cent. Unemployment levels are currently at 6.3 per cent, against a North East percentage of 6.5 per cent.
28. There has been a total of 14 inward investment enquiries via the 'Invest in Darlington' website for land or property from January to February.

Conservation Area Appraisals

29. The North East Civic Trust are engaged in developing Conservation Area Character Appraisals for Heighington and Hurworth. These are progressing well, with the research and technical surveys well underway. The timetable is to consult

on these in Spring, including any proposed boundary changes. This new style of compact and focussed appraisal will simplify the process of proposing and managing change for all stakeholders, whilst emphasising the key features that make these places special. This understanding will inform development of the new Local Plan for Darlington and assist in determining Planning Applications in the short term. Residents are asked to look out for consultation events where comments and suggestions will be invited.

Briefs, Masterplans and Concept Statements

30. The Built and Natural Environment Team has had a productive year being at the centre of the elaboration of briefs for housing sites at Blackwell Grange, the refreshed masterplan for Central Park South, Ingenium Parc Masterplan and the Healthy New Towns housing pilot at Red Hall Stables. The team has also produced concept statements to guide both public and private sector development on a number of sites around the Borough responding to development enquires resulting from interest in the Town, and meeting the Council's ambitions for growth through high quality development. Often balancing a wide variety of issues including heritage, ecology and habitat, and concerns of local communities the team seeks to embed quality into development from the earliest stages providing certainty to all stakeholders.

Warmer Homes Project to Help Reduce Fuel Poverty

31. In July 2017 the National Grid announced the launch of a national grant fund of £150m available to all organisations, including local authorities. The purpose of the grant funding was to address some of the issues relating to fuel poverty. A consortium of seven local authorities, including Darlington, registered housing providers and community partners made a joint bid and it was announced on 23 October 2017 that the bid had been successful. Year one of the bid was a modest bid of nearly £1.8 million recognising the significant preparation and start up time required for the project and the need to deliver installations onwards from December 2017 until November 2018. A second bid was made in February 2018 for nearly £8m. The project is being led and managed by the lead partner authority, Northumberland County Council, and qualifying residents and properties who have no existing central heating systems may benefit from a free gas central heating system, oil central heating, Liquid Petroleum Gas or an air source heat pump. There will also be a focus on attempting to provide gas connections for those living in on gas areas without a gas supply in the property and also those living in off gas rural areas where another heating system will be installed. Help is available for qualifying residents regardless of the tenure type they are living in.

Town Centre Partnership

32. A Town Centre Marketing Communications Group has been set up involving some of the major retailers, Market Asset Management and the Council. This Group is looking at how, collectively, the Town Centre can be promoted to increase overall footfall. The aim is to have a #LoveDarlo Facebook page and banners ready for Easter 2018.

33. The Town Centre Partnership and Events Manager (TCPEM) is working with local businesses daily, currently discussing the Council providing increased floral displays and hanging baskets around the Town that will be part-maintained by the businesses as well as the Council. This will help bring colour and vibrancy back into the Town this Summer.
34. Work is ongoing to bring the cascade water feature back into use for 2018.
35. The TCPEM has been working with a number of businesses to extend the quiet hour shopping, which was piloted in December in the Cornmill, Queen Street, Dolphin Centre, Marks and Spencers, Mercure Kings Head Darlington, House of Fraser and Origins Coffee Bar, for residents and visitors who suffer from Dementia and Autism, and for those who just want a quiet hour of shopping. This was a success and now many other businesses have joined in, including: Boots, Boyes, Wilkos, Laura Ashley, Guru Boutique, The Keys, Imperial Express, Vue Cinema and Mangobean. We are also working with the Autism Society with the aim of developing an Autism Friendly Town.
36. Work is ongoing with a number of partners to review the night time economy; looking at how a special weekly Darlington Night can be developed and promoted.

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Economy and Regeneration Portfolio