

CABINET
4 FEBRUARY 2025

UPDATED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS) 2025-2028

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

**Responsible Director -
Ian Williams, Chief Executive**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Members' approval for the revised timetable for commencing a review of the existing Local Plan rather than look to produce a separate 'Climate Change DPD' and also to agree to consult on an updated Design of New Development SPD alongside this process.
2. In light of the changes to the NPPF made in December 2024, the Deputy Prime Minister has asked that all local planning authorities produce an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) within 12 weeks of the publication of the NPPF, i.e. by no later than 6 March 2025.

Summary

3. An up-to-date Local Plan is essential to meet the development needs of the Borough and to enable the Council to shape and maintain control of development.
4. The Local Plan is a framework for growth and aims to ensure that Darlington becomes an even more sustainable location in which people increasingly choose to live, work and visit. Not only does it help to deliver the economic strategy it also makes provision for new housing to meet local needs supporting the needs of our current and future workforce, and other new developments with the provision of key new infrastructure.
5. The success of the Borough is predicated on growth and underpins the future vibrancy of our town centre and our local communities. The Local Plan sets out how Darlington will grow, adapt and change and importantly how this will be achieved and managed. It provides the Council with the required spatial guidance and direction to contribute to and enable the structured development of the Borough – in support of both the Council's drive for a growing economy, building stronger communities and creating opportunities for all.
6. The Darlington Local Plan was adopted in February 2022 covering the period 2016 to 2036. The Local Plan is up to date and not due for review until it is five years old (before February 2027). Whilst the plan remains up to date there are benefits to reviewing the

plan early. It is worth noting that this review would only commence a year earlier than it would need to anyway to meet the five-year review requirement set by government.

7. In summary the benefits of an early review of the Local Plan are as follows:
 - (a) Most policies will remain up to date and therefore will not need to be revisited.
 - (b) Evidence base updates will only need to reflect reviewed policy areas.
 - (c) Avoids uncertainty around the preparation of 'new style' local plans currently being consulted upon.
 - (d) Is a quicker process than developing a new plan.
 - (e) Sufficient land allocations for housing have already been identified in the existing plan to meet most of the need required in an extended plan period to 2042. Further large allocations are therefore unlikely to be required.
8. An updated Design of New Development Supplementary (SPD) will also be prepared and consulted upon alongside the review of the Local Plan.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that Cabinet agree that the attached Local Development Scheme (2025-2028) is approved to take immediate effect.

Reason

10. The recommendation is supported as the Council is required to have an up-to-date Local Development Scheme (Planning & Compulsory Act 2004, as amended by Section 111, Localism Act 2011).

Ian Williams
Chief Executive

Background Papers

- (i) National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023
- (ii) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- (iii) Town and Country Planning Act (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- (iv) Localism Act 2011

<p>Council Plan</p>	<p>The Local Plan and supporting documents are integral to the delivery of the Council Plan and its priorities (adopted by Council in July 2024).</p> <p>The priorities are:</p> <p>ECONOMY - building a strong sustainable economy and highly skilled workforce with opportunities for all.</p> <p>The Local Plan allocates land for employment sufficient to meet the future needs of the borough.</p> <p>HOMES – affordable and secure homes that meet the current and future needs of residents.</p> <p>The Local Plan allocates sufficient land to meet the boroughs needs, sets affordable housing requirements and ensures new developments are well planned, safe and attractive.</p> <p>LIVING WELL – a healthier and better quality of life for longer, supporting those who need it most.</p> <p>The existing Local Plan encourages development to consider health and wellbeing with a requirement for larger developments to undertake a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). Allowance is also made for older people’s accommodation and sets a requirement for adaptable homes.</p> <p>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – supporting the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations.</p> <p>The Local Plan contains a mechanism to secure contributions to education provision and secure sites for new provision in key locations.</p> <p>COMMUNITIES – working together for safer, healthier and more engaged communities.</p> <p>The Local Plan throughout has a focus on delivering cohesive communities rather than individual developments.</p> <p>LOCAL ENVIRONMENT – a well-connected, clean and sustainable borough.</p> <p>The Local Plan contains numerous policies to protect both the natural and built environment.</p>
<p>Addressing inequalities</p>	<p>An Equalities Impact Assessment will be part of the plan and SPD review and process.</p>

Tackling Climate Change	<p>Achieving sustainable development is a fundamental objective of the Local Plan. The early review of the existing Local Plan will enable the council to develop additional policy to tackle climate change matters, reflect updated national policy and improve existing policies where necessary.</p> <p>The reviewed plan will need to be supported by an updated Sustainability Appraisal which will consider climate change in greater detail.</p>
Efficient and effective use of resources	<p>The council has to have an up-to-date plan this necessitates a review at least every five years. In commencing the review early (by less than a year). This will enable the life of the current plan to be extended to 2042 and remove the current uncertainty around 'new style' local plans.</p> <p>Some evidence will need updating, but not all. Producing a totally new plan would require significant investment in new evidence base documents.</p> <p>Most work on the review will be undertaken by the planning policy team but some specialist input will be required on topics like employment need, gypsy and traveller need, transport impact etc.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>A key objective of Local Plan and supporting documents is to improve people's health and wellbeing by protecting and improving the economic, social and environmental conditions in the Borough.</p>
S17 Crime and Disorder	<p>The Local Plan has a role in reducing crime through the promotion of good design and location of development.</p>
Wards Affected	<p>All</p>
Groups Affected	<p>All</p>
Budget and Policy Framework	<p>The Plan Review will necessitate a release of already allocated funds to commission updated evidence base work and will ultimately form part of the Council's Planning Policy Framework.</p>
Key Decision	<p>Yes</p>
Urgent Decision	<p>No</p>
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	<p>This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers</p>

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

11. The Updated LDS, attached at **Appendix 1**, is a statutory requirement. It sets out the planning policy documents that the Council will prepare over the next three years, when the key stages of preparation will be, the scope of each document, the resources available for, and risks to, their preparation. This will replace the LDS 2024-27. An update has been necessary owing to the change in national policy (with the publication of an updated NPPF in December 2024) and ongoing consultation on planning reform meaning an early review of the local plan would be beneficial. The LDS will be monitored and if necessary, further revised prior to the end of 2028.
12. The focus over the next three years will be on reviewing and updating the existing Local Plan where necessary. The previous LDS (adopted March 2024) proposed producing a Climate Emergency Development Plan Document (DPD) to enable the Council to develop further policy to help meet its climate change ambitions. Owing to a number of factors including the change of government and associated policy direction it now makes sense to incorporate the content of a Climate Emergency DPD into a Local Plan review.
13. A Local Plan review is required to be undertaken 'at least every five years' which in the case of the current Darlington Local Plan would be February 2027. Review now would enable the plan to be updated in line with the current (December 2024) NPPF relatively quickly and efficiently and it's time horizon extended to 2026-2042 without the need to commence work on a 'new style' Local Plan currently in the early stages of government consultation.
14. The main change in the December 2024 NPPF was the publication of new mandatory housing targets which can be incorporated into our plan review with the new figure being 440 for Darlington, slightly lower than the 492 in the currently adopted plan. It is therefore unlikely significant additional allocations would be required for the extended plan period.
15. All Local Plan reviews need to go through a similar process to adopting a new plan including public consultation and an examination in public by a government appointed inspector.
16. Work is also planned to revise the current Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which was last updated in 2011. SPDs are currently adopted by the Council, again there are proposals to make new 'Supplementary Plans' subject to a public examination process in the future.

Legal Implications

17. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.