

Darlington Borough Council

Local Plan Review 2025-2042

Regulation 19

Draft Version

(Formatting of the document will be updated prior to consultation)



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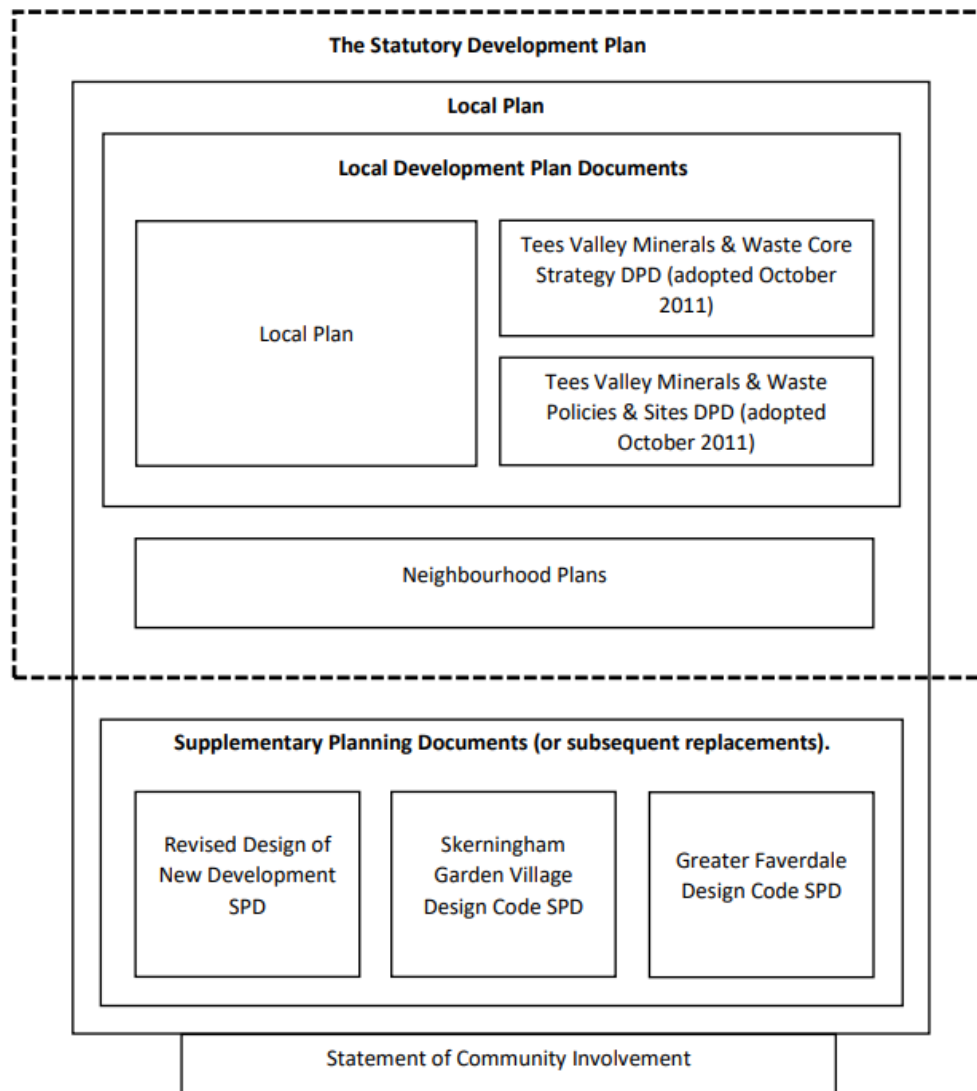
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1. INTRODUCTION

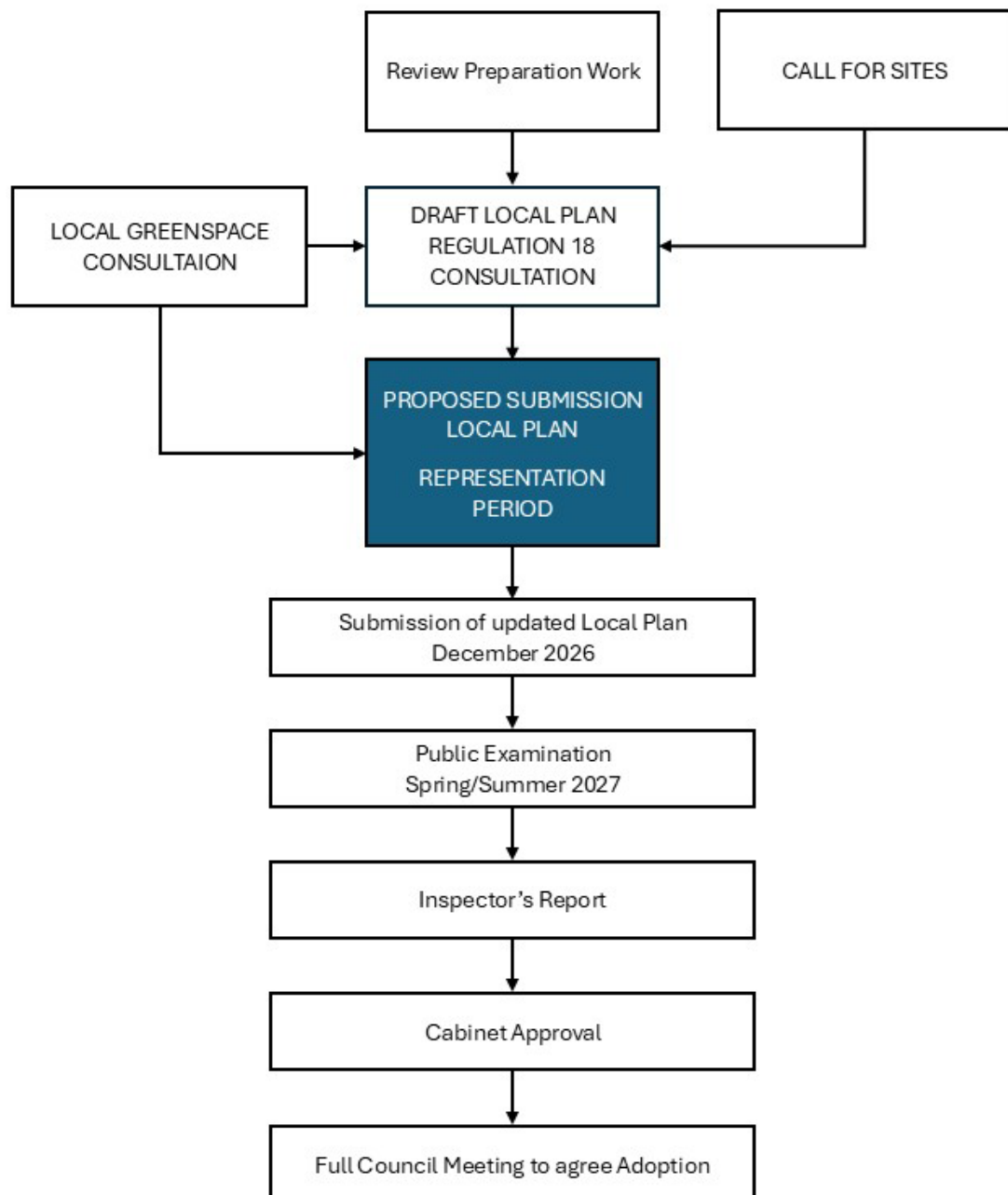
- 1.0.1** This consultation document contains draft policies and proposals for using and developing land throughout the Borough of Darlington.
- 1.0.2** The Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 was adopted by the Council on 17th February 2022 and replaced the Darlington Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy (May 2011) and the saved policies of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan (1997, including adopted alterations 2001).
- 1.0.3** The National Planning Policy Framework states that policies in Local Plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every 5 years and should then be updated as necessary. Reviews should be completed no later than 5 years from the adoption date of a plan and should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy. The Council is therefore reviewing the Local Plan to ensure its continued longevity. The reviewed Local Plan will run from 2025-2042.
- 1.0.4** This version of the plan has been updated having considered all comments received during the initial Regulation 18 consultation undertaken earlier in 2026. Additional evidence has also been prepared and has informed further changes.
- 1.0.5** This Consultation under Regulation 19 will allow stakeholders and local people to comment on the legal compliance and soundness of the proposed submission plan before examination by a Planning Inspector. All comments received at this consultation stage are passed to the planning inspector for consideration.
- ~~Following this consultation, the Council will consider the comments and any other evidence and will write a proposed submission version draft plan. This will be consulted on (under Regulation 19) later in 2026 and will be submitted with comments and other required documents to the Secretary of State by December 2026.~~
- 1.0.6** All applications for development must, by law, be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan, unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise. Figure1.1 shows the documents that make up the statutory development plan for Darlington.

Figure 1.1:

Relationship of the Local Plan to other planning policy documents covering Darlington Borough.



1.0.7 All the policies, proposals and site allocations are designed to address a range of specific issues, problems or challenges. Successful implementation of the policies and proposals in this document will contribute towards economic growth in Darlington and achieving sustainable development. There will be a number of stages involved in updating the Local Plan and these are indicated in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2:**Local Plan Review Process**

Context

- 1.1.1 The policies and proposals in this document have been prepared with regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), and sub-regional and local strategies.
- 1.1.2 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 through providing new housing to meet local needs; it supports the needs of our current and future workforce, and delivers other new developments with provision of key infrastructure.
- 1.1.3 The Localism Act 2011 introduced a 'duty to co-operate' requiring the Council to work with neighbouring Local Planning Authorities and other key stakeholders on cross-boundary planning issues and matters of strategic concern. The Act also introduced the concept of neighbourhood planning and the implications of this have also been taken into account in the preparation of this document.

Overview of Darlington Borough

- 1.2.1 Darlington Borough is a unitary local authority area that lies at the western extent of the Tees Valley, a Combined Authority area also comprising the unitary authorities of Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland, Middlesbrough and Stockton-on-Tees. The Borough is regarded as ~~the 'gateway'~~ strategically important to the Tees Valley and the wider North East region.
- 1.2.2 Darlington is a historic market town, surrounded by open countryside with many attractive rural villages. The town's development has been closely associated with the railway age and manufacturing. This includes the internationally significant Stockton and Darlington Railway which was the world's first publicly financed passenger railway and the world's first public railway on which a steam locomotive hauled passengers. This past industrial activity has left a legacy of unused and underused land, but it has also bestowed a wealth of buildings of architectural and historic interest dating from the railway age and the subsequent Victorian period, to complement buildings and urban layouts reflecting the town's Quaker community.
- 1.2.3 The Borough's range of cultural facilities, such as the Dolphin Centre, Hippodrome Theatre and Hopetown Darlington contribute to a good quality of life and help attract visitors. Hopetown Darlington opened in July 2024, a £37 million project investing in the Borough's rail heritage to create a national visitor destination in Darlington. An abundance of street trees and open space within the urban area contribute to the town's distinctiveness and biodiversity, particularly the green corridors along the River Skerne, Cocker Beck and Baydale Beck. Outside the urban area, a magnesian limestone escarpment forms higher land and a rare ecosystem at the northern fringe of the Borough. An attractive, biodiverse and often wooded landscape has evolved along the River Tees corridor, complemented

by more recent community woodland planting, especially at the urban fringe. The Borough hosts a variety of habitats and species, including some, like the black poplar and the great crested newt, that are rare and/or declining regionally or nationally.

- 1.2.4** The Borough has excellent national and international transport links by rail (East Coast Main Line), road (A1/M) and air (Teesside International Airport). The town centre provides employment, shops and services for large parts of North Yorkshire, south and west Durham, and the western part of the Tees Valley.
- 1.2.5** The Borough's current population is approximately 107,800 (Census, 2021). Between the last two censuses, the average (median) age of Darlington has increased by two years, from 41 to 43 years of age. This ageing population is caused by declining birth rates over recent decades and by out-migration of young, well-educated adults seeking better employment opportunities elsewhere. Approximately 20% of the population is over 65 (NOMIS). There are also marked contrasts in the life opportunities of people in the Borough, according to where they live.
- 1.2.6** The Borough's economy has performed strongly over recent years, shifting from its past reliance on manufacturing to one with a wider, more resilient base. On the ground this can be seen with the opening of a number of 'Storage and Distribution Hubs', including the Amazon Distribution Centre, and an increase in public sector employment with the creation of the Darlington Economic Campus, occupied by numerous government departments, including HM Treasury. Further investment is also committed to the expansion of the Darlington Economic Campus, Darlington Science Park at Central Park, ancillary industries at Teesside International Airport and speculative development of warehousing and commercial premises.

National Planning Policy Context

- 1.3.1** The Local Plan has been prepared so that it is consistent with the principles and policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024), including the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Council Plan: 2024 – 2027

- 1.5.1** The Council Plan outlines the Council's long-term ambitions for Darlington. The Council Plan's vision is for Darlington to be one of the best places to live, learn, work and invest in the UK, with a strong and sustainable economy, healthy thriving communities and opportunities for all. It recognises the fundamental link between health, wellbeing and the economy. It is shaped by the building blocks of good health with a focus on a good job, home and social connections.
- 1.5.2** The key priorities are:
- Economy

- A strong sustainable economy and a highly skilled workforce with opportunities for all.
- Homes
 - Affordable and secure homes that meet the current and future needs of residents.
- Living Well
 - A healthier and better quality of life for longer, supporting those who need it most.
- Children and Young People
 - The best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations.
- Communities
 - Safer, healthier, and more engaged communities.
- Local Environment
 - A well-connected, clean and sustainable borough.

Other Policies, Plans, Strategies and Studies

- 1.6.1** The preparation of this document has been informed by policies, plans, strategies and studies prepared by the Council and its partners. Examples include the Tees Valley ~~Strategic Economic~~ Local Growth Plan (~~2016-2026~~) (2026-2036), the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan (2020-2030), Draft Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the Darlington Economic Strategy (2016-2026), the Darlington Housing Strategy (2012-2017), Darlington Transport Plan (2022–2030), Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan (2022-2030), Darlington Joint Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2025), Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy (2013-2026), Darlington Climate Change & Nature Strategy (2025-2040), Darlington Tree and Woodland Strategy (2021-2031) and the Tees Valley Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (2011) which includes the Coal Authority's coal legacy and resources register.

Duty to Co-operate

- 1.7.1** The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that co-operation should produce effective policies on cross-boundary strategic matters. The Council considers that the Duty to Co-operate affects Darlington in the following ways:

- Working with neighbouring authorities to identify and address strategic cross-boundary issues.
- Developing an evidence base to support the review of the Local Plan.
- Working with other public and private sector bodies, along with utility and infrastructure providers.

- 1.7.2** The full list of bodies included within the Duty to Co-operate is specified in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012).

- 1.7.3** A full statement of the actions taken by the Council under the Duty to Co-operate will be published in Statements of Common Ground alongside the reviewed Local Plan.

Sustainable Economic Growth

- 1.8.1** The NPPF states that planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver homes, business and industrial premises, infrastructure and thriving local places. The Local Plan 2025-2042 provides that focus with more detailed policies and site allocations, reflecting economic forecasts and priorities identified in the Darlington Economic Strategy (2016-2026) and the Tees Valley ~~Strategic Economic~~ Local Growth Plan (~~2016-2026~~) (2026-2036).
- 1.8.2** The Local Plan 2025-2042 recognises the contribution that housebuilding makes to the local economy. Land is allocated for approximately ~~5,195~~ 5,109 homes with an additional ~~3,836~~ 3,365 (approx.) expected to be delivered via existing planning permissions over the plan period. A range of previously developed land and greenfield sites provide choice both within and on the edge of the urban area and at the large service villages⁽¹⁾.
- 1.8.3** In order to create Economic Growth through further employment options, sites have to be available and have to be able to be flexibly used for different ranges of sectors and commercial development. Opportunities for further investment in Darlington will be accommodated through a diverse portfolio of sites and locations. Our ambition to achieve ~~6,400~~ 5,998 net additional jobs over the ~~16~~ 17-year plan period requires suitable locations to grow the economy, which are identified through the Local Plan 2025-2042. This equates to ~~400~~ 353 jobs per annum which is slightly above the 350 jobs per annum calculated in the Employment Land Needs Report (2017), which informed the current adopted Local Plan (2016-2036).
- 1.8.4** The significant contribution of Darlington Town Centre and retailing to the local economy is also recognised, as is the potential of railway heritage tourism. A Town Centre Strategy (2019-30), the Town Centre Fringe Master Plan (2013) and the Northgate Masterplan (2023) have informed allocations for retail, mixed use, leisure and commercial development.
- 1.8.5** New development needs to be supported by appropriate infrastructure. This document identifies key investment priorities including highway improvements, vital utility improvements and a new north-south green corridor through the Town Centre Fringe, focused on the River Skerne.

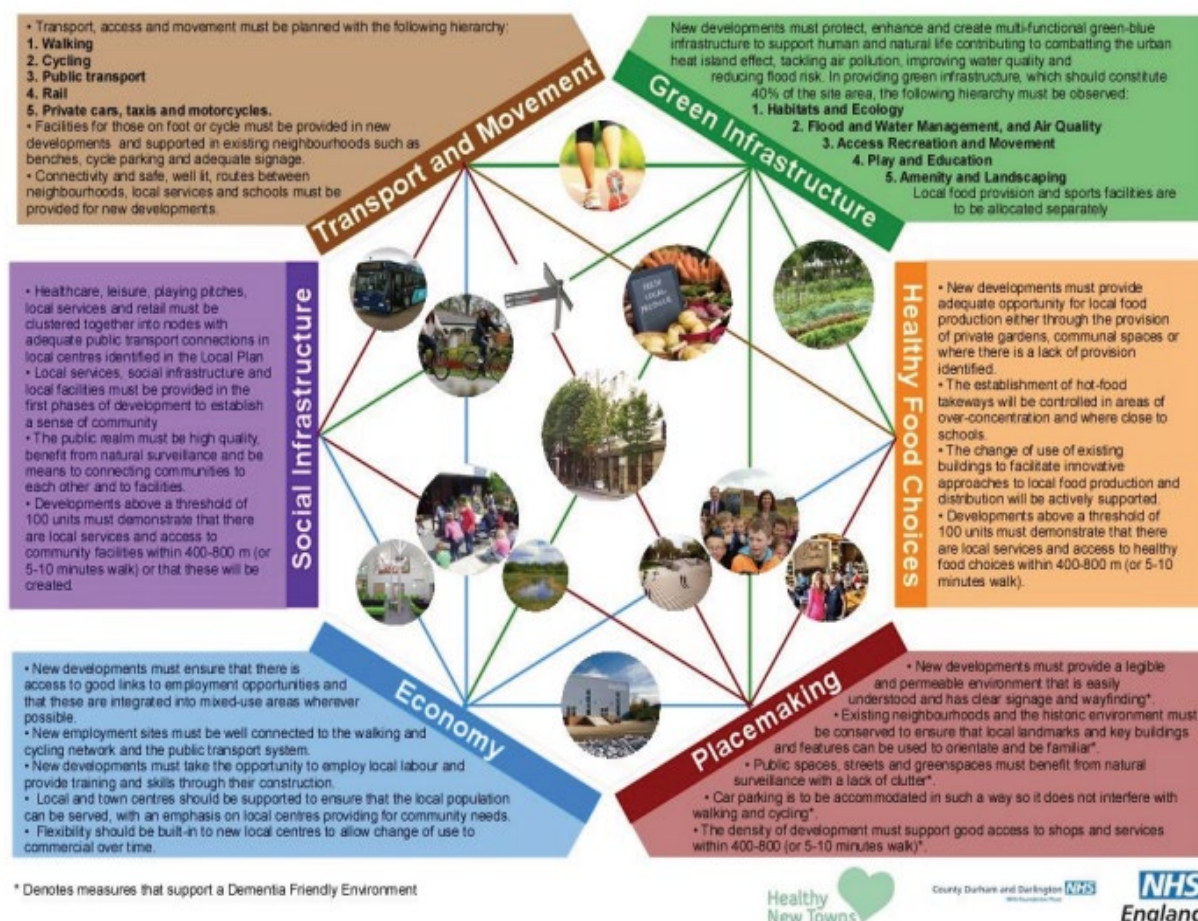
¹ Defined in Policy SD 2

Health & Wellbeing

- 1.9.1** There is an increasing body of evidence linking the quality of the built and natural environment with health and wellbeing outcomes. Access to greenspace, social infrastructure, active travel choices and the availability of local goods and services are all key determinants of both mental and physical health. The links between planning, the environment and health are being explored by a number of bodies including the NHS, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Local Nature Partnerships and voluntary and community organisations. Both the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) have been actively involved in developing guidance to inform Local Plans and decision making and there is a high degree of commonality between approaches. In the context of an ageing population and lifestyle related disease the importance of planning for health is clear, and the Darlington Local Plan seeks to integrate best practice approaches.
- 1.9.2** Darlington was an NHS Healthy New Towns pilot site alongside nine others across England. This pilot allowed the sharing of best practice and access to research and development across a number of areas including green infrastructure, design, sustainable transport, placemaking and the public realm. The evidence bases and learning gained through this programme informed policy development across the Plan. Many of the principles were tested with local stakeholders and developers to ensure that they were aspirational, realistic and deliverable.
- 1.9.3** Within the Local Plan the six Darlington Healthy New Towns Design Principles (see Figure 1.3) have informed the suite of policies, with a particular emphasis on design, green infrastructure and the strategic allocations, to meet the ambition to create a Local Plan that secures better health and wellbeing outcomes for all.

Figure 1.3

HEALTHY NEW TOWNS - DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Neighbourhood Planning

1.10.1 The Localism Act 2011 gave local communities the power to help decide where development should go and the type and design of development, by preparing neighbourhood plans for their areas. They can be prepared by Town or Parish Councils, or in areas without a parish by Neighbourhood Forums. The Act requires the Borough Council to support work on neighbourhood plans.

1.10.2 Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with strategic policies included in the Local Plan, as detailed below:

- SD 1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- SD 2 – Settlement Hierarchy
- SD 3 – Development Limits
- DC 1 - Sustainable Design Principles
- DC 2 – Climate Change

- DC 3 – Flood Risk and Water Management
- HC 1 – Health and Wellbeing
- H 1 - Housing Requirement
- H 2 - Housing Allocations
- H 3 – Housing Mix
- H 5 - Affordable Housing
- H 6 – Rural Exception Sites
- H 7 - Residential Development in the Countryside
- ~~H 9 – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation~~
- H 10 - Skerningham Strategic Allocation
- H 11 – Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ Strategic Site Allocation
- H 12 – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation
- E 1 – Safeguarding Existing Employment Land
- E 2 - Employment Allocations
- E 3 - Economic Development in the Open Countryside
- TC 1 – Darlington Town Centre
- TC 4 – District and Local Centres
- TC 5 – Retail Impact Assessment Threshold
- ENV 1 - Protecting, Enhancing and Promoting Darlington's Historic Environment
- ENV 2 - Stockton and Darlington Railway
- ENV 3 - Local Landscape Character
- ENV 4 - Green and Blue Infrastructure
- ENV 7 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Development
- ENV 8 – Assessing a Development's Impact on Biodiversity
- ENV 10 – Trees and Hedges
- ENV 11 – Nutrient Neutrality
- IN 1 - Delivering a Sustainable Transport Network
- IN 2 - Improving Access and Accessibility
- IN 3 – Transport Assessment and Travel Plan
- IN 5 – Airport Safety
- IN 6 - Utilities Infrastructure
- IN 8 – Broadband Infrastructure
- IN 9 - Renewable and Energy Efficient Infrastructure
- IN 10 - Supporting the Delivery of Community and Social Infrastructure

1.10.3 Once made, Neighbourhood Plans become part of the statutory development plan. There are currently two made Neighbourhood Plans in the Borough:

- Low Coniscliffe & Merrybent Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2018 – 2036).
- Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan (2022-2036).

Further plans may be made in due course and become part of the Development Plan for Darlington.

Viability and Deliverability

- 1.11.1** Nationally, planning policy highlights the importance of ensuring plans are deliverable. It states that policies, planning conditions and obligations should not undermine the deliverability of the plan². The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)³ also states that: “where up to date policies have set out the contributions expected from development, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable”. Viability assessments should be undertaken at plan making stage and should reflect the recommended national approach set out in National Planning Practice Guidance. It will be up to applicants to demonstrate whether particular circumstances justify the need for a viability assessment at the application stage. If so, this should be based upon, and refer back to, the Local Plan Viability Assessment and will be made publicly available.
- 1.11.2** National policy highlights the need for local authorities to take account of changes in market conditions over time and notes there is a degree of flexibility required within the planning policy framework, to prevent planned development being stalled.
- 1.11.3** In negotiating planning conditions early, the overall sustainability of schemes is paramount, and conditions should be kept to a minimum as outlined in national policy⁴. These established considerations of conditions will have to inform any negotiations on planning obligations.

² NPPF, Dec 2024, Para 35

³ NPPF, Dec 2024, Para 59

⁴ NPPF, Dec 2024, Para 57

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations

- 1.12.1** The Local Plan must be subject to ongoing Sustainability Appraisal (SA) throughout its preparation, including specific consideration of environmental, health, equalities and rural impacts. This seeks to identify the likely impacts and how they might be addressed to ensure the effectiveness of this document in achieving economic, social and environmental goals. The SA has been used in a proactive way to help shape emerging themes, objectives and actions. An updated SA report ~~will be~~ is published to accompany ~~the~~ this Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Local Plan.
- 1.12.2** Alongside the SA, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report ~~is~~ has being been prepared. The purpose of the HRA is to identify whether the proposed policies set out within the Local Plan, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, are likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity of any ~~Natura 2000~~ European Sites. The requirement to carry out this assessment is set out within the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations. The HRA Screening Report concludes that some of the Local Plan policies are ~~is not~~ likely to give rise to ~~any negative impacts~~ significant adverse effects on ~~any Natura 2000 sites as a result of the adoption of the document in the Borough of Darlington and therefore an Appropriate Assessment is not required.~~ The Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area and Ramsar. A HRA Appropriate Assessment was undertaken and this has concluded that with mitigation through the inclusion of Policy ENV11 in the Local Plan none of the policies or site allocations would result in harm to the integrity of a European site or its conservation objectives. This also took in to account in-combination effects with other relevant plans and strategies.

2. VISION, AIMS and OBJECTIVES

Local Plan Vision

- 2.1.1** The Vision for the Local Plan, set out below, reflects comments made during the Strategic Issues and Scoping consultation process and sets out what the Plan is seeking to achieve.

'In 2042, Darlington Borough will have maintained its identity as a cohesive historic market town situated amongst countryside and villages, whilst developing its reputation for ingenuity and its status as an economic driver in the Tees Valley. Its coherent community, natural and historic environment will be enhanced and will continue to be cherished, protected and celebrated. Work between the Council, government, public and private sectors and residents will have created a resilient town able to respond and adapt to climate change. Residents of Darlington will be healthier and will experience a better quality of life for longer. The opportunities available in Darlington and its links with other centres will make the Borough an attractive place for both residential and commercial investment, with the Borough's needs for housing, jobs and other development being met, supported by new and improved built and green infrastructure and community facilities. Together, with excellent national and regional connectivity and accessibility, these characteristics will mean Darlington continues to thrive and be a great place to live, work and invest.'

- 2.1.2** The following Aims and Objectives will provide the link between the Vision and the spatial strategy. They represent a translation of the Vision into specific themes and what this will mean for place making in the Darlington context if it is to be successful.

Overarching Aims

- Deliver sustainable development to meet the Borough's needs through a cohesive plan which makes the best use of land and resources.
- Protect and enhance the quality of Darlington's built, natural and historic environment, and to use it positively to create great places.
- Deliver new development that is capable of facilitating local or strategic infrastructure.
- Contribute to the satisfaction, fulfilment, health and wellbeing of the population of the Borough.

Specific Aims and Objectives

1. Facilitating Economic Growth – facilitate sustainable economic growth of ~~6,400~~ 5,998 new jobs within the Borough.

In order to deliver this Aim we have the following Objectives:

- a) Create the conditions to attract and retain investment, with a range and continuous supply of employment development opportunities in sustainable locations.
- b) Provide a choice and range of sites capable of delivering this growth. These will include established areas of existing economic development but will also be flexible enough to be responsive to accommodate growth industries or the changing needs of established sectors.
- c) Support clusters of economic activity in the context of the Tees Valley ~~Strategic Economic Plan~~ Local Growth Plan and the Council's Economic Strategy.
- d) Promote Darlington Town Centre as the main location for shopping, leisure, culture and employment and strengthen its role as a regional centre for such activities.
- e) Diversify the rural economy to support businesses and existing communities whilst also protecting the Borough's valued open countryside.
- f) Facilitate the delivery of strategic infrastructure that supports economic growth, including the supply of appropriate housing.

2. Meeting Housing Needs – enable the development of ~~9,031~~ 8,474 new homes in order to meet the housing needs and aspirations of those living and working in the Borough.

In order to deliver this Aim we have the following Objectives:

- a) Maintain a supply of land for new housing developments that meets the needs of the growing number of households in Urban and Rural areas of the Borough.
- b) Achieve and maintain a 5-year supply of housing land.
- c) Provide a range of housing products providing types and tenures of homes suitable for all people, including people who are unable to access housing on the open market and for the Borough's ageing population.
- d) To have a portfolio of sites of different sizes, different housing products and delivery rates for the short, medium and long term.

3. A Well-Connected Borough – to capitalise on Darlington's excellent existing connections to the national strategic transport network and seek improvements to regional connectivity across the Borough. New development that supports delivery of key infrastructure and a sustainable pattern for growth will be supported.

In order to deliver this Aim we have the following Objectives:

- a) Ensure that new development is in places where it will be **reasonably** accessible by public transport, cycling and walking.
- b) Maintain and improve transport links between communities within the Borough and further afield.
- c) Support development that enhances regionally and nationally important transport links including those offered by Darlington Station, Teesside International Airport, Teesport and the Strategic Road Network.
- d) To improve the local highway network by managing our strategic highway demands.
- e) Delivery of communication infrastructure, including broadband, to enhance business and social interaction.

4. Create Cohesive, Proud & Healthy Communities – create and support cohesive communities through good place-making to achieve lively, well-located and distinctive places with an increased sense of civic pride.

In order to deliver this Aim we have the following Objectives:

- a) Protect, maintain and enhance Darlington's historic environment and identity as a historic market town, set amongst countryside and surrounding villages with strong links to **Railway**, Quaker, **and** Industrial and internationally significant Railway heritage.
- b) Maintain a vibrant, attractive and safe market town centre that embraces its historic character whilst functioning as a modern centre offering retail, culture, leisure, tourism and employment opportunities.
- c) Secure provision of necessary infrastructure to support growth including improvements to existing services.
- d) Ensure convenient access to local goods and services.
- e) Ensure residents have reasonable access to education facilities within the Borough and where necessary developers should contribute to the provision of education facilities in sustainable locations.
- f) Improve access to green spaces for leisure and recreation.
- g) To build healthier homes and environments that support independence at all stages of life.
- h) Tackle unhealthy environments by creating **walkable** active travel neighbourhoods, delivering improved infrastructure for safe, active travel and more accessible public transport.
- i) Create connected neighbourhoods, with local social infrastructure and inclusive public spaces that enable people of all ages and abilities from all backgrounds to develop strong communities.

- j) Create healthy workplaces, schools and leisure facilities that make the most of opportunities to encourage physical activity, healthy eating and positive mental health and wellbeing.

5. Protect, Restore and Enhance the Countryside and Natural Environment – maintain and enhance the biodiversity, character and appearance of the countryside and wildlife habitats.

In order to deliver this Aim we have the following Objectives:

- a) Development within and around existing urban areas will be expected to protect, and add to, the Borough's rich and accessible existing Green Infrastructure network.
- b) Improve the amount of quality accessible greenspace where deficiencies in provision are identified.
- c) Protect and enhance biodiversity and support nature and habitat restoration across the Borough.
- d) Mitigate flood risks through environmental and ecological improvement of the River Skerne and River Tees and their tributaries.
- e) Improve the connectivity of habitats through the creation and/or enhancement of corridors and stepping stones.

6. Responding to Climate Change and Reducing Energy Consumption – support the national commitment for net zero carbon and greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 through the continued move towards a net zero carbon community by encouraging efficient use of resources, good design and well-located development, whilst increasing resilience to impacts from climate change.

In order to deliver this Aim we have the following Objectives:

- a) Manage flood risk from all sources.
- b) Maximise opportunities to generate and use renewable energy in all developments.
- c) Actively encourage energy and water efficient design in all new and existing housing, industrial and commercial developments.
- d) Locate development in areas not susceptible to flooding and encourage flood resilient design where necessary.

3 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 3.1.1** The NPPF requires policies in local plans to follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development so that it is clear that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay.
- 3.1.2** Policy SD 1 will help to ensure that decisions are made in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Policy SD 1

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development (Strategic Policy)

A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in Darlington Borough.

Planning applications that accord with policies in the development plan⁽⁵⁾ will be approved without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, the Council will grant planning permission unless:

- the application of policies in the National Planning Policy Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed, or
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

This policy will be implemented and monitored by making and reviewing decisions on planning applications.

The Settlement Hierarchy

- 3.2.1** There is a need to make clear 'spatial' choices for the distribution of new development across the Local Plan area, thereby reflecting and supporting the specific roles and functions of different communities, helping “place-shaping” and ensuring that they are linked by sustainable ~~patterns-of~~ transport. Failure to respect the scale and function of places can lead to inappropriate development and result in unsustainable patterns of transportation, loss of environmental

⁵ The Darlington Borough development plan consists of the Local Plan, Tees Valley Joint Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD), Tees Valley Joint Minerals and Waste Policies and Sites DPD and made neighbourhood plans.

Policy SD 2

Settlement Hierarchy (Strategic Policy)

The broad distribution of development in the Local Plan area will be shaped by the role and function of places, based on the following hierarchy of settlements:

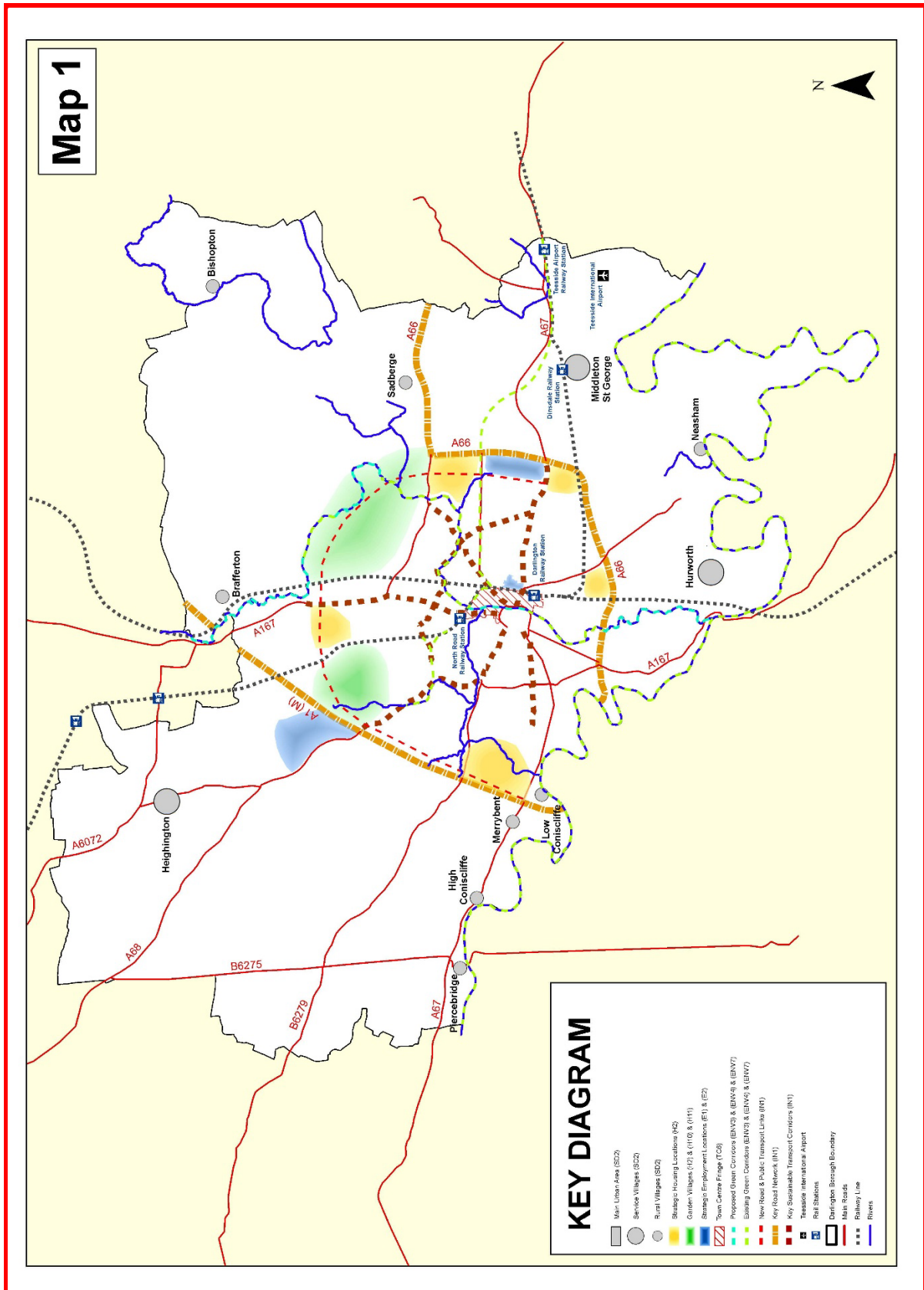
1. **Darlington Urban Area** - will remain the focus of future development within the Borough. As a single urban centre within the Borough it will aim to maintain its role as a leading sub-regional centre for transport connectivity, services, employment and retail and leisure. Sustainable and accessible locations will be selected to enable further development.
2. **Service Villages (Heighington, Hurworth and Middleton St George)** - will be maintained as villages that offer a range of facilities and services, where a level of development will meet local needs and facilitate the economic diversification of rural areas. Development should safeguard and reinforce the distinctive character of each settlement and not detract from their landscape setting.
3. **Rural Villages (Bishopton, Brafferton, High Coniscliffe, Low Coniscliffe, Merrybent, Neasham, Piercebridge, Sadberge)** - The character of the Rural Villages, including their relationship to and setting within the surrounding countryside, will be protected and where possible enhanced. Development in these villages will make efficient and sustainable use of existing buildings and infill opportunities. On the edges of Rural Villages, housing development will meet clearly identified local [affordable housing](#) needs, recognising that an element of open market housing may be required to deliver essential affordable units.

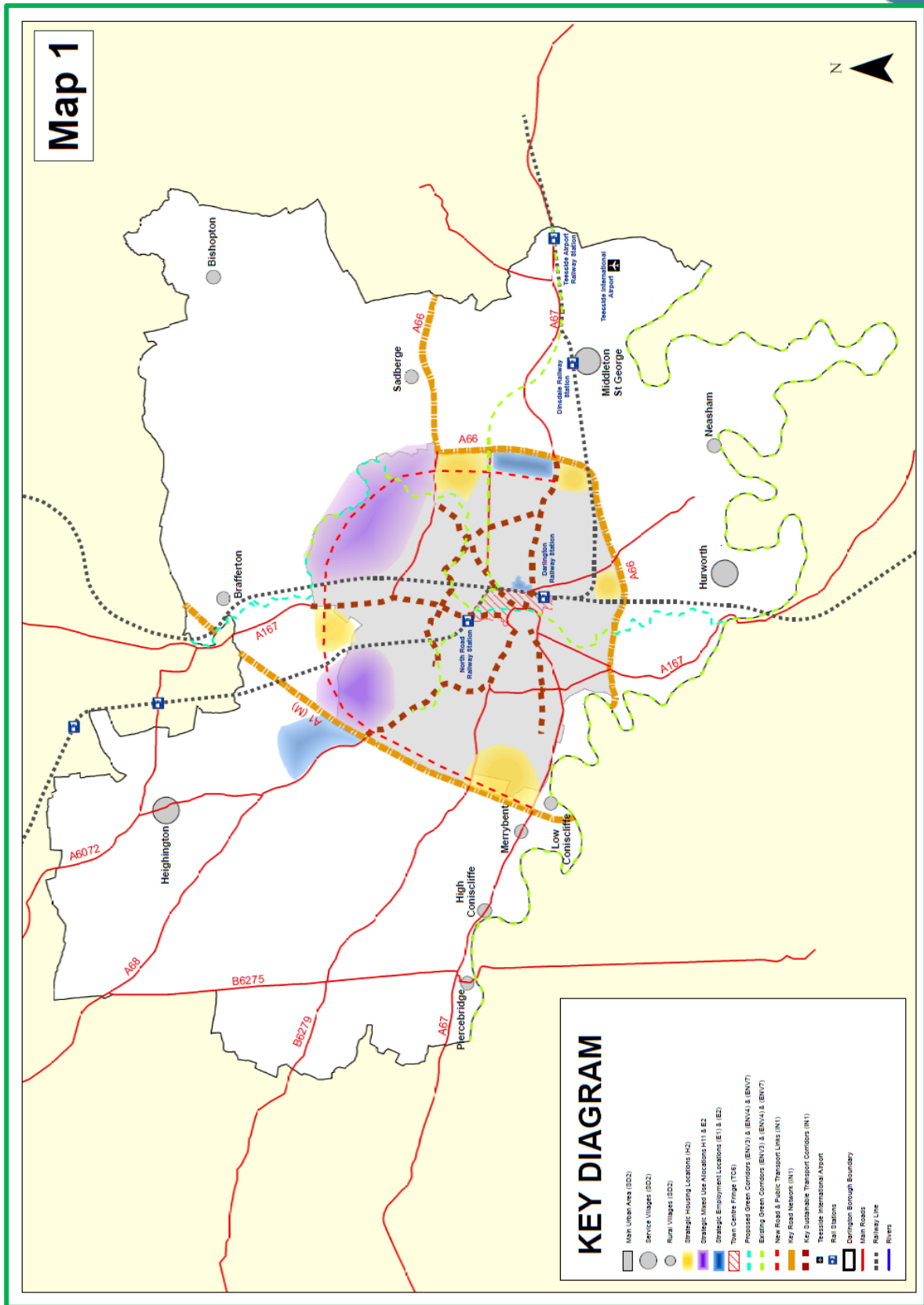
In meeting the objectives for each level of the settlement hierarchy, development should not compromise the ability to meet the objectives for other tiers in the hierarchy.

Only those places with defined Development Limits are classified as settlements for the purposes of this Policy. All areas outside the Development Limits are to be regarded as 'countryside' unless specifically identified for other uses in the plan (including Policies E 1 and E 2). The Development Limits are defined on the Policies Map.

- 3.2.2** The Key Diagram shown overleaf identifies the key strategic locations for development.

Map 3.1 Key Diagram





Urban Area

- 3.2.3** Darlington has excellent national and international transport links, by rail (East Coast Main Line), road (A1M) and air (Teesside International Airport). Its 'gateway' location, accessibility and attractive environment make it perfectly placed within North East England and the Tees Valley to attract investment and economic activity that might not otherwise come to the region or sub-region. It is a key centre within the Tees Valley City Region, with potential to contribute significantly to regional economic growth across a range of sectors.
- 3.2.4** Darlington is an important location for employment development, a sub-regional centre for retail and leisure uses, and a strategic public transport hub. The town centre provides employment, shops and services for large parts of North Yorkshire and South and West Durham and the western part of the Tees Valley, and is rated third in North East England in terms of shopping venue quality⁶. The Borough provides housing to meet the needs of local people and many of those who work in the town and also helps to meet some of the housing needs of a wider area, particularly those arising from those on higher incomes working across the Tees Valley.
- 3.2.5** **New** Land will be required for the employment, services, infrastructure and new housing associated with population and economic growth. Priority will be given to land and buildings in accessible and sustainable locations, where these can accommodate the specific needs of the developments proposed, and where this does not prejudice heritage or nature conservation or impinge on land protected for recreational purposes.
- 3.2.6** The town centre will continue to be the primary retail centre in the Borough. It will be enhanced and safeguarded as such and will be expected to accommodate additional mixed-use development for much of the plan period. The Council accepts that the face of retailing is changing and the roles of town centres need to change to reflect that, with a more flexible approach to uses within the high street, including encouraging people to live in town centres. The town centre will also continue to be a key location and first priority for office development and other town centre uses, including an office-led scheme on previously developed land in the East Street area.
- 3.2.7** New development and regeneration in the Town Centre Fringe, including the new Civil Service office at Brunswick Street, will be key to delivering the vision for Darlington over the medium to longer term. The area is critical to improving links between the town centre, Central Park and the main railway station, which are all close by. It provides opportunities for new employment, leisure/culture, recreation and housing in a highly accessible location, and for local pockets of deprivation, poor housing and environmental quality to be tackled comprehensively. Development will have to take into account constraints (such as flood risk) which will shape the eventual pattern of redevelopment there.

⁶ Venuescore 2016

- 3.2.8** In selecting the broad locations for new housing development, the urban fringe has been identified as the most sustainable, suitable, available and developable, provided that appropriate community infrastructure and sustainable transport provision is made and potential adverse impacts of development there are mitigated.

Outside the Urban Area

- 3.2.9** The Borough's villages and countryside are an integral part of what makes Darlington an attractive place to live. Their vitality and viability need to be safeguarded and strengthened, whether it be by retaining services or supporting new development, such as affordable housing, that help to maintain sustainable communities. The larger villages of Heighington, Hurworth/Hurworth Place and Middleton St George have a range of services which means they are well placed to accommodate some development which would also assist in providing for a range of sites within the Borough.
- 3.2.10** Service Villages are those that provide a core set of essential services for local communities. They must contain a school, village/community hall, and convenience store. It is also essential that they are well connected to higher service centres (towns) by public transport.
- 3.2.11** Given that the Service Villages are shown to contain essential facilities and services, they are considered to be locations where development opportunities may be acceptable. As centres for activity in the rural area, Service Villages can also play a role in providing small-scale employment opportunities outside of the traditional rural industries. Developments that enhance this role should be supported.
- 3.2.12** The Rural Villages are generally of a very small scale and offer limited, and in some cases, no service provision. Sustainable development opportunities within the defined Development Limits of these villages will be supported, including infill development and the conversion of existing buildings. New housing development on the edge of Rural Villages (outside the defined Development Limits) will be required to meet local and other functional needs, i.e. through the delivery of 'exception(s) sites' (affordable housing schemes), allowing for an element of open market housing where this helps the viability and deliverability of an exception(s) site as a whole. Housing development that meets a functional need includes that which provides essential accommodation for those involved in land management or other countryside activities. The development of new services will be supported. However, the growth of Rural Villages as a sole means of generating additional demand for services will not be supported where such growth would have an adverse impact on the character of the village, or on the viability of a service in a nearby village.

Development Limits

Policy SD 3

Development Limits (Strategic Policy)

Development within the limits identified on the Policies Map will be acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant national and local policies.

- 3.3.1** Development limits are a planning policy tool in the Local Plan, to help to achieve the locational strategy for new development. The Local Plan's aims and objectives set out that development will be expected to be in sustainable locations, within and around existing urban areas in order to protect the Borough's green infrastructure network. The development limits help preserve the distinctive identities of existing settlements, protect the open countryside between settlements and preserve the countryside's intrinsic character and beauty. There are a number of other non-housing allocations beyond development limits that are considered appropriate locations for their identified use (Policies E1 and E2).
- 3.3.2** The limits, defined through Policy SD 3, will provide more certainty as to where development will or will not generally be permitted.
- 3.3.3** Work to identify where the edge of the built-up area ends and the countryside begins has been undertaken in the preparation of these limits to development. This has taken into account factors such as the nature of the land use or building and whether it would be typically located within the urban area or the countryside. The limits follow clearly defined permanent features such as walls, fences or roads, wherever possible.
- 3.3.4** The development limits have been drawn to include areas identified for future planned growth of housing and employment adjoining the urban area, such as Skerningham, Burtree ~~Garden Village~~, West Park ~~Garden Village~~ and Great Burdon. In addition to the main urban area a similar exercise has been undertaken for the Borough's villages. It should be noted that not all of the Borough's villages have development limits. In these areas policies relating to development in the countryside will apply.

4 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Sustainable Design

- 4.1.1** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that “Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”. One of the overarching aims of this Local Plan is to 'create great places' in which to live, work and invest - the key to achieving this is through promoting good design principles. New buildings and public spaces should reflect these principles and seek to enhance the local character and distinctiveness of the area, whilst also reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions. Development proposals should have regard to the principles in the National Design Guide and Darlington Design of New Development SPD in considering design. The Darlington Design of New Development SPD is in the process of being updated to reflect latest national standards, and the latest national guidance should take precedence in the interim.

Policy DC 1

Sustainable Design Principles (Strategic Policy)

Good design is required to create attractive and desirable places where people want to live, work and invest. All development will be required to have regard to the design principles in the Darlington Design of New Development SPD⁽⁷⁾ and National Design Guide (or successors) by demonstrating that:

- a. An analysis of the constraints and opportunities of the site and the function of development has informed the principles of design, including;
 - i. that the proposal has a clear and distinct identity that responds to the local character and environment.
 - ii. that the detailed design responds positively to the local context, in terms of its scale, form, height, layout, materials, colouring, boundary treatments, fenestration and architectural detailing;
 - iii. that the proposal has taken account of the need to safeguard or enhance important views and vistas, having regard to their significance and the wider benefits of the proposal; and
 - iv. the layout of the development maximises opportunities for natural surveillance, and routes and public spaces are overlooked.

⁷ Revised Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document, Darlington Borough Council, July 2011 (or subsequent replacement).

- b. The proposal provides suitable and safe vehicular access and suitable servicing and parking arrangements in accordance with Policy IN 4. Parking should be arranged to avoid streets and spaces becoming visually dominated by vehicles. Long, uninterrupted runs of parking spaces or large un-landscaped areas of grouped parking should be avoided.
- c. The layout of the proposal, associated green infrastructure, and landscaping has been developed to complement and enhance both the ecological function of the local area and character of the built and natural environment, retaining and enhancing the ecological, landscape and recreational value of existing features of interest such as watercourses. Proposals should feature native and/or naturalised tree types and plant species characteristic of the area.
- d. Private and communal amenity space is well-defined, defensible and appropriate in its design, size and location to the needs of its users.
- e. Proposals for development on land affected by contamination will be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate that the site is suitable for the proposed use and development will not result in unacceptable risks to human health or the environment including watercourses and groundwater.

~~All major new residential development will be required to conduct a Building for a Healthy Life Assessment (or successor document). Schemes should secure as many greens as possible, whilst minimising the number of ambers. Schemes with one or more red will not be acceptable and will be refused planning permission unless significant overriding reasons can be demonstrated.~~

Extensions

Extensions, additions and alterations must be subservient to the original building and should respect its scale, form, proportions, character and appearance, and that of the locality. Extensions or alterations that would harm the character and appearance of the original building or the surrounding area will be refused.

Extensions should not result in overdevelopment of the plot. Adequate space should be retained around the extended building for circulation, parking (where necessary) and amenity space (for dwellings).

Shopfront Design

The design of shopfronts should enhance the character and legibility of the street and complement the character of the building they are part of. This includes the overall scale and proportions of the shopfront as well as the materials and colours used in construction. Fascia signs and projecting signs should not be overly large and should be designed to be appropriate to the scale, character and design of the shopfront. Proposals for projecting signs also need to address any highway safety issues.

Design Fundamentals

- 4.2.1** Design is not just about the architecture or style of a building. It is also about the spaces in and around the development, the quality of the relationships between the development and surrounding areas and the appropriateness of the function of the building in its context. Darlington is experiencing ongoing change and good design will help to maintain a 'sense of place'. In turn this improves the quality of

the built environment, its public spaces, its heritage and local distinctiveness, which all contribute to the community's quality of life.

- 4.2.2** Developers will be required to carry out contextual site surveys, which should be used to inform the design concept. Applicants should be able to demonstrate how good design principles and adopted design policy have been applied in terms of influencing the function, scale, detailing and character of development in addition to the materials used in construction and the quality of the public realm. This should include consideration of the Revised Design of New Development SPD⁽⁸⁾. Innovative design solutions will be encouraged where appropriate within the context of the other policy provisions within this plan.
- 4.2.3** Housing developments have in recent decades been criticised for their uniform and standardised appearance. In order to avoid creating homogeneous and sterile neighbourhoods, developers will be required to incorporate a mix of property types of a varying scale, utilising a range of complementary materials wherever possible. Similarly, the layout of development should encourage integration with surrounding areas and not be inward facing.
- 4.2.4** Proposals for the extension or alteration of existing buildings should respect the character and scale of the original building, drawing reference from the materials and detailing used in the original building and ensuring that the original building remains the principal feature of development. However, it is recognised that the use of alternative materials and detailing in extensions and alterations can, in some cases, enhance the character of an existing building and / or the surrounding area. The Local Planning Authority will encourage contemporary and innovative design solutions that enhance local character. For extensions and alterations to residential properties, proposals will be required to accord with the appropriate design guidance.
- 4.2.5** Access and parking are also dealt with elsewhere in the plan in Policy IN 2 and Policy IN 4, however they also have design considerations so these policies should be considered in tandem. Parking should be well-designed and located, so that it is convenient and accessible, but does not lead to streets and spaces becoming visually dominated by vehicles. A variety of parking solutions should be used within larger developments to minimise the visual impact of vehicles within the street scene. Parking areas should be thoughtfully landscaped and their visual impact minimised, paved with a variety of robust standard materials, and provide clear and accessible routes for pedestrians.
- 4.2.6** Physical Infrastructure, such as utilities and telecommunications including broadband provision, also need to be included in the design for new developments and are covered in the plan under the physical infrastructure section.

⁸ Revised Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document, Darlington Borough Council, July 2011 (or subsequent replacement)

Public Realm

- 4.2.7** 'Public realm' refers to the publicly accessible areas between buildings; the streets, paths, squares and parks that people use and move through on a day-to-day basis. Ensuring a high-quality, safe and accessible public realm is an essential part of creating environments that people want to live, work and invest in.
- 4.2.8** Developers will be required to demonstrate a clear and understandable relationship between the design of the public realm and the surrounding built and natural environment, building upon local character and distinctiveness and reinforcing the sense of place.
- 4.2.9** The public realm should be accessible to all members of the community and maximise opportunities for pedestrians and cycling within, to and from development. Within larger developments the public realm should also be considered as a wider network of publicly accessible spaces, which should be linked together in order to create sustainable and accessible neighbourhoods.
- 4.2.10** The design of the public realm can help to promote safe communities by limiting the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour to take place. To this end, where appropriate, new development proposals will be required to demonstrate the application of 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design' and 'Secured by Design' principles, which look at the following aspects of development as a means of creating safe environments:
- Environmental quality
 - Natural surveillance
 - Access and footpaths
 - Green infrastructure provision; and
 - Lighting.
- 4.2.11** This policy will be implemented and monitored by making and reviewing decisions on planning applications taking into consideration the Local Authorities obligations as set out in Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Development on Brownfield sites and land which may be affected by contamination

- 4.2.12** Brownfield sites selected for redevelopment may be contaminated as a result of previous uses. It is desirable that such sites which are otherwise suitable for development are brought back into productive use, but it is essential that the health and wellbeing of construction workers or the end users of any development are not put at unacceptable risk. Therefore, proposals for development on land which is likely to be affected by contamination will be permitted only if the applicant can demonstrate that the site is or will be made safe for the proposed development and surroundings.
- 4.2.13** The Council will have regard to Government and other appropriate regional guidance [and the Darlington Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy \(June, 2021\)](#) when assessing land contamination reports submitted as part of the

planning process. In considering outline applications, sufficient information will be required to enable the Council to be satisfied that the development can be carried out and used safely, and that any outstanding problems are capable of solution and can be dealt with as matters of detail.

Shopfront Design

- 4.2.14** Shopfronts and their associated advertisements play a vital role in determining the character of retail centres and shopping streets, primarily because they are the section of the building which has direct interface with the public realm and an immediate relationship with the human scale. Additionally, changes to shopfronts can have a significant impact not only on the appearance of a building and the surrounding retail area but also on the economic vitality and viability of the area. Highway safety is also a significant consideration. The design of new shopfronts, therefore, needs careful attention. The key aim is to ensure that shopfronts are not designed in isolation but are considered as an important part of the building in which they are housed. The design of the shopfront should be informed by the architectural style and character of the building and the framework provided by the building within which the shopfront can be integrated. Consideration should also be given to the design of neighbouring shopfronts to ensure that any new design fits harmoniously into its surroundings.

Climate Change

Policy DC 2

Climate Change (Strategic Policy)

Good design and sustainable approach to construction will help reduce carbon emissions and ensure resilient development that mitigates and adapts to the effects of climate change.

1. To mitigate climate change, development proposals will need to demonstrate how they have implemented the following principles and requirements:
 - a. All development proposals should minimise carbon emissions and demonstrate within an energy statement (part of the Design and Access Statement) how the design will: the following energy hierarchy (in order of preference) has been embedded within the design of buildings;
 - i. Minimise energy demand and use through the layout, massing, orientation and design of buildings and use of landscaping (where these factors are not otherwise constrained);
 - ~~ii. ——— Maximise energy efficiency using the ‘fabric first approach’;~~
 - iii. Maximise opportunities for on-site renewable energy generation and storage ~~on site;~~ and
 - iv. ~~Utilise~~ Link to renewable and low carbon energy sources.

- b. All development proposals should demonstrate, within an Energy Statement (part of the Design and Access Statement), the actions taken to minimise embodied carbon emissions. This should include the measures to be implemented to minimise the use of high embodied carbon materials and maximise the use of low embodied carbon materials and reclaimed materials and, where applicable, the re-use of existing buildings, structures, hard surfaces and infrastructure. Residential developments of 150 homes or more, and non-residential development of 10,000 sqm floorspace or more, should undertake an embodied carbon assessment to calculate ~~their~~ the proposals embodied carbon emissions which follows the 'RICS Whole Life Carbon Assessment for the Built Environment' methodology through a nationally recognised methodology and demonstrate the actions being been taken in the design process to reduce these.
- c. All residential development proposals are required, as a minimum, subject to transitional provisions in Building Regulations, to meet the energy efficiency requirements set out in the building regulations Future Homes Standard (2026), or successor standards. ~~Should the standards not be incorporated in to building regulations prior to the adoption of the Local Plan, the standards set out in the Future Homes and Building Standards: 2023 consultation will be required;~~ Where a proposal exceeds the energy efficiency requirements in the Future Homes Standards an Energy Statement (part of the Design and Access Statement) should be provided setting out the standards achieved.
- d. Minor non-residential development of 999 sqm floorspace or less will be required to meet BREEAM 'Very Good' standard. Major non-residential development of 1,000 sqm floorspace or more will be required to meet BREEAM 'Excellent' standard. This should be demonstrated through the provision of a design stage report at the application submission stage and a post-construction assessment at the completion stage of the development both undertaken by a suitably accredited person;
- e. Proposals for conversions and extensions to existing buildings are encouraged to incorporate energy efficiency measures and low carbon technologies which result in a reduction in carbon emissions, where this does not result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset and complies with other policies in the plan;
- f. Development proposals are required to meet the requirements of the prevailing Heat Network Zoning Regulations, where applicable. If proposals are brought forward prior to the Heat Network Zoning Regulations coming in to force then the development, installation and connection to District or Communal Heat Networks is encouraged, where feasible. Heat networks can be developed on a range of scales and all new developments should consider their potential. Where a development proposal is close to a source of waste heat where there is a reasonable prospect of a heat network or an existing heat network it will need to demonstrate it has considered all opportunities to connect to it. Major residential developments of ~~300~~ 150 homes or more are required to be enabled for heat network connection unless demonstrated not to be feasible or financially viable to do so.
- g. ~~All development proposals should~~ To minimise materials usage and waste and promote opportunities for a circular economy ~~by;~~ all development proposals will need to demonstrate through a Sustainability Statement (part of the Design and Access Statement) how they have implemented the following principles and requirements:
 - i. Reusing or adapting existing buildings as part of the development where possible;
 - ii. Reusing and recycling appropriate materials that arise through the development including non-contaminated soils and hardcore;
 - iii. Minimising construction waste, including designing out waste during the design stage;
 - iv. Prioritising the use of locally sources and/or sustainable materials and construction

techniques that have smaller carbon and ecological footprints;

v. Using locally distinctive, low maintenance and resilient materials;

vi. Designing the development to deliver longevity, adaptability, repairability and the ability to recycle products at the end of their lifetime; and

vii. Providing adequate facilities for recycling, [food waste](#) and [home](#) composting.

2. To adapt to climate change, [all](#) development proposals will need to demonstrate [through a Sustainability Statement \(part of the Design and Access Statement\)](#) how they have implemented the following principles and requirements:
 - a. The overall site layout, orientations and design of buildings has been undertaken in a manner that ensures resilience to future climate change impacts, such as [avoiding areas at risk of future flooding](#), overheating, and provides for the comfort, health and wellbeing of occupiers over the lifetime of the development. These measures should be integral to the design and layout of the new development and consider the vulnerability of the building occupants;
 - b. Maximise green infrastructure to sequester carbon, provide urban cooling and deliver biodiversity net gains and ensure an appropriate landscaping scheme which incorporates permeable surfaces along with vegetation and planting which is adaptive to the effects of climate change and rising temperatures over the lifetime of the development;
 - c. Minimise water usage including through the use of sustainable water management solutions such as rainwater harvesting, greywater recycling, sustainable drainage systems, swales and green roofs where achievable.
 - d. All dwellings (including conversions, reversions and change of use) should achieve an estimated water consumption of no more than the prevailing optional technical standard (currently 110 litres/person/day) through the incorporation of water saving measures ~~where feasible~~.

- 4.3.1** Minimising the impact of and increasing resilience to the effects of climate change is an objective of the Local Plan in order to contribute towards the achievement of the national commitment of net zero carbon and greenhouse gas emissions (100% reduction relative to 1990 levels) by 2050. Mitigating climate change is about ensuring that the design and construction of new development (external fabric and structure) and the layout of internal and outdoor space minimises carbon emissions. In contrast, adaptation and increasing resilience to climate change is about ensuring that buildings can still function safely and effectively as the impacts of climate change, that we are already seeing, grow increasingly severe. Mitigation and resilience measures are complementary; they should be integrated into the design of new development.
- 4.3.2** In order to reduce whole-life carbon emissions the energy hierarchy classifies energy options, prioritizing and embedding more sustainable energy options such as minimising energy demand and maximizing energy efficiency right at the beginning of the design process. The least favourable option is located at the bottom of the hierarchy. This approach is also often referred to as the ‘fabric first approach’. This must first be reduced by maximising performance of the components that make up the building fabric (i.e. consider the materials and design of the environment and then move down the energy hierarchy). Not only is the ‘fabric first’ approach the most sustainable and environmentally best approach, but it can also make an important contribution to addressing fuel poverty and improving social equity. All development proposals will be required to submit an Energy Statement as part of the Design and Access Statement to demonstrate that ~~the energy hierarchy has been followed and any specific policy requirements on energy efficiency that apply are met.~~ Measures have been implemented to minimise carbon emissions and energy usage and maximise renewable and low carbon energy and storage.
- 4.3.3** The layout, orientation and design of buildings can reduce the need for energy consumption by maximising the potential to secure the benefits energy provides, e.g. heating, lighting and cooling, through alternative means. Design features such as south facing windows can allow for heat and light from the sun to be captured passively, whilst roof overhangs can provide natural shading, thereby reducing the need for cooling systems. There are also studies that show external shading such as shutters and canopies are more effective than internal shading. Where layout, orientation and design is not constrained or dictated by other factors, i.e. by the character of the surrounding area or the juxtaposition of adjacent buildings, applicants will be required to demonstrate how the design of the development has reduced the need for energy consumption.
- 4.3.4** A significant reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved by ensuring that buildings use energy more efficiently. By incorporating higher standards of insulation and using combined heat and power systems in buildings, occupiers can get more out of each unit of fuel that they use. Following the phasing out of the Code for Sustainable Homes as part of the government’s wider review of housing standards

and the scrapping of 'net zero CO2 emissions' from 2016, energy efficiency is currently promoted by, and measured against, Part L of the Building Regulations. The regulations were most recently amended in 2021 to reflect improved standards for carbon emission; the government's position remains that energy efficiency standards will continue to be promoted through Building Regulations. ~~There are~~ Further ~~proposed~~ changes were made to the Building Regulations ~~anticipated~~ in 2026 with the introduction of the Future Homes Standard which developments proposals will be expected to be achieved subject to the transitional measures applied. ~~It is expected that the Future Homes Standard will deliver 75% CO2 emission reductions compared to the 2013 Building Regulations. Should the Future Homes Standard not be introduced prior to the Local Plan Review being adopted then proposals will be expected to achieve, as a minimum, the 75% CO2 emissions reduction compared to the 2013 building regulations equivalent to the proposed Future Homes Standard. Should a proposal seek to achieve higher efficiency standards than the Future Homes Standard then an assessment should be provided within an Energy Statement setting out the energy efficiency standards to be achieved.~~

- 4.3.5** Major non-residential development proposals of 1,000 square metres or more will be expected to achieve a minimum of BREEAM certified 'Excellent' standard. Minor non-residential development proposals of 999 square metres or less will be expected to achieve BREEAM certified 'Very Good' standard. Applicants will be expected to provide a design stage report as part of their application and will be required by planning condition to provide a post-construction assessment once the development has been delivered. This should be undertaken by an accredited assessor. BREEAM New Construction Standard is the UK version of BRE's international sustainable building standard for non-domestic buildings. This includes commercial, office, retail, education, healthcare, public buildings and short and long stay residential institutional buildings such as hotels, care homes and sheltered accommodation etc. It can include part new-build and part refurbishment projects.
- 4.3.6** A key part of achieving this is ensuring the proposal has been designed to include the maximum amount of photovoltaic (PV) solar panels on the roof or it incorporates other suitable forms of renewable energy generating schemes and technologies that are appropriate to the location and setting of the proposal.
- 4.3.7** When considering proposals affecting existing buildings which require permission such as conversions or extensions, significant weight will be given to improvements proposed to the fabric and energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels) where they do not conflict with the policies in the Local Plan including Policy ENV1. Applicants seeking to make adaptations to Historic Buildings are advised to consult the Historic England Advice Note 18 – Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency (February 2026) or its successor.

Embodied Carbon

- 4.4.1** As the carbon component of the national electricity grid reduces, embodied carbon and whole life carbon will become a greater component of a building's whole life emissions. The Council wants to give priority to collecting data on embodied carbon to ensure developers prioritise consideration of it in the design process and account for emissions from the Built Environment to align with the Council's climate emergency and national targets.
- 4.4.2** Developers are therefore expected to consider the energy and resource use associated with the raw material extraction, manufacture and transport of building materials and construction, and emissions associated with the maintenance, repair and replacement as well as dismantling, demolition and eventual material disposal of the building. Particular consideration should be given to the use of low embodied carbon, locally sourced and manufactured materials. Where buildings are being demolished as part of new development, an explanation should be provided as to why their reuse would not be possible or practical.
- 4.4.3** Developments will need to provide information about what measures they are taking to reduce embodied carbon as part of their Energy Statement. In addition, the largest developments will be expected to calculate their embodied carbon using the latest version of the RICS Whole Life Carbon Assessment for the Built Environment ~~guidance or another nationally recognised~~ methodology. Further details about how this should be provided will be set out in future guidance.

Heat Networks

- 4.5.1** Heat networks are essential for meeting climate targets, with the Committee on Climate Change suggesting that 20% of heating will need to come from district heating by 2050. The government's Warm Homes Plan (2026) sets a target to more than double the amount of heat demand met via heat networks in England to 7% by 2035 with them expected to provide 20% of all heat by 2050. It also recognises that heat networks are an essential part of decarbonizing heat, enhancing energy security, tackling fuel poverty and achieving net zero by 2050.
- 4.5.2** Heat Network Zoning regulations are expected to be laid before parliament ~~in~~ Spring 2026 to implement the Heat Network Zoning. Proposals will be expected to comply with these regulations once enacted. Should these regulations not be enacted prior to the adoption of the Local Plan then proposals should, where feasible, seek to develop and install District or Communal Heat Networks or connect to existing networks. Heat networks can be developed on a range of scales from Communal Heat Networks serving a single building to District Heating Networks comprising a standalone energy centre serving multiple buildings. The Council will particularly promote the development of district heat networks on larger strategic sites where opportunities exist due to high heat density or an increase in heat density brought about by new development.

Minimising Waste & Material Usage

- 4.6.1** Development proposals should demonstrate, within a Sustainability Statement (part of the Design & Access Statement), the measures they will employ through the design process and construction stage to minimise waste, material use and maximise the opportunities for recycling materials. The circular economy principles

seek to ensure a sustainable future that seeks to minimise use and reuse of finite materials and resources.

- 4.6.2** Proposals should ensure adequate storage and space is provided for recycling, food waste and home composting to encourage residents to use these methods of waste disposal.

Adaptation Measures

- 4.7.1** Developments should be designed to support the comfort, health and wellbeing of future occupants, taking into account the way that the climate will change over the lifetime of the development. Regarding buildings, this should include measures to reduce vulnerability to overheating (including consideration of the internal layout, the orientation of glazed areas and the potential use of green roofs with sufficient substrate depth to maximise cooling). Across the site, consideration should be given to issues such as providing shading through tree planting and designs that enable airflow through the development. It is recognised that these adaptation measures can also have wider benefits, such as supporting green infrastructure, biodiversity and carbon sequestration.
- 4.7.2** To assist in mitigating the nutrient impact of residential development proposals on the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area, development proposals, where feasible, are expected to achieve the prevailing optional technical standards for water efficiency.

Flood Risk and Water Management

Policy DC 3

Flood Risk & Water Management (Strategic Policy)

New development will be focused in areas of low flood risk (Flood Zone 1) as identified by the Borough's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2019~~26~~) or most recent assessment. In considering development on sites in higher flood risk areas, the Sequential and Exception Tests must be passed and the sequential approach applied on site. Site specific flood risk assessments will be required in accordance with national policy.

All development proposals will be expected to be designed to mitigate and adapt to climate change. They will be designed to ensure:

- a. They will be safe over the lifetime of the development, including access and egress to individual buildings;
- b. Flood risk is not increased elsewhere and will, where possible, reduce flood risk overall;
- c. Opportunities are taken to mitigate flooding elsewhere;
- d. Full separation of foul and surface water flows;
- e. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are prioritised; and
- f. SuDS have regard to the Tees Valley Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) Guidance Design Guide, ~~and~~ the National Standards for Sustainable Drainage

g. Opportunities for rainwater harvesting are utilised.

Where required, the incorporation of SuDS must be integral to the design process and integrated with green infrastructure. Priority should be given to natural drainage features which are designed to encourage wildlife and create habitat enhancement within the site and act a functional habitats which link to create green and blue corridors. Where SuDS are provided arrangements must be made for their whole life management and maintenance.

Surface water run-off must be discharged to one or more of the following, listed in order of priority:

1. Collected for non-potable use (rainwater harvesting)

2. Discharged into the ground (infiltration); or where not reasonably practicable;
3. Discharged to a surface water body; or where not reasonably practicable;
4. Discharged to a surface water sewer, highway drain or another drainage system; or where not reasonably practicable;
5. Discharged to a combined sewer.

To utilise a lesser priority final destination appropriate evidence will need to be provided demonstrating all higher priority final destinations have been utilised to the maximum extent practicable. Disposal to combined sewers should be the last resort once all other methods have been investigated.

To ensure that growth can be accommodated sustainably by the sewerage infrastructure, this policy requires that in all locations surface water should be separated, with any surface water runoff entering the sewerage system being minimised and controlled. The priority is to avoid using public sewers wherever possible for the disposal of surface water. If a connection to the public sewerage network is the only option, there is a need for onsite attenuation to minimise and control the flows leaving the site.

For development proposals on previously developed land, the peak runoff rate from the development to any drain, sewer or surface water body for the 1-in-1 year rainfall event and the 1-in-100 year rainfall event should be as close as reasonably practicable to the greenfield runoff rate from the development for the same rainfall event, but should never exceed the rate of discharge from the development prior to redevelopment for that event. For developments on greenfield land, the peak runoff rate from the development to any highway drain, sewer or surface water body for the 1-in-1 year rainfall event and the 1-in-100-year rainfall event should never exceed the peak greenfield runoff rate for the same event.

Developers will be required to submit drainage details for consideration by the Council, in consultation with the Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water Ltd, to ensure adequate management of foul and surface water flows. Major developments (development of 10 or more dwellings and other developments with a floor space of 1,000m² or more) will be required to incorporate SuDS unless it can be demonstrated that it would be inappropriate.

The drainage system must be designed and constructed so surface water discharged does not adversely impact the water quality of receiving water bodies, both during construction and when operational. New development should seek to improve water quality where possible, as well as maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity and habitat of watercourses.

Within critical drainage areas or other areas identified as having particular flood risk issues the Council may:

h. Support reduced runoff rates.

- i. Seek contributions, where appropriate, towards off-site enhancements directly related to flow paths from the development, to provide increased flood risk benefits to the site and surrounding areas.

New developments should make an assessment of and address via mitigation measures where required, any risks from the construction and proposed use of the site to underlying groundwater, watercourses and other surface waters, in order to protect these resources and prevent contamination.

- 4.8.1** The NPPF outlines that the planning system plays a key role in the mitigation and adaptation to climate change, including the management of water and flood risk. It goes on to state that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at high risk (whether existing or future), but where development is necessary, making it safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Reducing and mitigating flood risk is an important issue for planning particularly as the effects of climate change are being realised. When addressing flood risk it is important to consider all sources of flooding which include fluvial, surface water, sewer and groundwater flooding.
- 4.8.2** As required by national policy, Local Plans should apply a sequential approach to the location of development to avoid where possible flood risk to people and property. Development should not be allocated or permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding. Any proposal that involves development within an area of risk would require the exception test to be applied and passed if appropriate. The proposal would have to demonstrate wider sustainability benefits which outweigh the flood risk and also demonstrate that the development will be safe for its lifetime, accounting for the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere and where possible reducing flood risk overall.
- 4.8.3** The Local Plan has been informed by the Darlington Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2019²⁶) which is the basis for the sequential test and identifies areas at risk of flooding from all sources, now and in the future, taking into account the impacts of climate change. This assessment has informed the allocation of sites in the Local Plan and should be taken into account when considering future development proposals, along with catchment flood management plans, surface water management plans and related flood defence plans and strategies.
- 4.8.4** Policy DC 3 seeks to direct new development to areas at lowest risk of flooding in accordance with the sequential test. If it is not possible to direct development to low-risk areas, then the exception test must be applied as outlined.
- 4.8.5** Flooding from surface water occurs during extreme rainfall, storms and when heavy snow melts, when the ground or rivers cannot absorb all the surface water or when rainwater rapidly flows into the public sewerage and drainage system, causing overloading and back-up of water to the surface. It is more of a risk in the older built-up parts of the Borough with traditional drainage, such as the Town Centre Fringe, and low-lying parts of the Borough.
- 4.8.6** Climate change and the significant amount of new development envisaged in

the Local Plan could increase the risk, if the increase in impermeable surfaces is not adequately mitigated.

- 4.8.7** Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are now the preferred approach to managing surface water runoff from hard surfaces. The primary purpose of SuDS is to control surface water runoff close to where it falls and mimic the natural drainage of the site prior to development. They use a number of techniques generally based on natural drainage features to collect, treat, store and then release storm water slowly to the environment. There are many different SuDS features available to suit the constraints of a site. SuDS schemes provide many benefits beyond just reducing flood risk, such as assisting in improving water quality, creating new habitats for wildlife and providing a valuable amenity asset. Further information and technical guidance can be found in the Tees Valley Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) Guidance Design Guide and Local Standards (2019) and national standards such as the CIRIA SuDs Manual (C753), [CIRIA – Using SuDs to reduce nitrogen in surface water runoff \(C815\)](#) and the latest Design and Construction Guidance/Code by Water UK.
- 4.8.8** SuDS should be designed to act as functional habitats, to link habitats and create green/blue corridors, which will increase biodiversity. The design of SuDs should, where possible, prioritise natural drainage features such as retention basins, swales and rain gardens, offering wildlife habitat year-round, along with appropriate planting, which should where possible include plants of local provenance that are hardy and suited to the local environment and climate. The incorporation of wetlands surrounding SuDs features will offer many benefits including carbon capture, nutrient run off [reduction](#) and increasing habitats for wildlife including protected species such as great crested newts.
- 4.8.9** When SuDs are incorporated the management measures should, where applicable, align with the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan for the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. Natural SuDs features will create breeding habitats for protected species such as GCN and for other wildlife including dragonflies and other invertebrates, which will increase the food availability for birds and bats.
- 4.8.10** The Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority is responsible for preparing a local flood risk management strategy and maintaining a register of flood risk assets. The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy was published in May 2016. The Strategy sets out how the Council will manage flood risk from surface water runoff, groundwater and ordinary watercourses for which the Borough Council has a responsibility as Lead Local Flood Authority, and other types of flooding where local agents can play a supporting role to lead agencies. The strategy identifies opportunities to reduce and mitigate flood risk; information which can be utilised in the development management process.
- 4.8.11** Part 2 of the 2010 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment identified the Town Centre Fringe (area to the east of the river Skerne) as a Critical Drainage Area (CDA). CDAs are those areas identified from historical flood events and/or modelled data as having a significant risk from surface water flooding or subject to potential large changes in runoff due to development. In these areas and other areas with flood risk issues it may be beneficial to restrict runoff rates to a level to provide flood risk benefits. The Council may also seek contributions towards off-site enhancements directly related to flow paths from the development, to provide increased flood risk benefits to the site and surrounding areas.

- 4.8.12** Water resources are a particularly vulnerable aspect of the environment and it is important that groundwater, watercourses and other surface waters are protected from contamination. Darlington lies across a principal aquifer, Magnesian Limestone, a highly sensitive environmental receptor, with a number of source protection zones and an important source of water for a large number of public, private and industrial supplies. Pollutants can easily permeate soils and contaminate groundwater and development can also affect the hydrology of the area. Once contaminated, it is very difficult and costly, if not impossible, to clean ground water. In taking a precautionary approach to groundwater protection, the Environment Agency have advised that they may object to SUDs proposals which seek to include direct pathways to groundwater.
- 4.8.13** Where risks to controlled waters are identified as part of a development, appropriate remediation and the implementation of mitigation measures will be required to prevent contamination and to protect resources. If potentially polluting materials are to be used/stored either during construction works or as part of the new land use, sufficient prevention and maintenance measures should be incorporated into the development proposals. Gypsum, which is readily dissolved by flowing underground water, underlies parts of the Darlington area. Developers will need to satisfy themselves and the Local Planning Authority that their proposals for development will not be affected by this geological feature.
- 4.8.14** Prior to submitting a planning application, applicants are encouraged to seek formal pre-planning advice from Northumbrian Water Limited to inform their drainage strategy.

5. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Health and Wellbeing

- 5.1.1** Helping to reduce health inequalities is a key local policy objective and providing accessible local healthcare facilities can improve the quality of life and wellbeing of residents in the Borough. Darlington's Council Plan⁽⁹⁾ recognises the fundamental link between health, wellbeing and the economy. It is shaped by the building blocks of good health with a focus on a good job, home and social connections. The plan has six priorities: economy, homes, living well, children and young people, communities, and the local environment. The Local Plan has a significant role in ensuring these priorities are delivered.
- 5.1.2** Darlington has a network of primary and community care facilities, such as GP surgeries and dentists, as well as mental health and acute hospital facilities at West Park and Darlington Memorial Hospital respectively; both of these latter two are expected to continue to offer accessible healthcare from their existing sites. There is also a private hospital at Morton Park, and a private mental health facility at the Teesside International Airport site.
- 5.1.3** Many factors influence our health, including the lifestyles we lead, the environment we live in and the opportunities we have to exercise and access health facilities. A wider sense of wellbeing is influenced by a variety of factors such as opportunities for work and recreation, attractive environments, personal relationships and feelings of safety and community.
- 5.1.4** The link between planning and health has been set out in national policy. Health and wellbeing is a cross-cutting theme in this plan; policies on inclusive design, green space, transport and housing in other chapters will play a key role in reducing health inequalities and encouraging healthy lifestyle choices.
- 5.1.5** Healthy New Towns was an NHS England sponsored programme about building healthy communities. Darlington was one of 10 sites selected nationally to take part in this programme. Darlington's Healthy New Towns project was focused on an area including Red Hall, Burdon Hill and Lingfield Point - collectively known as the Eastern Growth Zone. It included some new development and some refurbishment of existing homes.
- 5.1.6** The Eastern Growth Zone in Darlington was chosen due to the economic and housing development opportunities the area presented, along with some significant challenges in terms of health inequalities compared to the rest of Darlington. These include:
- High premature mortality rates;

⁹ Darlington Council Plan 2024 -2027, DBC

- Higher worklessness than other areas of Darlington;
- Significantly high emergency hospital admissions;
- A significantly high number of residents with a life-limiting condition.

5.1.7 There are a number of cross-cutting aims derived from the Healthy New Towns project that would be supported through development during the plan period including:

- Building of homes that assist citizens to stay informed, live healthily and maintain independence;
- Use the built environment and public realm as a health improvement tool that:
 - encourages healthier lifestyle choices and exercise;
 - aids connections within and between communities, social cohesion and sense of community;
 - harnesses natural benefits of green and blue space;
 - improves access to employment opportunities and employability.

Policy HC 1

Health and Wellbeing (Strategic Policy)

Development that supports improvements to health and wellbeing in Darlington will be supported. In order to achieve this the council will:

- Work with the NHS to reduce health inequalities in the areas with poorest health;
- Protect existing facilities, where possible, and support the provision of new or improved health facilities in sustainable locations;
- Support the integration of community facilities and services, i.e. health, education, cultural and leisure in multi-purpose buildings;
- Ensure that new developments:
 - are age friendly, inclusive, safe and attractive, and easily accessible on foot or by bicycle. Where appropriate this should integrate dementia friendly design principles;
 - have a strong sense of place which encourages social interaction;
 - are designed to promote active travel and other physical activity through the arrangement of buildings and uses, access to open space and landscaping;
 - through the arrangement of buildings and uses, promote access to open space and landscaping, and the provision of facilities to support walking.
- Promote improvements and enhance accessibility to the Borough's green spaces and green infrastructure corridors;
- Ensure all new development that may cause groundwater, surface water, air (including odour), noise or light pollution, either individually or cumulatively, will be required to incorporate measures to prevent and reduce their pollution so as not to cause unacceptable impacts on the living conditions of all existing and potential future occupants of land and buildings, the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the landscape;

- g. Require, in the case of development of 150 or more homes and all other non-residential 'major' development, the submission of a Health Impact Assessment as part of the application to explain how health considerations have informed the design. Assessments should be proportionate to the scale of development proposed and undertaken in line with current government guidance.⁽¹⁰⁾

Comprehensive planning of land for development at strategic development sites of Skerningham, Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ and Coniscliffe Park will be required to include for the possibility of new primary care as appropriate (see Policies H 10 and H 11).

- 5.1.8** Applicants will be expected to set out, within their Design and Access Statement, how the proposals have been designed to take account of the requirements of this policy. Applicants are also encouraged to utilise the design principles set out within Sport England's 'Active Design' guide⁽¹¹⁾ when preparing a development scheme in order to promote active, healthy and stronger communities.
- 5.1.9** Population growth and an ageing population are placing pressure on primary healthcare facilities in Darlington. Population projections indicate an overall population increase of around 12,000 people between 2016 and 2036⁽¹²⁾, which is around 3000 extra patients in every five-year period. However, the over 65 population, which places a higher demand on services, is projected to increase from 21,000 in 2016 to 31,000 by 2026.
- 5.1.10** Types and levels of health issues vary considerably across Darlington and spatial planning has a role in meeting health needs throughout the Borough. The reasons for these variations are complex and are likely to include both disparities in health need and demand for health services. Health inequalities in Darlington are apparent with the most deprived areas tending to experience the poorest health.
- 5.1.11** Darlington Borough Council and NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) work together to identify the key priorities of the borough's residents through Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)⁽¹³⁾. The JSNA data highlights the health needs and current trends in the Borough in order to further understand and address the existing inequalities. The focus of future land and facility requirements will be on ensuring there is adequate primary care provision in the Borough to meet local needs. The council will support the provision of additional health facilities and will work with the ICB and other service providers to ensure the Borough has a necessary supply and distribution of accessible premises to meet health care needs. Further information on health infrastructure

¹⁰ Public Health England, Health Impact Assessment in spatial planning, October 2020 (or subsequent replacement)

¹¹ Active Design – Creating active environments through planning and design, Sport England, May 2023

¹² Darlington Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2017.

¹³ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2025, Darlington Borough Council

will be set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

- 5.1.12** During the plan period a significant proportion of new housing is proposed in north, west and eastern fringes of Darlington. This development would generate additional needs for primary health care. Some GP practices near these areas are already experiencing pressure on patient lists. Most general practices in Darlington encompass the entire township within their practice boundary and therefore patient choice will play a part in determining which practices have increases in patient numbers. Any additional capacity which is created in general practice will need to reflect patterns of patient choice.
- 5.1.13** Strategic sites include a requirement for land of appropriate configuration to accommodate community infrastructure to be reserved in a masterplan. These requirements will facilitate the delivery of additional health care provision, in accessible locations within housing growth areas, if funding is made available within the Plan period.

Safeguarding Amenity

- 5.2.1** A core function of planning is to ensure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of all types of land and buildings, particularly residential properties. Without appropriate controls, new development could result in unacceptable living environments for its occupants, reduce the quality of life for the occupants of neighbouring buildings, and result in poor quality neighbourhoods overall. It is also an overarching aim of the Local Plan to improve the quality of life for those living in the Borough (Section 2 - Visions, Aims and Objectives), and to ensure that employment sites remain attractive, by not being unduly constrained by neighbouring uses.

Policy HC 2

Safeguarding Amenity

New development should be sited, designed and laid out to protect the amenity of existing users of neighbouring land and buildings and the amenity of the intended users of the new development. New development will be supported where it is suitably located and is acceptable in terms of:

Form of built development

- a. Privacy and overlooking;
- b. Access to sunlight and daylight;
- c. Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- d. The relationship of proposed and existing habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces. Guidance on separation distances between residential developments is provided in the adopted Design of New Development SPD.

Use of land and buildings, including traffic movements and hours of operation

- e. Noise and disturbance;
- f. Artificial lighting;

- g. Vibration;
- h. Emissions from odour, fumes, smoke, dust, etc; and
- i. Commercial waste.

Where an otherwise acceptable development could change its character to a use that would have a greater impact on amenity without needing planning permission, conditions will be applied to control such changes.

Where the operation of an existing business or community facility could have a significant adverse effect on new development (including changes of use) in its vicinity, the applicant ('agent of change') will need to provide suitable mitigation before the development has been completed.

5.2.2 The Local Plan aims to deliver significant new development, mostly within the existing urban area of Darlington. The mix, density and concentration of uses needs to be planned well at the detailed level to avoid conflicts between uses, where segregation is not provided by land allocations.

5.2.3 The aspects of amenity taken into consideration through the planning process are:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Emissions of odour, fumes, smoke, dust etc., and
- Commercial waste

5.2.4 Conflicts between neighbouring developments can often be avoided by careful design, siting and orientation of buildings and spaces, paying particular attention to those aspects which are most likely to cause issues, e.g. roads and railways, bin stores and noisy equipment, plant and operations, and which are most sensitive to their effects, e.g. recreational areas, outdoor amenity spaces or habitable rooms. Planning conditions can also be used to mitigate and reduce to a minimum adverse impacts and to control, for example, hours of operation and delivery times, as well as to secure any required mitigation or preventing a development from changing its character in a detrimental way.

5.2.5 The visual impact and sustainability of any mitigation measures, for example, acoustic barriers should be considered by developers and applicants.

5.2.6 In terms of new housing developments affected by noise, justification of how the development has been designed to minimise noise intrusion from environmental sources should be provided, as should details of how required internal and external noise levels will be achieved.

- 5.2.7** This policy applies equally to amenity levels within new and existing residential developments. For instance, proposals should avoid locating living rooms, bathrooms and kitchens next to, above, or below neighbouring bedrooms of attached properties or any proposed.
- 5.2.8** Artificial lighting can significantly impact on the environment and people. Artificial lighting is important for security and safety and has other important uses such as lighting key buildings. However, poorly designed or badly directed lighting can cause loss of sleep, illness, discomfort and loss of privacy and obscure the night sky. Lighting can also have a significant and detrimental impact on wildlife through affecting the annual and diurnal rhythms of plants and animals and act as a significant barrier to some, including protected nocturnal animal species such as bats.
- 5.2.9** Artificial lighting can become a significant issue where it is excessive, poorly designed, badly installed or poorly maintained. Unnecessary light also causes excessive carbon emissions, contributing to air pollution and poor air quality. All forms of exterior lighting can result in light pollution. Light pollution can be defined as artificial light which shines outside the areas it is intended to illuminate, including light which is directed into the night sky, creating 'skyglow'.
- 5.2.10** This policy will safeguard against excessive, inefficient and irresponsibly situated lighting, limiting the impact from light pollution on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes, and nature conservation. Development proposals should provide a lighting plan which sets out a sensitive lighting design scheme including for bats/nocturnal wildlife (Priority habitats & species). The scheme shall identify those features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats/nocturnal wildlife and that are likely to cause disturbance along important routes used for foraging; and show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent bats using their territory. Reference should be made to relevant guidance including the ILP Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night Guidance Note. Dark corridors are required within relevant sites to ensure that light sensitive nocturnal wildlife and bats such as brown long-eared and *Myotis* species can use the area with low or no disturbance from additional lighting. Dark corridors should be mapped out and included within the lighting plan.
- 5.2.11** Other policies in this document deal specifically with uses which often have particular amenity impacts including; new employment uses (Policy E 2), new housing (Policy H 2), rural employment (Policy E 4) and the Town Centre (Policy TC 1) and these should be read in conjunction with this policy where they apply.
- 5.2.12** As national planning policy states it is important to ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing businesses and community facilities such as places of worship, pubs, music venues and sports clubs. Existing established businesses and facilities should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of development permitted after they were already in existence. In circumstances where the operation of an existing business or community facility could have a significant adverse effect on new development (including changes of use) in its vicinity the applicant or 'agent of change' will be required to provide suitable mitigation before the development is completed.
- 5.2.13** Certain development is permitted under national 'permitted development' rights' with the exception of prior approval. In such circumstances, impact on amenity

is not a consideration as development of this scale is deemed to be minor in scale. Where there is clear justification to do so, permitted development rights may be removed to protect local amenity and minimise impacts on health and quality of life.

- 5.2.14** In assessing impacts on health and quality of life and in looking to ensure a good standard of amenity the Council will have regard to Government and other appropriate guidance on the assessment of matters which are material planning considerations.

Hot Food Takeaways

Policy HC 3

Hot Food Takeaways

Hot food takeaways and fast food outlets will be permitted:

- a) Where they are not within walking distance of schools (defined as 400m), unless within the designated town centre (Policy TC1) or district/local centre boundaries (Policy TC4); and
- b) Where they are not located within Northgate, Stephenson, Bank Top & Lascelles or Park East Wards which already have significant concentrations of such uses and have evidence of adverse local health impact; and
- c) Where they are not located within the Strategic Site Allocations identified in Policies H10 and H11; and
- d) Where they can satisfy other planning requirements in relation to design, amenity and highway safety.

- 5.3.1** Paragraph 97 of the NPPF outlines that Local Planning Authorities should refuse applications for hot food takeaways and fast-food outlets that are within walking distance of schools or places children and young people congregate (unless within the town centre) and where evidence is provided on local health, pollution or anti-social behaviour.

- 5.3.2** The Darlington Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy adopted in 2025, includes creating 'Healthy Places as a key theme with actions around tackling commercial determinants of health, and use the planning system to restrict new hot food takeaways. The theme 'Best Start in Life' has an ambition to increase the numbers of children who are a healthy weight. The strategies Vision specifies that the local plan must be focused on reducing health inequalities.

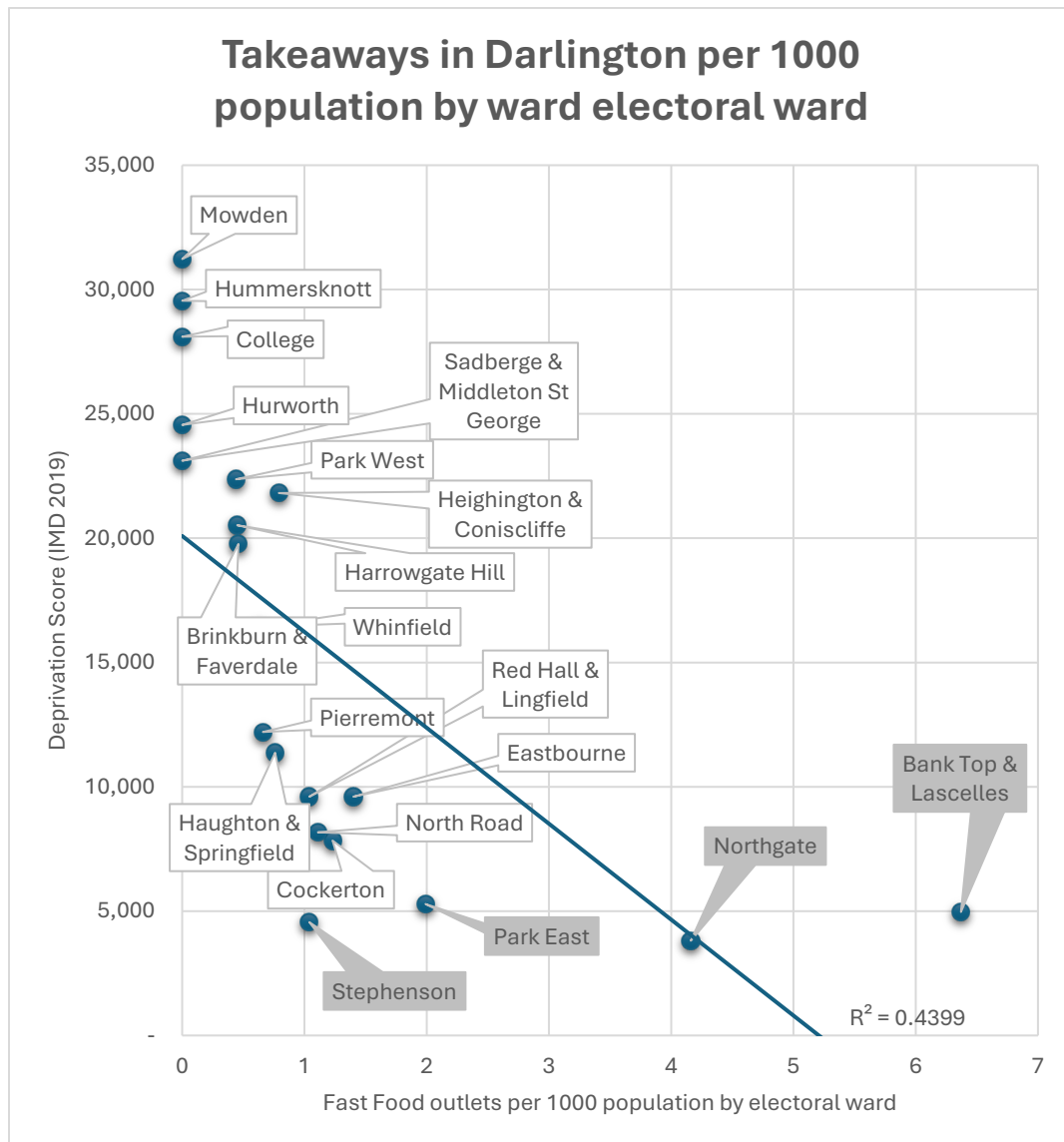
The Council Plan makes a commitment to work with communities to reduce the burden of the cost of living and focus on food insecurity, and through planning will ensure that development is sustainable and will positively impact local communities.

- 5.3.3** In the UK, 27% of adults and 19% of children eat meals out of the home at least once a week, and takeaway food consumption peaks in young adults aged 19-29 years. Takeaway foods tend to contain high levels of fat, saturated fats, sugar, and salt, and lower levels of micronutrients, and therefore regular consumption of takeaway food over time has been linked to weight gain⁽¹⁴⁾.
- 5.3.4** This impact is worsened by high exposure to hot food takeaways. Adults with increased exposure to hot food takeaways have increased takeaway consumption, and as such have a higher average body weight.
- 5.3.5** More deprived areas have higher concentrations of fast-food outlets, with the poorest areas seeing 5 times more takeaways than the most affluent areas⁽¹⁵⁾. Trends in Darlington Borough are consistent with this. The following graph demonstrates that more deprived areas in Darlington tend to have a higher ratio of takeaways per 1000 population.

¹⁴ “Using the Planning system to promote healthy weight environments” Public Health England (2020)

¹⁵ Obesity and the environment : Density of fast food outlets at 31/12/2017, Public Health England

Graph showing Takeaways in Darlington



Gambling Premises

Policy HC 4

Gambling Premises

To ensure that shopping areas remain diverse and balanced, and to help address concentrations of deprivation, crime and ill health, the council will seek to manage the concentration of gambling premises.

Planning permission for gambling premises may be granted within the Town and Local/District Centres where it can be demonstrated that the proposal is not located within a high-risk zone for gambling related harm or a Cumulative Impact Area.

Planning Permission for gambling premises may be granted where:

- a) it will not impact adversely on the amenity, character and function of an area; and
- b) it will add to the vitality of the existing shopping parade; and
- c) they would not be within 800 metres of a school; and
- d) it will not result in negative cumulative impacts. Cumulative impacts will be considered as follows:

1) Linear concentrations:

- i. None of the specified uses in the policy are adjacent to each other; and
- ii. There are at least two units in other uses between gambling premises; or

2) Area concentrations:

- iii. There are no more than three (in total) gambling premises within 400m of each other.

5.4.1 The Government introduced additional planning controls in relation to betting offices, removing them from Class D2 use to a 'sui generis' use. This means that betting shops have been taken out of the planning 'use' classes and will need to receive planning approval. This has enabled planning authorities to exercise stricter controls over these uses.

5.4.2 Whilst there is a trend towards gambling online and at home, proposals could nevertheless be received for new gambling premises or extensions to approved hours. Facilities for gambling, including betting shops and casinos require a license from the council to operate. This is separate from the planning regime. To ensure that shopping areas remain diverse and balanced, the council is seeking to limit the amount and concentration of premises used for gambling and betting in areas of high concentration. This will also help the council address strategic and

borough wide objectives in relation to health, addressing deprivation and regeneration.

5.4.3 The industry-funded charity GambleAware uses national survey data applied to local demographic profiles to estimate the rates of problem gambling at local authority level. They estimate that 2.5% of the Darlington borough population suffers from problem gambling, and 4.2% engage in moderate-risk gambling ⁽¹⁶⁾ GambleAware also estimates that the cost of gambling related harm in Darlington is currently £2,009,777 annually ⁽¹⁶⁾.

5.4.4 Mapping of gambling premises in Darlington, including scratchcard outlets and lottery terminals, has also recently been undertaken by the ADPH North East Gambling Harms Programme. This found 248 premises with active licences to provide land-based gambling in Darlington Borough. The vast majority (61/67) of the gaming licences are held by public houses or bars, whilst convenience stores are the most common location for both scratchcard and lottery terminals (42 out of 80 scratchcard and 41 out of 84 lottery terminals respectively). When machine permits, lottery terminals and scratchcards are excluded, there are 15.1 gambling premises per 100,000 people in Darlington, higher than the national average of 12.9. This places Darlington in the top third of districts and unitary authorities in England for land-based gambling premises per capita.

5.4.5 As is the case nationally, premises cluster in socioeconomically deprived areas, with 66 premises in the most deprived Darlington ward Park East, compared to 5 in the least deprived, Mowden. This pattern persists when scratchcards and lottery terminals are excluded, with 37 premises in Park East, and 3 in Mowden.

5.4.6 The Healthy Lifestyles Survey collects data from school-aged children and young people in Darlington annually. In 2024, questions on gambling behaviour were included for the first time. Response rates (whether children chose to answer or skip the questions about gambling) were excellent for the 3197 secondary school children surveyed, but poor for the 1482 primary school children surveyed.

5.4.7 Of the activities asked about, arcade games had the highest participation, with 73% of primary and 55% of secondary school aged children reporting playing arcade games for fun. Notably, 18% of secondary school children reported buying loot boxes, 15% placing bets with friends, and 9% reported gambling online. Worryingly, 20% of secondary school students and 36% of the primary school children surveyed indicated that they found it difficult to stop gambling.

Thirty one percent of primary school children and 18% of secondary school aged children who responded believed that most or nearly all of their peers had taken part in a gambling activity in the last 7 days. This demonstrates the extent to which gambling participation is normalised amongst children in Darlington.

¹⁶ GambleAware: Gambling Harm Data Profile, Darlington, August 2025

Policy HC 5**Skills and Training**

The Borough Council will encourage all local employers to participate in skills and employment training initiatives to increase access to employment for those who live within the area. Where development proposals would generate a significant number of construction and operational phase jobs, the Borough Council will seek to secure appropriate commitments and targets for employment skills and training, including apprenticeships appropriate to the development proposed.

- 5.5.1** The number of residents (aged 16-64) with no qualifications in the Borough is 6.5%⁽¹⁷⁾ which is similar to Great Britain with 6.8%. The overall number of Borough residents unemployed (aged 16-64) is 3.9%⁽¹⁸⁾ again similar to Great Britain (4.2%). There has, however, been a significant issue in underemployment, i.e. people in low-paid insecure employment, identified in the Borough along with a high, spatially concentrated increase in 16–24 year olds not in employment, education or training in the least affluent wards⁽¹⁹⁾.
- 5.5.2** It is therefore important to ensure that current and future residents within the Borough have access to the employment and business opportunities that will emerge over the life of this Local Plan and that these opportunities are available across the range of employment opportunities that are forecast to emerge. This includes encouraging relationships between businesses operating within the Local Plan area and local schools and colleges, to raise aspirations and help prepare young people to have the right information, motivation and aptitude to compete with the best across the region to be part of the future workforce.

¹⁷ Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey (2024)

¹⁸ Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey (2025)

¹⁹ Levelling Up Darlington Plan

6. HOUSING

- 6.0.1** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Local Planning Authorities to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing. It is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed. Strategic policies should set out the minimum number of homes required. The size, type, and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should also be assessed and reflected in the planning policies. Many factors have an impact on housing demand including population growth, decreasing household size, an ageing population, migration, economic growth and residents being unable to afford homes in the area. These issues, in combination, result in a significant need for new homes of an appropriate mix and type.
- 6.0.2** The NPPF also requires Local Planning Authorities to identify and update annually a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old. The supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of 5% or 20% where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the last three years.
- 6.0.3** It is important to note that the need to deliver a mix of new homes across the Borough is not considered in isolation and the Local Plan also considers and plans for issues such as the provision of new community facilities and infrastructure. It is a combination of these elements which are required to deliver sustainable communities and these issues are addressed in other relevant chapters and within the supporting infrastructure plan. ~~which will be published to accompany the Proposed Submission Local Plan.~~
- 6.0.4** This chapter sets out the housing requirement for the Borough, housing allocations and policies on the mix of housing, custom and self-build, affordable housing, exceptions, residential development in rural areas, housing intensification, HMOs and accommodating travelling groups.

Housing Requirement

Policy H 1

Housing Requirement (Strategic Policy)

Housing will be delivered to meet a minimum requirement of ~~446~~490 net additional dwellings per annum over the plan period from 2025 to 2042. This results in a total net minimum requirement of ~~7,582~~8,330 dwellings.

It is anticipated that the sites will be delivered in accordance with the housing trajectory in APPENDIX A which indicates that a continuous five-year supply of housing will be maintained throughout the plan period. The trajectory is an approximation of delivery and does not place any phasing restrictions on the sites.

At any point in the Local Plan period where there is no longer a demonstrable supply of sites to fully meet the five year land requirement, housing sites located beyond development limits that would make both a positive contribution to the five year supply of housing land and be well related to the built form of the main urban area or service villages (as defined in Policy SD 2) will be supported. Such proposals should be consistent with relevant national and Local Plan policies.

The NPPF states that strategic policies should also set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations. The table below outlines the minimum housing requirement for the neighbourhood areas in the Borough, following the above approach.

Table 6.1 Neighbourhood Area Housing Requirements

Low Coniscliffe & Merrybent	~~1405~~ <u>1402</u>
Blackwell	0
Hurworth	~~364~~ <u>297</u>
Middleton St George	~~742~~ <u>682</u>
Sadberge	~~494~~ <u>46</u>

6.1.1

The amount of housing to be planned for is one of the most important issues within the Local Plan. The NPPF sets out to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing needs assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning practice guidance. Any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for. No neighbouring authorities have requested that Darlington Borough Council accommodates any unmet housing needs from their areas.

- 6.1.2** A new standard method was introduced by the Government in December 2024 which included updates to the NPPF and planning practice guidance. In the past the method was based on household growth, whereas the new method uses a formula that incorporates a baseline of housing stock. It uses 0.8% of the existing housing stock for the area which is then adjusted upwards to reflect local affordability pressures. The affordability data used is the median workplace-based affordability ratios, published by the Office for National Statistics at a local authority level. The mean average affordability ratio over the five most recent years for which data is available is used.
- 6.1.3** The data which is utilised in the method varies over time as new data becomes available. As of ~~January~~August 2026 the calculation generates a minimum annual local housing need figure for Darlington of ~~446~~453 dwellings. The NPPF and practice guidance explains that the housing requirement in a Local Plan may be higher than the identified housing need, for example to reflect economic growth aspirations. Darlington is an ambitious authority with regards to economic growth and the area has performed relatively well in recent years attracting businesses and government departments, ~~however when looking at past delivery rates it is considered appropriate and realistic to utilise the 446 figure as the housing requirement. It is considered that this will not constrain development as a substantial land supply buffer has been factored into the development plan. As such an uplift has been applied to the local housing need figure to take account of potential jobs growth over the plan period which is estimated at approximately 350 jobs per annum. This is evidenced in the Darlington Future Employment Needs Report September 2026. The uplift factors in the number of new homes required to support such employment growth and is explained in the Local Housing Needs Assessment 2026.~~
- 6.1.4** With regards to the neighbourhood area housing requirements, the Council has followed policy and guidance in the NPPF and NPPG in setting the figures. The requirements are based on the number of dwellings that are expected to be built on housing allocations and commitments in that neighbourhood area between 2025 and 2042. This approach follows the guidance in reflecting the plan's spatial strategy and supporting evidence base (e.g. HELAA and SA). The neighbourhood planning body does not have to make specific provision for housing or seek to allocate sites to accommodate the requirement. The requirements are met through the allocations in policy H 2 and the housing commitments set out in table 6.7. If monitoring indicated that the committed and allocated sites were not delivering the number of homes set out in table 6.1, there should not be an automatic expectation that development will be allowed on non-allocated sites within the neighbourhood area. Monitoring of housing completions is undertaken yearly and if such a situation was to occur it would be addressed through a review of the Local Plan.
- 6.1.5** The scope of neighbourhood plans is up to the neighbourhood planning body. Groups are not required to plan for housing. If they wish to do so a neighbourhood plan can allocate additional sites to those in a local plan where this is supported by evidence to demonstrate need above that identified in the Local Plan. Consequently, it is important to note that the neighbourhood area housing requirements are not a restrictive maximum figure. Groups can plan for additional sites if they wish and other suitable windfall sites can be brought forward

by developers. Early engagement with the Council is encouraged, where groups wish to exceed their housing requirement figures, to assess whether the scale of additional housing numbers is considered to be in general conformity with the strategic policies.

Housing Land Supply

6.2.1 The identified housing requirement will be met in full through the delivery of housing from a variety of sources. This will include; sites which are already being developed within the plan period (completions), sites which have planning permission (commitments), known housing sources (sites which are currently under consideration by the local planning authority or awaiting a legal agreement) and new site allocations. A housing trajectory has been included in APPENDIX A, which demonstrates that there is a range of sites that are capable of meeting the housing requirement and ensuring a continuous five-year supply of deliverable housing land throughout the plan period. The table below outlines the amount of dwellings expected to be delivered in the five-year periods of the Local Plan. It is however important to note that the housing trajectory does not place any phasing restrictions on the sites and they may come forward sooner than indicated.

Table 6.2 Expected Housing Delivery

Period	Number of Dwellings
~~2025/26 – 2029/30~~ <u>2026/27 – 2030/31</u>	~~3217~~ <u>3148</u>
~~2030/31 – 2034/35~~ <u>2031/32 – 2035/36</u>	~~3266~~ <u>3174</u>
~~2035/36 – 2039/40~~ <u>2036/37 – 2040/41</u>	~~2223~~ <u>2177</u>
~~2040/41 – 2041/42~~ <u>2041/42</u>	~~750~~ <u>375</u>

6.2.2 There is the need to allocate sufficient land to accommodate a minimum of ~~7,582~~ 8,330 dwellings within the plan period. The allocations which will contribute to achieving this are set out in Policy H 2. In combination with existing commitments there is sufficient land to surpass the housing target. The allocations and existing commitments have the potential to deliver approximately ~~9,456~~ 8,474 homes up to 2042. The build out of a number of the strategic sites will also extend beyond 2042. Taking this into consideration the plan has sufficient land for approximately ~~13,841~~ 12,919 homes.

6.2.3 Further flexibility has been incorporated into the plan as contributions from windfall sites and brownfield regeneration schemes within the urban area have not been included in the allocations / housing trajectory. With regards to the regeneration sites, these have not been included due to site constraints and questions over deliverability. The Council will however be supportive of these sites coming forward providing they are in suitable and sustainable locations. Site 468 Kendrew Street Car Parks and Regeneration Area is however an exception and has been included in the trajectory as there is more certainty that this site will come forward for development. A small sites windfall allowance of 25 dpa has been included within the housing supply and is set out within the housing

trajectory (Appendix A).

- 6.2.4** The housing requirement is a 'net' figure and must take into account any dwellings that are lost during that period through demolition or change of use. However, the loss of housing through demolition and change of use has been relatively low in Darlington Borough and there are no planned demolition or regeneration schemes identified.

Five Year Supply

- 6.2.5** There is a requirement to continually monitor delivery and the supply of housing sites to ensure a five-year supply throughout the plan period. The Local Planning Authority will produce a housing position statement at the beginning of each financial year to set out the current five-year housing land supply. The five-year requirement on 1 April ~~2025~~2026 based on the target of delivering ~~7,582~~8,330 net additional dwellings between 2025 and 2042 (~~446~~490 dwellings per year) was ~~468~~521 dwellings per annum which includes a 5% buffer. Table 6.3. below sets out how the figure was arrived at.

Table 6.3 Five year requirement on 1st April ~~2021~~2026

Local Plan Housing Requirement	~~7,582~~ <u>8,330</u> (~~446~~ <u>490</u> dwellings per annum)
<u>Requirement 2025/26</u>	<u>490</u>
<u>Net completions 2025/26</u>	<u>460</u>
<u>Shortfall 2025/26</u>	<u>30 (490 – 460)</u>
Requirement ~~2025/26~~ <u>2026/27</u> ~~2029/30~~ <u>2030/31</u>	- ~~2,230~~ <u>2,480</u> (~~446~~ <u>490</u> x 5 + <u>30</u>)
Requirement ~~2025/26~~ <u>2026/27</u> ~~2029/30~~ <u>2030/31</u> plus 5% buffer	- ~~2,342~~ <u>2,604</u> (~~2,230~~ <u>2,480</u> x 1.05)
Annual requirement plus 5% buffer	~~468~~ <u>521</u>

- 6.2.6** The five-year housing land supply on 1st April ~~2025~~2026 was ~~3217~~3148 dwellings. Table 6.4. below provides a breakdown of the categories of sites in the five-year supply. At this point in time the Council could demonstrate a ~~6.9~~ year housing land supply, based on the type of evidence relating to deliverable sites required by national policy.

Table 6.4 Summary of five-year housing land supply on 1st April ~~2024~~2026

	Total expected completions: ~~2025/26~~ 2026/27 - ~~2029/30~~ 2030/31
A. Sites of <10 dwellings with outline or full planning permission	0
B. Sites of 10 or more dwellings with detailed planning permission	~~4832~~ 1917
C. Sites of 10 or more dwellings with outline planning permission	~~660~~ 210
D. Sites with a grant of planning permission in principle	0
E. Allocations without planning permission	~~600~~ 896
F. Small sites allowance	125
Total	~~3247~~ 3148

6.2.7 If the situation arose where the Local Planning Authority were unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, there is a fall-back position within Policy H 1. The policy states, in this situation sites which are not allocated, are located beyond development limits but are well related to the built form of the main urban area or service villages will be supported. This is providing they are consistent with relevant national and Local Plan policies.

6.2.8 In the above circumstance, proposals will not be required to accord with Policy H 7 Residential Development in the Countryside but will have to demonstrate that they will be deliverable in the short term, therefore contributing to the five-year supply. The Local Planning Authority may reduce implementation or submission of reserved matters timescales to ensure delivery takes place within the five year period and to ensure the site makes a positive contribution to the five-year supply. It is important to note that small sites can make a positive contribution to the housing land supply. If an application is granted under this situation and subsequently expires, it will not necessarily be renewed automatically if permission is sought again.

6.2.9 If monitoring indicates that there is persistent and prolonged under delivery of housing, a review of this housing chapter and the housing allocations will be undertaken in order to resolve the situation.

Spatial Distribution of New Housing

6.2.10 Development opportunities for housing should be primarily focused in those areas that provide (or will be able to provide) the level of services, infrastructure facilities and employment opportunities that are required to support communities and an increase in the population.

6.2.11 The distribution of sites has followed the existing settlement hierarchy. A large proportion have been focused on the main urban core of Darlington Borough via sites within the main urban area and urban extensions. Strategic urban extensions are focused to the north east and west of the main urban area. ~~Smaller scale extensions are also proposed around the urban fringe.~~ The strategic urban extensions would take some time to deliver due to infrastructure requirements, consequently it was considered necessary to look to the service villages for sites which could be delivered in the short and medium term.

6.2.12 Only the service villages are considered to be suitable for housing development in the Local Plan. The smaller more rural villages as defined in the settlement hierarchy are generally considered to be less favourable locations for housing development as they meet limited sustainability criteria. They are considered to be unsuitable due to their remote locations and lack of facilities / services. As a consequence no housing allocations have been proposed in these areas.

Policy H 2

Housing Allocations (Strategic Policy)

The following sites are allocated for housing development and are identified on the Policies Map. The allocations are required to meet the housing requirement as set out in Policy H 1, taking into account existing commitments (extant planning permissions) and completions since April 2025.

The allocations will assist to meet the Borough's quantitative and qualitative need for housing over the plan period. They will provide an appropriate mix of residential developments in accordance with the objectives set out in Policy H 43 and will support the sustainable development of the Borough in accordance with the locational strategy.

The sites will provide a supply of housing land sufficient to **annually** evidence a deliverable five-year housing supply in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

The yield identified is for indicative purposes only and the final number of homes to be delivered on site will be determined by the planning application process. Development proposals on the allocated sites listed below will be permitted providing the scheme is in accordance with other relevant policies set out in the Local Plan and national policy. Schemes should satisfactorily address any issues or requirements as set out in APPENDIX B HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATION STATEMENTS.

Table 6.5 Housing Allocations

Location	Site ref	Site name	Site area (ha)	Indicative site yield (by 2042)	Indicative site yield (after 2042)
Urban Extension	20	Great Burdon	~~88.39~~ 91.44	600	650
	100	Hall Farm, Branksome	21.89	~~400~~ 353	
	185	Burtree ~~Garden Village~~	178.48	~~1170~~ 1110	~~830~~ 890
	251	Skerningham	492.19	1950	2550
	392	Elm Tree Farm	7.10	200	
	504	Snipe Lane, Hurworth Moor, Phase 2	10.28	~~145~~ 180	

Urban Area	11	Cattle Mart	2.16	76	
	467	Tees Grange	~~6.84~~ 7.09	~~89~~ 75	
	468	Kendrew Street Car Park Regeneration Area	1.34	125	
	471	Land east of Maidendale (former Ingenium Parc)	~~30.65~~ 42.50	420	300
	Villages	95	Beech Crescent East, Heighington	1.53	20
Total				~~5195~~ 5109	~~4330~~ 4390

6.2.13 The policy above indicates that the allocations are capable of accommodating around ~~5,195~~5,109 homes in the Borough throughout the plan period. The housing requirement will also be met by existing commitments on major sites (table 6.7), some of which are currently being built out, net completions since 1st April 2025 and a small sites allowance of 25 dwellings per annum. The table below provides a summary of the overall housing supply expected in the period 2025 to 2042, highlighting that the total supply ensures that the housing requirement will be met and exceeded. The figure of ~~3,836~~3365 homes on commitments is the remaining dwellings to be completed on sites with planning permission as at 1st April 2025~~6~~ over the plan period. It is important to note that extra capacity exists on a number of sites and they are assumed to be delivered after 2042. This includes site 249 Coniscliffe Park North a housing commitment and four of the housing allocations, which total ~~4,385~~4,445 units beyond 2042. Furthermore, no allowance is made for windfalls over one hectare, and the small site allowance of 25 dwellings a year is below the historic average of 37 dwellings per year on such sites.

Table 6.6 Overall housing supply 2025 - 42

<u>Net completions 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026</u>	<u>460</u>
Commitments (major sites) 1 April 2025 ~~6~~ to 31 March 2042	~~3836~~ 3365
Allocations 1 April 2025 ~~6~~ to 31 March 2042	~~5195~~ 5109
Small sites windfall allowance 1 April 2025 ~~6~~ to 31 March 2042	400 ⁽²⁰⁾
Total	~~94569~~ 9334

²⁰ 16 years multiplied by small sites allowance of 25 dwellings per annum (16x25=400).

6.2.14 The indicative yields have been calculated using density multipliers and average developable areas for particular site sizes. Where on-site constraints have restricted the developable area this has been reflected in the yields. Also in cases where more detailed information has been available, for example via a developer proposal in a current planning application, this has been reflected in the yield.

6.2.15 The allocations have been selected taking into account sustainability principles and the following criteria:

- Directing development to within the urban area, as urban extensions and to the service villages, in accordance with the locational strategy;
- Selecting sites in sustainable locations with good access to ~~public transport~~ active travel, services, shops, employment locations and community facilities;
- Including brownfield sites where possible, taking into account site constraints and economic viability;
- Avoiding areas which have significant physical constraints and avoiding environmental sensitive locations;
- Selecting a mix of sites in terms of size and location, which can meet both the quantitative and qualitative housing needs over the plan period;
- Selecting sites which have a reasonable prospect of being delivered within the plan period.

6.2.16 APPENDIX B HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATION STATEMENTS provides guidance for each housing allocation, outlining site specific requirements, constraints or relevant information. It should be noted that this guidance is not exhaustive and further issues may need to be addressed via a planning application. The statements will also give guidance in some cases on the type of schemes and densities which the Council would be supportive of. Generic issues such as affordable housing requirements will not be set out in the statements as they will apply to most sites. Specific infrastructure requirements will also be dealt with at the planning application stage unless there is a need for on-site provision. This will mainly apply to the strategic urban extensions.

Table 6.7 Housing Commitments

Site ref	Site name	Size (ha)	Total number of dwellings	Remaining dwellings at April 2025 (to be completed pre 2042)
3	South of Burtree Lane	17.02	380	380
8	Berrymead Farm	21.42	348	~~139~~ 32
41	Coniscliffe Park South	28.32	475	~~475~~ 472
45	High Stell	8.49	198	~~120~~ 107
68	West Park ~~Garden Village~~	79.32	1200	~~538~~ 440
~~78~~	~~East of Middleton Road, Sadberge~~	~~0.75~~	~~25~~	~~3~~
89	Land west of Oak Tree, MSG	2.66	61	36
99	Maxgate Farm, MSG	13.71	260	~~260~~ 213
146	Land South of Railway, MSG	14.8	326	326
249	Coniscliffe Park North	50.08	985	930
390	West Park ~~Garden Village~~ -North	5.54	125	125
394	Lakeside, The Old Brickworks, Neasham Road	5.59	115	~~25~~ 21
395	Dr Piper House, King Street.	0.13	46	46
403	Blackwell Grange East	5.26	44	~~44~~ 29
410	Snipe Lane, Hurworth Moor	23.64	449	~~259~~ 128
412	12 – 18 Skinnergate	0.22	16	16
422	Reservoir (Disused) Darlington Road, Sadberge	2.8	46	46
~~424~~	~~182 Northgate~~	~~0.1~~	~~24~~	~~24~~
425	Former Rise Carr Club, Eldon Place	0.05	18	18
~~426~~	~~Sherborne Close~~	~~0.6~~	~~14~~	~~14~~
~~429~~	~~Eldon Street~~	~~0.13~~	~~12~~	~~12~~
	Total			~~3836~~ 3365

Policy H 3

Housing Mix

Proposals for housing development will be encouraged to provide an appropriate mix of housing types, sizes and tenures which have regard to local needs as identified within the most up to date Local Housing Needs Assessment or other relevant evidence. A suitable housing mix should also give consideration to a site's location, physical constraints, character and surrounding context.

The Council will support proposals for specialised housing for both older people and those with disabilities to meet identified needs outlined within most recent evidence. Proposed sites for such schemes will be expected to be in sustainable locations close to essential services and facilities and well served public transport routes.

To ensure that new homes provide quality living environments for residents both now and in the future, the following standards from Building Regulations Approved Document M: Volume 1 (Access to and use of dwellings) will apply to new dwellings, subject to consideration of site suitability and site viability:

- a. ~~57~~59% of all new dwellings will meet category 2 requirements (accessible and adaptable dwellings).
- b. ~~87~~% of all new dwellings will meet category 3 requirements (a) or (b) (wheelchair user dwellings). Where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling, homes should meet building regulation M4 (3) (2) (b). When providing for wheelchair user housing, early discussion with the Council is required to obtain the most up to date information on specific need in the local area. Where there is no specific need identified, then M4 (3) (a) will apply, to allow simple adaptation of the dwelling to meet the future needs of wheelchair users.

All new residential development, including change of use or conversions, will be required to ensure that the internal layout and size are suitable to serve the amenity requirements of future occupiers and will be expected to comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards, as set out in Appendix F, unless it can be demonstrated that compliance would compromise the viability, deliverability, or optimal use of the site.

6.3.1

The NPPF requires the Council to plan for a mix of housing to ~~the~~ meet the needs of communities. This includes but is not limited to; those who require affordable housing (including social rent), families with children, looked after children, older people and people with disabilities, students, service families, travellers, people who rent their own homes and people wishing to build their own homes. The overall objective is to widen the choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable inclusive and mixed communities. Policy H 3 sets out the Council's approach to meeting these needs.

- 6.3.2** The Darlington Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) 2025²¹ provides the most up to date evidence of housing need of specific types in the Borough. The assessment considers the specific housing needs for parts of the local community. The evidence indicates that there will be an increasing demand in the future for specialist housing to meet the needs of the elderly and those with physical or learning disabilities. The LHNA quantifies the likely needs of these groups. An ageing population is a national issue and the assessment highlights the importance of meeting the needs of the elderly population when planning for new housing. It is acknowledged that this is not necessarily solely through specialist provision as housing solutions for older people can also be found from general housing and many older people may not want or need specialist accommodation or care. Provision may come in the form of bungalows or homes which can be adapted to meet a change in needs.
- 6.3.3** Government policy is focused on supporting older people and those with a disability to live independently at home. Supporting independent living can help to reduce the costs to health and social services and providing more housing options for older people can free up homes which are under occupied. Meeting these needs is a challenge, however providing more accessible and easily adaptable homes will help people to maintain independence for longer. This is recognised in Policy H3 with the requirements for standards relating to accessible and adaptable homes. These standards are governed by the Building Regulations and are set out in the 2015 edition of Approved Document M: Volume 1 (Access to and use of dwellings) (2016 amendments)²². These standards are part of the optional technical requirements which exceed the minimum standards required by the Building Regulations in respect of access. The Government's intention is that Local Planning Authorities should not apply any additional local standards on requirements relating to the construction, internal layout or performance of new dwellings. The optional technical standards help to streamline standards nationally.
- 6.3.4** Category 1 requirements are mandatory within the Building Regulations and are classed as a visitable dwelling. Reasonable provision should be made for people to gain access to and use the dwelling and its facilities. A category 2 dwelling is classed as accessible and adaptable and is optional in the Building Regulations. Provision must be sufficient to meet the needs of occupants with differing needs including some older and disabled people and to allow adaptation of the dwelling to meet the changing needs of the occupant over time. A category 3 dwelling is classed as wheelchair user and is optional in the Building Regulations. The provision made must be sufficient to allow simple adaptation of the dwelling to meet the needs of occupants who use wheelchairs. The standards will be applied to outline or full applications. They will not be applied retrospectively to previous permissions.
- 6.3.5** The evidence to support the percentage requirements for accessible and adaptable homes is set out in the LHNA 2025²¹. Modelling work was undertaken in the assessment which utilised national and local data on housing, long term illness and disability, to estimate the number of households likely to require adaptations or needing to move to a more suitable home in the housing market area. The assessment indicated that ~~at least 4,896~~ 5,216 households ~~will~~ may

²¹ Darlington Local Housing Needs Assessment, ORS, 2025²¹

²² Approved Document M: Volume 1 Access to and use of dwellings, HM Government, 2016 amendments

require adapted homes by 203642. This represents 656% of the overall housing need for Darlington between 2025 and 2042. More detailed analysis of the data also revealed that at least 58045 wheelchair adapted homes will be required over the plan period which results in 87% of overall housing in Darlington needing to be M4(3) standard. Subsequently this implies a need for 579% of all new homes to be M4(2) standard (656% minus 87%).

- 6.3.6** With regards to other specific needs, the LHNA outlines that within Darlington Borough there are few students. Most students are either under 18 or are mature students who live in their own home. Local colleges do not provide specialist accommodation for its students. Teesside University has part of the campus in Darlington but this does not provide accommodation. As such, there is limited student impact on the working of the local housing market.
- 6.3.7** The numbers of service personnel living in Darlington is relatively low compared to the overall population of the housing market area. A large base is located 15 miles away at Catterick and could impact on Darlington if the Borough were ever expected to meet some of the bases housing need. The nations armed forces have been reduced in size over previous years, however there are plans for the base at Catterick to be increased in size in the near future. The Council believes that this growth is to be dealt with in the Catterick Garrison area and ~~Richmondshire District Council~~ North Yorkshire Council have not asked Darlington Borough Council to accommodate any of this growth in the draft Local Plan.
- 6.3.8** There has been a rise in the relative size of the private rented sector and a decline in owner occupation both in Darlington and across England between 2001 and 2021. The evidence supports continuing demand for and growth in private rented sector homes in Darlington.
- 6.3.9** The NPPF requires that looked after children are considered as part of the housing mix and references that evidence for this should come from the local authority's Children's Social Care Sufficiency Strategy. The most recent document covering Darlington is the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy Refresh 2025 – 2026. The document states that in Darlington, as of 31st March 2025, there were 265 children and young people looked after by Darlington Borough Council, a large proportion of these children with foster parents. In terms of future needs the strategy identifies a priority to improve the quality of existing accommodation in Darlington. Work is being undertaken to replace existing stock of in-house residential homes with newer homes. It also acknowledges the pressures on the system and that further provision may be required but this is not quantified.

Self-Build and Custom Build Housing

Policy H 4

Self-Build and Custom Build Housing

To improve choice and variety of new housing, proposals for self-build and custom build homes that comply with other policies in this plan will be supported.

On sites of ~~150~~500 dwellings or more at least 1% of the housing plots should be made available as self-build or custom build plots, to meet the demand identified on the Council's self-build register. Each plot shall have access to the public highway and be provided with utility services (water, electricity, gas, telecommunications, foul drainage and surface water drainage) up to the plot boundary. The plots should be well integrated with the wider development.

The plots are to be made available to self-builders or custom builders for a period of not less than 12 months. The value and marketing strategy shall be agreed with the Council before the plots are released for purchase. If the plots are not sold within this time, the requirement to retain the plot for self-build will cease. Proposals for 100% flatted development, conversions of existing buildings, student accommodation or C2 accommodation will be exempt from the requirement to provide self-build plots.

Proposals including self and custom build serviced plots will be required to submit and agree with the Council a design code and plot passport which will set design criteria and specifications.

Evidence will be required at the appropriate stage of the application process to demonstrate how the initial homeowners have had primary input into the final design and layout of the dwelling. A suitable legal mechanism will be utilised to ensure that the homes are constructed as self and custom build.

6.3.10 Custom and self-build is the process by which an individual or association purchases a plot of land and then builds their own home. The process can vary from the individual undertaking the whole process or commissioning architects or builders to assist. The evidence in the LHNA and on the authorities Custom and Self-build Register suggests that there is some demand for self-build plots but this is limited. The Council are however keen to widen opportunities for people to build their own homes as this is an important element of boosting housing supply and meeting housing aspirations.

6.3.11 Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2022 there have been very few self-build plots permitted. Additional requirements have also been placed on the Council via new legislation. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 placed a duty on local planning authorities to provide sufficient serviced plots which have planning permission to match entries on the register. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 also requires authorities to include pre-existing un-met demand for self-build and custom build housing when calculating their current level of demand. As such in order for the Council to meet its duty to provide enough suitable permissions for self and custom build, a low level of serviced plots will be sought on larger housing developments.

Policy H 5

Affordable Housing (Strategic Policy)

In order to meet the needs of people who are not able to access the general housing market, the provision of affordable housing will be expected in residential development schemes of 10 or more dwellings or sites of 0.5ha or more. Exemptions include residential institutions, student accommodation, live work units where the main use is predominantly employment, gypsy and traveller accommodation and non-residential development.

The level and type of affordable housing required in residential developments is as follows:

Table 6.8 Affordable Housing Requirement

Location (wards)	Affordable Requirement	Tenure Split of the Affordable Requirement
Bank Top and Lascelles, Northgate, Park East, Stephenson.	10%	<u>60% social rent</u> ~~100%~~ 40% affordable home ownership
~~Brinkburn and Faverdale~~ , Cockerton, College, Eastbourne, Harrowgate Hill, Haughton and Springfield, ~~Heighington and Coniscliffe~~ , North Road, Pierremont, Red Hall and Lingfield ~~Sadberge and Middleton St George~~ and Whinfield	20%	- ~~51~~ <u>60</u> % social rent - ~~7~~ % affordable rent - ~~42~~ <u>40</u> % affordable home ownership
<u>Brinkburn and Faverdale</u> , <u>Heighington and Coniscliffe</u> , Hummersknott, Hurworth, Mowden, ~~and~~ Park West <u>and Sadberge and Middleton St George</u>	30%	- ~~51~~ <u>60</u> % social rent - ~~7~~ % affordable rent - ~~42~~ <u>40</u> % affordable home ownership

A map of these areas can be found in APPENDIX E.

Developments of less than 10 dwellings or sites smaller than 0.5ha will not generally be required to make an affordable housing contribution, unless they form part of a rural exceptions site.

The tenure split to be provided on site is set out within table 6.8 ~~and differs across the three requirement areas~~. In determining the type and size of affordable housing to be provided, the Council will also have regard to the evidence in the most recent Local Housing Needs Assessment.

Affordable housing will normally be provided on-site alongside market housing to create balanced communities. As such, the affordable housing should be distributed across sites in small clusters of dwellings. Exceptions to the requirement for on-site provision will be:

- Schemes which involve the conversion of a building which is not able to physically accommodate units of the size and type of affordable housing which is required within that locality;
- Specialist accommodation where the management of the building(s) would make it difficult to provide affordable housing on-site (such as sheltered accommodation); and
- Any other circumstances where the Council considers off-site provision to be preferable to on-site provision; for example where a contribution would result in the delivery of more affordable homes off-site or in a more suitable location when

compared to the policy requirement for on-site provision. Such an approach would be required to contribute to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.

In the above circumstances, the requirement should be provided off-site on developer owned land or a financial contribution by way of a commuted sum will be expected, which will be used by the Council to meet affordable housing needs within the Borough. The sum shall be equal to the difference between the open market valuation of the affordable units which would have been provided on-site and the purchase price that the Registered Provider would have been willing to pay for these units.

Where an applicant considers that the provision of affordable housing in accordance with the requirements of this policy would make a scheme unviable, they must demonstrate the particular circumstances that have changed since the viability assessment undertaken at the plan-making stage that justify the need for a viability assessment at the application stage. Applicants must also submit a detailed viability assessment to demonstrate that this ~~is the case~~ policy requirement is unviable and to show the maximum level of affordable housing that could be delivered on the site. The Council will have regard to all the circumstances in the case when apportioning weight to the viability assessment. The applicant will be expected to deliver the maximum level of affordable housing achievable. All submitted viability assessments should follow the recommended approach in national planning practice guidance including standardised inputs. All viability assessments will be made publicly available.

6.4.1 Affordable housing provides opportunities for people who are unable to access the housing market. It provides suitable housing for people who cannot afford to rent or buy on the open market and also for those people who work in different aspects of the economy. It also assists in reducing homelessness and overcrowding. Currently affordable housing is delivered within the Borough by Registered Providers and the Council. The Council's stock comprises of approximately 5269 homes. The Council are aware of the need for affordable homes in the Borough and therefore are very much active in delivery. ~~Delivery is currently focused largely on affordable rent schemes due to a lack of government subsidies for social rent.~~ The different types of affordable housing are set out in the NPPF ~~and outlined below.~~ Dwellings that do not meet the definitions of affordable housing in national policy will not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

- ~~**Social Rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent; (b) the landlord is a registered provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.~~
- ~~**Other affordable housing for rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).~~

- ~~**Discounted market sales housing:** is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.~~
- ~~**Other affordable routes to home ownership:** is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.~~

6.4.2

Darlington Borough does have a substantial need for affordable homes and detailed evidence is provided in the LHNA(2025~~6~~). The assessment provides an analysis of the social, economic, housing and demographic situation across the Borough and identifies a need of ~~185~~219 affordable dwellings per annum over the plan period, a total of ~~3,148~~3,724. This would equate to approximately ~~41~~5% of the housing requirement figure (~~446~~490 dwellings per annum as outlined in Policy H 1). The affordable need is broken down into ~~1,598~~1,809 dwellings required for social rent (~~94~~106 dwellings per annum), ~~227~~230 dwellings required for affordable rent (~~13~~14 dwellings per annum) and ~~1,323~~1,685 dwellings for households aspiring to home ownership (~~78~~99 dwellings per annum). Given the level of affordable housing need identified, it is important to maximise the amount of affordable housing that can be delivered through market housing led developments. Key to this is the economic viability of such developments.

6.4.3

Policy H 5 will assist in achieving delivery of affordable homes via market led housing schemes. It sets out the affordable housing requirement for schemes of 10 or more dwellings and sites of 0.5ha or more within particular areas of the Borough. The requirements within policy H 5, including the tenure split, have largely been informed by data from the LHNA 2025~~6~~ and ~~previous evidence~~ Local Plan viability testing. The LHNA (2026) identifies an overall affordable housing need of 45% of the overall housing requirement. Local Plan viability testing has examined the impact of the affordable housing need requirement on the viability of housing development across the Borough. This has demonstrated that an affordable housing requirement of 45% would not be viable so affordable housing requirements are set at a lower viable level for each of the respective value areas. Local Plan viability testing will take place at the next stage of plan making and will inform the publication draft. This will ~~As the affordable housing requirements are set at a lower level than overall identified affordable housing need a slightly higher proportion of social rent housing is required in Policy H 5 in comparison to the proportion identified in the LHNA as the Council wish to prioritise this tenure. This is because it is considered that those who require social rent have more pressing housing needs. Whereas those who aspire to affordable home ownership are derived from those who can afford private rent but would like to own and therefore these households are currently suitably housed. examined the impact of the affordable housing requirements on the viability of housing development across the borough. If necessary, the percentages will be altered within policy H 5 to~~

~~ensure the requirements are viable.~~ The policy ~~is to be~~ has been prepared so as to not stifle overall development and to contribute to affordable need. It is acknowledged that in some individual cases these proposed levels of affordable housing may not be viable due to other site-specific issues. In such circumstances applicants will be expected to submit evidence to justify and substantiate this consisting of a viability assessment. Where the evidence is considered to be satisfactory, lower levels of affordable housing provision will be explored.

Rural Exception Sites

Policy H 6

Rural Exception Sites (Strategic Policy)

Affordable housing schemes closely related to the identified development limits of the service villages and rural villages will be permitted providing:

- a. Affordable housing need in the local area has been demonstrated;
- b. Local need cannot be met on sites within the settlement limits;
- c. The type and size of housing provided reflects identified local need;
- d. Arrangements exist to ensure the housing will remain affordable in perpetuity; and
- e. The site is well-related to the settlement and local services and does not conflict with other policies in the Local Plan.

In exceptional circumstances, a small proportion of market or self/custom build housing may be provided, if it can be demonstrated via a detailed viability assessment that a 100% affordable scheme would be unviable and the market homes would support delivery.

6.5.1 The housing market can be stronger in rural areas with prices generally higher than similar properties in urban areas and suburbs. This can make it difficult for people who want to live close to their families in such areas or for those whose employment is based in the rural area. It can also result in younger people moving out of village areas subsequently resulting in an imbalance in the age structure of the rural population.

6.5.2 In the LHNA (2025~~5~~6) there is limited spatial evidence for the distribution of additional affordable housing needed. As such, there is no evidence of specific unmet needs for additional affordable housing in the service villages or any of the other villages / hamlets in the Borough. If it can be demonstrated by a local needs survey that there is a need for additional affordable homes in these areas, Policy H 6 allows for the provision of affordable dwellings on the edges of villages. The survey would normally be carried out by a parish council or Registered Provider and would have to satisfy the Borough Council. Where supported by a detailed viability assessment, a small proportion of market housing may be provided if it can be demonstrated that it is necessary to deliver the affordable dwellings.

Residential Development in the Countryside

Policy H 7

Residential Development in the Countryside (Strategic Policy)

New isolated dwellings in the countryside will be avoided. New permanent dwellings will only be permitted where they meet criteria set in national policy.

Proposals for rural workers dwellings will need to demonstrate:

- i. an essential need to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside; and;
- ii. provide evidence as to why the need for on-site accommodation cannot be dealt with by other means, such as CCTV surveillance, or met in another way through alternative accommodation in the existing local housing stock within a reasonable distance; and;
- iii. the location of the proposed residential accommodation has been carefully considered to minimise visual impact on the countryside and any neighbouring land uses.

The replacement of residential buildings in the open countryside will only be permitted providing;

- a. There is no detrimental effect on the character, appearance, historical context and amenities of the site and surroundings;
- b. The existing dwelling has a lawful use, has not been abandoned, and is not a caravan, mobile home or other temporary structure;
- c. The size of the new replacement dwelling is not significantly larger than the original house volume or footprint;
- d. The number of new dwellings is no more than the number of dwellings to be demolished and replaced; and
- e. They are positioned on the footprint of the existing dwelling, unless a more appropriate location is identified for landscape, highway safety, neighbouring residential amenity, or other environmental reasons.

Extensions to existing residential dwellings in the countryside, which require planning permission, will be permitted providing there is no significant detrimental impact on the character of the dwelling or its setting.

Where planning permission is required for the conversion or change of use of buildings in the countryside to residential use (defined by being outside development limits) proposals will be permitted where it has been demonstrated that they are no longer required for their original purpose and there is no potential for conversion to non-residential use.

Proposals for conversion and change of use to residential uses will be expected to meet the following criteria:

- f. The building is of permanent construction and capable of conversion without major reconstruction or rebuilding as demonstrated by a structural survey;

- g. The proposal is largely accommodated within the existing building(s). Any extensions that are required must be subordinate in scale and proportion and of a suitable design to ensure that they are in keeping with to the original dwelling;
- h. The proposed use does not detract from its setting in the immediate landscape;
- i. Conversion is capable without prejudicing any viable agricultural operations on an active farm unit;
- j. The conversion in itself will not generate a need for future building in the countryside;
- k. The access to the site and approach roads are suitable for the levels and type of traffic likely to be generated; and
- l. The development would not result in unacceptable amenity levels arising from nearby operations or conflicting uses.

6.6.1 National planning policy states that isolated new dwellings in the countryside should be avoided. They will only be permitted in the circumstances as set out in national policy, for example if it can be demonstrated there is a specific need for a rural worker(s) or are of exceptional design quality.

6.6.2 Replacement dwellings and extensions to existing dwellings can have a significant adverse impact on the character of the surroundings and/or on the existing property itself. Such proposals should meet the criteria in Policy H 7 above. The replacement of rural dwellings will be carefully controlled to avoid the loss of buildings that are worthy of retention, (e.g. those identified as non-designated heritage assets and/or making a positive contribution to the character of the area). Where buildings are worthy of retention, applicants will have to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council that they are not capable of renovation.

6.6.3 Not all changes of use or conversions to residential require planning consent. Rights to convert existing buildings are set out in the General Permitted Development Order regulations. Advice can be sought on these regulations either on the government's Planning Portal website or by contacting the Local Planning Authority.

6.6.4 The re-use of agricultural buildings for purposes that benefit the rural economy are the preferred option to promote and enable growth of the rural economy. This accords with the NPPF as it outlines that isolated dwellings in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances.

6.6.5 Policy H 7 will also be used in the consideration of the conversion or change of use of non-agricultural buildings in rural areas and can include buildings such as public houses and petrol filling stations. Where such a building is considered appropriate for conversion but is already in some form of economic use it will be necessary to demonstrate that the existing (or most recent) use is no longer required or viable. It is acknowledged that the re-use of such buildings is not always viable. Subsequently conversion to residential use may be suitable providing the criteria in Policy H 7 is met.

- 6.6.6** Where the conversion of the property to residential is to be considered, the building must be capable of conversion without substantial alteration and extension. To demonstrate the building is sound, any proposal must, through the submission of a professionally prepared structural report, confirm that the building is free from major defects and can be converted without significant alterations or substantial demolition and rebuild. Where a building is beyond repair or restoration or requires major reconstruction any proposal for replacement or rebuild should be considered against Policy H 7.
- 6.6.7** In addition, the loss of a building in the countryside to a dwelling should not result in the demand for further building in the rural area. For example, the loss of a barn to a dwelling should not result in the farm holding requiring the construction of a further barn or building for a similar function.

Housing Intensification

Policy H 8

Housing Intensification

~~A) Subdivision of dwellings to HMO's and self-contained flats~~

~~In circumstances where planning permission is required for self-contained flats and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), permission will normally be granted where it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant impact on the following:~~

- ~~i. Privacy of existing homes and gardens of neighbours must be maintained and ensured for new occupiers;~~
- ~~ii. Vehicular access or car parking both in terms of highway safety or visual, noise or light impact on neighbours;~~
- ~~iii. Service provision there should be sufficient space to accommodate adequate bin storage and accommodate other ancillary functions for the increased number of residents;~~
- ~~iv. Housing stock to protect the existing small family housing stock, and to allow for adequate residential space standards in the proposed subdivided dwelling, the subdivision of existing properties of less than 4 bedrooms will not be permitted.~~

~~Applicants will be expected to submit evidence to demonstrate that there will be no significant impact on the criteria outlined above. All development proposals should have regard to the Council's SPD on HMO's or any other relevant guidance.~~

Back land or garden development

The development of back land or a residential garden for a new dwelling will not normally be permitted. A limited scale of development may be acceptable in these circumstances providing it does not have a significant adverse impact upon the following:

- v. Garden land which contributes either individually or as part of a larger swathe of green space to amenity of residents or provides wildlife habitats;
- vi. The privacy of existing homes and gardens of neighbours or occupiers of the new development;
- vii. Vehicular access or car parking – both in terms of highway safety or visual, noise or light impact on neighbours;
- viii. Existing trees, shrubs and other wildlife habitats.

All development proposals should have regard to the Design of New Development SPD (2011), or most recent version.

- 6.7.1** National planning policy allows Councils to set out policies to resist inappropriate development, to set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances and requires consideration to be given to a policy controlling inappropriate development of residential gardens. Because these issues are often locally contentious, a policy is considered appropriate, to provide more clarity for applicants and decision makers alike.

Sub-division of Existing Housing Stock including HMOs and Self-contained Flats

- 6.7.2** — High concentrations of sub-divided housing stock or other forms of Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) can cause problems within a local community if not properly managed. Changes to permitted development regulations have made it easier for such properties to be created, and they can form a vital part of the overall housing mix. However when concentrations get too high, problems can arise, to the detriment of the amenity of existing residents.
- 6.7.3** — The creation of HMOs and self-contained flats has increased in recent years, in response to the increasing number of smaller households and the need for more affordable, low-cost housing. Needs are expected to increase further in response to changes to housing benefit payments. HMOs of three to six unrelated individuals who share basic amenities in a single property (Use Class C4) do not require consent under the General Permitted Development Order so local authorities have less control than previously over the establishment of such properties. The Council are, however, in the process of putting in place an article 4 direction, so that all HMOs in the borough require planning permission despite their size. This will give the Council greater control over the provision of this type of housing and will help to mitigate the negative impacts. It is anticipated that this will be established by July 2026.
- 6.7.4** — New HMOs and self-contained flats have generally been achieved by building new properties and converting large houses or commercial properties. In some instances, their provision can be detrimental to the amenity of existing residential areas. A concentration of these properties can lead to problems such as a shortage of on-street parking, increased noise and disturbance and inadequate bin storage areas, whilst short term lets and low levels of owner occupation can be associated with lower standards of maintenance and environmental decline. The conversion of existing larger homes can also reduce the proportion of family homes in an area, and result in an unbalanced community. As such, this could prejudice the plan's environmental improvement and regeneration objectives.
- 6.7.5** — Whether a residential property is considered acceptable for conversion will depend on size, unsuitability for continued family occupation or long-established use. Acceptable areas for conversion are likely to be close to town centres or services and facilities, or within mixed use areas providing there is no risk of flooding.

Back Land or Garden Development

- 6.7.6** National policy excludes private residential gardens from the definition of previously developed land, consequently there is no presumption that garden land is suitable for new housing. In general the Council will not support proposals for new dwellings within the garden areas to the rear of existing homes as this type of relationship between properties can result in poor levels of amenity and issues with vehicle access. Proposals for development of back land sites in other uses will be considered subject to the criteria in Policy H 8 above and other relevant policies.
- 6.7.7** In order to safeguard a range and choice of housing, including properties with larger than average gardens at the upper end of the property market, and to maintain local character, biodiversity and amenity space, the Council will resist proposals for developments on garden land.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Policy H9

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

To create inclusive, mixed and balanced communities and to protect residential amenity, development for HMOs will be expected to ensure that:

- a. the property is located where increased traffic and activity would not be detrimental to local amenity;
- b. the intensity of use would not adversely affect the character and function of the surrounding area;
- c. the proposed use would not harm heritage assets;
- d. the proposal would not be detrimental to the amenities of neighbouring properties by causing undue noise, disturbance or loss of privacy;
- e. adequate provision for vehicle parking, cycle storage, servicing, refuse, recycling arrangements and, where appropriate, the management and maintenance of the property can be demonstrated through the submission of a management plan;
- f. the proposal would not result in an over concentration of HMOs within the locality or lead to an unacceptable change in the character of the area; and
- g. the accommodation provides a good standard of well proportioned, useable living space and amenity for occupiers of the HMO.

The conversion of an existing property to an HMO will not be supported where there is insufficient provision of in-curtilage parking and where there is an already significant demand for on street parking by surrounding properties, unless there is a good supply of nearby public parking provision.

A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is defined under planning legislation as a house or flat occupied by a certain number of unrelated individuals who share basic amenities and is classified by the Uses Classes Order as Class C4 (between three and six residents); and Sui Generis (more than six residents). Planning permission is not required for changes of use from Class C3 (residential) to Class C4 (HMO) unless an Article 4 Direction has been made for a particular area. Darlington Borough Council has designated an Article 4 Direction for HMO development in Darlington, which came into effect on 28th July 2026.

HMOs can provide accommodation for a wide range of groups including professionals, students, migrants and people on low incomes. In Darlington, there is a strong HMO market

in central Darlington and in close proximity to the hospital, predominantly catering for groups who need single person accommodation at low cost.

HMOs provide a form of low-cost housing, particularly for students, younger people and people on low-incomes. They provide flexible accommodation for people with short-term housing requirements. This includes people in-between properties, people employed on short-term contracts and people who are saving to purchase a home. They also provide housing for people that simply prefer to live with large numbers of other people, such as friendship groups. Given the limited number of purpose-built private rented HMOs in the borough, the sector is likely to be reliant on conversion of existing properties.

Notwithstanding their importance in meeting housing needs, poor quality HMOs, or an over concentration of them, can have significant negative impacts and have caused concern to local residents and Members. These concerns include: transient populations; anti-social behaviour; noise and nuisance; changing character of an area; living conditions and property standards; impact on parking and highways; mismanagement of waste; and poorly maintained properties and gardens. This can impact the lives of their sometimes more vulnerable occupants and their surrounding neighbourhoods. In addition, landlords are often better placed to acquire properties than local families, thus undermining the ability of larger family households to meet their needs.

Development for HMOs will need to demonstrate that they would not have a detrimental effect on the character and function of the locality, its local amenity or neighbouring properties. When considering whether there is an over concentration of HMO properties within the locality, the Council will consider each proposal on its individual merits, taking account of the number of existing HMOs (where possible), clustering and the character of the area. As shared accommodation tends to provide smaller living accommodation than single dwelling houses, particular attention will be given to

Accommodating Travelling Groups (moved to later in the document)

- 6.8.1** — ~~Darlington has a long association with Gypsies and other Travelling groups with people from these groups accommodated on dedicated sites and within general housing. The Darlington Local Plan 2025-42 makes provision for travelling groups at the existing larger council owned sites together with other smaller, often private, sites within the Borough to accommodate for Gypsies and Travelling groups. It also indicates that additional accommodation to meet needs over the plan period should be allocated in accordance with a set of criteria, such criteria also being the basis for making decisions on windfall sites.~~
- 6.8.2** — ~~The requirement to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople is established through national guidance contained in the DCLG's August 2015 Planning Policy for Travellers Sites (PPTS).~~

Existing Sites and Commitments

- 6.8.3** — ~~To provide a robust evidence base for the pitch and plot targets set out in this policy, a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (2025) has been carried out. This has been supplemented with information by the Council's Annual Caravan Count July 2025. Table 6.9 shows existing pitches in~~

Darlington in 2025⁽²³⁾.

Table 6.9 Existing Gypsy and Traveller Pitches

Pitches	Transit Pitches	Total
152	16	168

6.8.4 — Two new sites which are owned by the Council have been provided by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA now Homes England) through the Traveller Pitch Fund (2011-2015) / Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) (2015-2018) funding. One site, Rowan East, has 16 pitches with amenity blocks and 4 chalet pitches and was completed in March 2015. A further site, formerly known as Neasham Road, was completely regenerated and upgraded in 2017 to a size of 22 pitches, all with enlarged amenity blocks. The standard of accommodation is of the highest standard and have been used as a 'quality of design demonstrator project' by the HCA in England for Gypsy and Travellers Sites based on the new caravan licence standard from 2014.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) 2025

6.8.5 — The most recent Gypsy and Traveller Site Needs Assessment (GTAA 2025)⁽²⁴⁾ came to the conclusion that Darlington Borough is well catered for in terms of supply for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. An annual need of 1.8 pitch per 5 years was identified from 2025-2029.

6.8.6 — Further need arises for residential pitches in the period of 2030-2042 which has been calculated on a projection basis of 37 pitches, an annualised need of 2.8 pitches.

6.8.7 — No need for Travelling Showpeople plots has been identified in the Local Plan Period until 2042.

Policy H 9

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation (Strategic Policy)

The council will seek to address the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs over the Plan period, as identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment by:

- a. — Safeguarding of existing larger Gypsy and Travellers Sites (20 pitches plus);
- b. — Safeguarding of private dedicated smaller Gypsy and Travellers sites, and;

²³ GTAA December 2025 / DBC Annual Caravan Count July 2025.

²⁴ By ORS Consultants December 2025

- c. ~~The extension to existing Council sites at Honeypot Lane (8 anticipated pitches) and an extension to the Rowan West / East complex site (25 anticipated pitches) off Neasham Road, and;~~
- d. ~~Allowing new sites to provide accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and/or Travelling Showpeople where:~~
 - i. ~~the site is clearly demarcated with pitch boundaries using appropriate boundary treatment and landscaping sympathetic to, and in keeping with, the surrounding area;~~
 - ii. ~~the site allows satisfactory access to local schools and other amenities;~~
 - iii. ~~the site design takes account of the needs of residents, and provides an appropriate pitch layout and adequate facilities for parking, storage, play and, if required, grazing space for livestock;~~
 - iv. ~~there is safe access for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, including for turning and parking, vehicles towing caravans, emergency services and servicing requirements, including waste collection;~~
 - v. ~~all necessary utilities can be provided on the site including mains water, electricity supply, drainage, sanitation and provision for the screened storage and collection of refuse, including recyclable materials; and~~
 - vi. ~~the proposal would avoid any unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity, health or living conditions of neighbouring residents or any other neighbouring uses, including as a result of flood risk, excessive noise, dust, odour, lighting, traffic generation, the keeping of livestock or other activities.~~

6.8.8 ~~The three existing larger council owned sites at Honeypot Lane and Rowan East & West will continue to be safeguarded to provide for accommodation needs. A range of existing private dedicated smaller sites will complement these and be safeguarded for use as Gypsy and Traveller sites, for up to the number of pitches currently authorised and licensed.~~

6.8.9 ~~In addition, there are a significant number of unimplemented planning permissions for Gypsy and Traveller sites within the Borough, all on private land, providing for small family units. These are anticipated to meet some of the need for additional pitches and for the five year supply of pitches. These pitches are spread throughout the Borough, with some concentrations in the Hurworth Moor and North of Brafferton area. Together, they make a considerable contribution to a particular need of some Gypsies and Travellers to own their own site. As some of these planning permissions are not for specific families, there is a potential that some will be let to families who wish to live on a smaller site, but who cannot afford to buy their own site.~~

6.8.10 ~~National policy indicates that Local Planning Authorities can make an allowance for windfall sites in the five year supply if they have compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply. Local evidence over the last 25 years supports making an allowance for 4 pitches per year coming forward as windfalls.~~

- 6.9.1** Skerningham ~~Garden Village~~ is a 487-hectare site, ~~covering two allocations~~, bordered by the Skerne River and Barmpton village to the north, the A167 to the west, Darlington's urban edge and the A66 to the south, and agricultural land to the east. It is bisected by the East Coast mainline. Most of the site is situated within the Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward, with the remainder located in the wards of Harrogate Hill and Whinfield. The majority of the area is currently in agricultural use, but the site allocations also includes Darlington Golf Club, areas of recreational open space, Skerningham Community Woodland and a network of formal and permissive Public Rights of Way.
- 6.9.2** The Council adopted a design code for the development of Skerningham ~~Garden Village~~ on 28th September 2023 which sets out the strategic design requirements that need to be applied in developing a successful scheme. Subsequently, the Council agreed the developer-led Masterplan for Skerningham ~~Garden Village~~ on 3rd December 2024.

Policy H 10

Skerningham – Site Allocation (Strategic Policy)

~~Two allocations are~~ An allocation is identified on the North side of Darlington at Skerningham (Site References: 251 & ~~505~~) to secure the delivery of a mixed use development of up to 4,500 dwellings and approximately ~~22ha-13.46ha (gross)~~ 9.42ha (net) of employment space. During the plan period to 2042, this site is expected to deliver approximately 1,950 dwellings of which 600 dwellings are to be delivered on land adjacent to the A167 and west of the East Coast Mainline on the western part of the allocation; and 1,350 dwellings to be delivered on land to the east of the east coast mainline on the eastern part of the allocation with initial phases located on land adjoining Barmpton Lane.

Development at Skerningham will be permitted in accordance with the principles set out below and other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

A comprehensive masterplan and infrastructure phasing plan for Skerningham ~~Garden Village~~, led by the applicants and prepared in consultation with the community, was agreed with the Council on 3rd December 2024. This masterplan informs the mix of uses, layout, scale, design, provision of local and strategic infrastructure including social and community facilities and phasing of the proposed development. The masterplan is based on a strong understanding of the characteristics of the site and its surrounds and incorporates the key principles for the development as set out in points a. to j. below.

To ensure that a cohesive development is delivered at Skerningham, the Council will only approve planning applications that adhere with the agreed comprehensive masterplan and the Council's Skerningham Garden Village Design Code SPD and deliver the necessary local and strategic infrastructure, including social and community facilities, at the appropriate phase of the development identified in the infrastructure phasing plan to support the coordinated provision of infrastructure and housing development. Future revisions of the comprehensive masterplan must continue to be based on the design approach and principles established in the Council's Design Code for Skerningham and should incorporate the points set out in a. to j. below.

The key principles for the development of Skerningham ~~Garden Village~~ are shown on the illustrative Masterplan Framework (Figure 6.1), including ~~broad~~ indicative locations for land uses and facilities. The site will provide:

- a. A mix of housing types, tenures and sizes, including ~~20~~30% affordable housing and 1% self/custom build housing, informed by up-to-date evidence of the housing needs

of the Borough and Policies H3, H 4 and H 5, with higher densities being incorporated close to public transport routes and neighbourhood centres;

- b. A centrally located and well-connected neighbourhood centre providing local community facilities including a health hub for GPs and Dentists, clustered with other facilities and services to meet the day-to-day needs of residents, education, employment opportunities, retail and food and drink (excluding hot food takeaways) facilities. These facilities should be of a scale and type proportionate to the nature of the development and shall be delivered in accordance with the infrastructure phasing plan. Policies TC 1, TC 4 and TC 5 will not apply to proposals in accordance with these requirements;
- c. Other local community facilities to serve residential areas as required, closely related to public transport, walking and cycling facilities, and shall be delivered in accordance with the infrastructure phasing plan;
- d. Up to two primary schools, associated nursery provision (a total of 5.6 hectares) and a reserved space for a secondary school (5 hectares), with a primary school being delivered on land to the east of the East Coast Mainline before the occupation of the 450th dwelling on land to the east of the East Coast Mainline subject to available capacity within existing or other newly created local schools (see Policy IN 10) and the phasing requirements established in the infrastructure phasing plan. The timescales for the delivery of the additional primary school (if necessary) and the secondary school ~~would should~~ be identified in the infrastructure phasing plan. ~~and/or through the review of infrastructure requirements prior to the occupation of the 1,650th dwelling where the education requirements and capacity levels will be considered;~~
- e. An integrated transport network focused on sustainable transport modes, including public transport, walking and cycling with strong links to adjoining communities, employment locations and Darlington town centre, shall be delivered in accordance with the infrastructure phasing plan;
- f. Principal vehicular access points from the A167, A1150 and Barmpton Lane and include appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of development on the local road network. The phased implementation of the highways works and improvements will be linked to appropriate phases of development within the plan period. This shall include, but not be limited to the following schemes from the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, exact details to be identified as part of the comprehensive masterplan, infrastructure phasing plan and any future planning applications for the site:
 - i. A66/Little Burdon Circulatory Upgrade
 - ii. A1150/ Thompson Street East Roundabout Improvements
 - iii. A167/Burtree Lane Junction Improvements
 - iv. Barmpton Lane upgrade works including its junction with Whinbush Way
- g. A local distributor road between the A167 and A1150, close to the Little Burdon roundabout, which is to include a crossing of the East Coast Mainline and junction on the A1150. This will be achieved through the following:
 - i. Prior to the occupation of the first dwelling on land on the western part of the allocation (between the A167 and the East Coast Mainline) the section of the local distributor road between the A167 and the primary development access point shall be delivered.
 - ii. Prior to the completion of the development on the western part of the allocation (between the A167 and East Coast Mainline) the remaining section of the local distributor road to the East Coast Mainline shall be delivered.
 - iii. Development of the initial phases of development on the eastern part of the allocation will be accessed via Barmpton Lane and/or Bishopton Lane. Prior to the occupation of between the 200th and 450th dwelling on the eastern part

of the allocation, between the East Coast Mainline and the River Skerne, the section of the local distributor road between Barmpton Lane and Bishopton Lane shall be delivered.

- iv. Prior to the occupation of between the 900th and 1500th dwelling the local distributor road between the A167 and the A1150 (including the bridge crossing of the East Coast Mainline) shall be completed in its entirety.

Precise details of the road and development access points, together with a timetable for its implementation, shall be agreed with the Council as part of the comprehensive masterplan, infrastructure phasing plan and any future planning applications for the site;

- h. Deliver approximately ~~22ha (net)~~ 13.46ha (gross) 9.42ha (net) of employment space to the east of the River Skerne, as shown on the Masterplan Framework ~~within Site 505~~.
- i. Other necessary infrastructure as required by the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and identified at the time of submitting a planning application;
- j. A network of green and blue infrastructure, the phasing of which is to be agreed with the Council as part of the infrastructure phasing plan, that:
 - i. retains and enhances the network of safe, attractive and accessible public rights of way, footpaths and cycle routes across the site;
 - ii. protects and enhances the River Skerne, its valley setting (see Policy ENV 7), and the green corridors (see Policy ENV 3). Where infrastructure crosses these corridors mitigation measures should be provided;
 - iii. delivers a net gain in the area of publicly accessible community woodland on the site;
 - iv. provides a pattern of well-integrated and inter-connected green spaces (along with provision for their long-term maintenance) across the site providing for the green infrastructure needs of the local community, including wildlife friendly natural spaces, sport and recreation facilities and allotments in accordance with Policies ENV 4, ENV 5 and ENV 9;
 - v. protects the amenity of existing residential properties (see Policy HC 2);
 - vi. wherever possible retains and enhances hedgerows and trees that contribute to landscape character;
 - vii. mitigates the impact on biodiversity (see Policy ENV 7) and aligns with wider ecological networks beyond site boundaries;
 - viii. incorporates sustainable drainage systems; and
 - ix. retains the openness and separation of the rural gaps between Darlington and the villages of Great Burdon and Barmpton (see Policy ENV 3).

Proposals will be required to conserve, and where appropriate enhance, designated and non-designated heritage assets within and in the vicinity of the site including their setting in accordance with Policy ENV 1. The design and layout should be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Darlington Local Plan Heritage Impact Assessment (2019) to avoid and minimise harm and provide opportunities for enhancement where appropriate.

Development should be located outside of areas of flood risk, and should be planned sequentially (Policy DC 3), placing the most vulnerable development in the lowest areas of flood risk, and proposals should be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment.

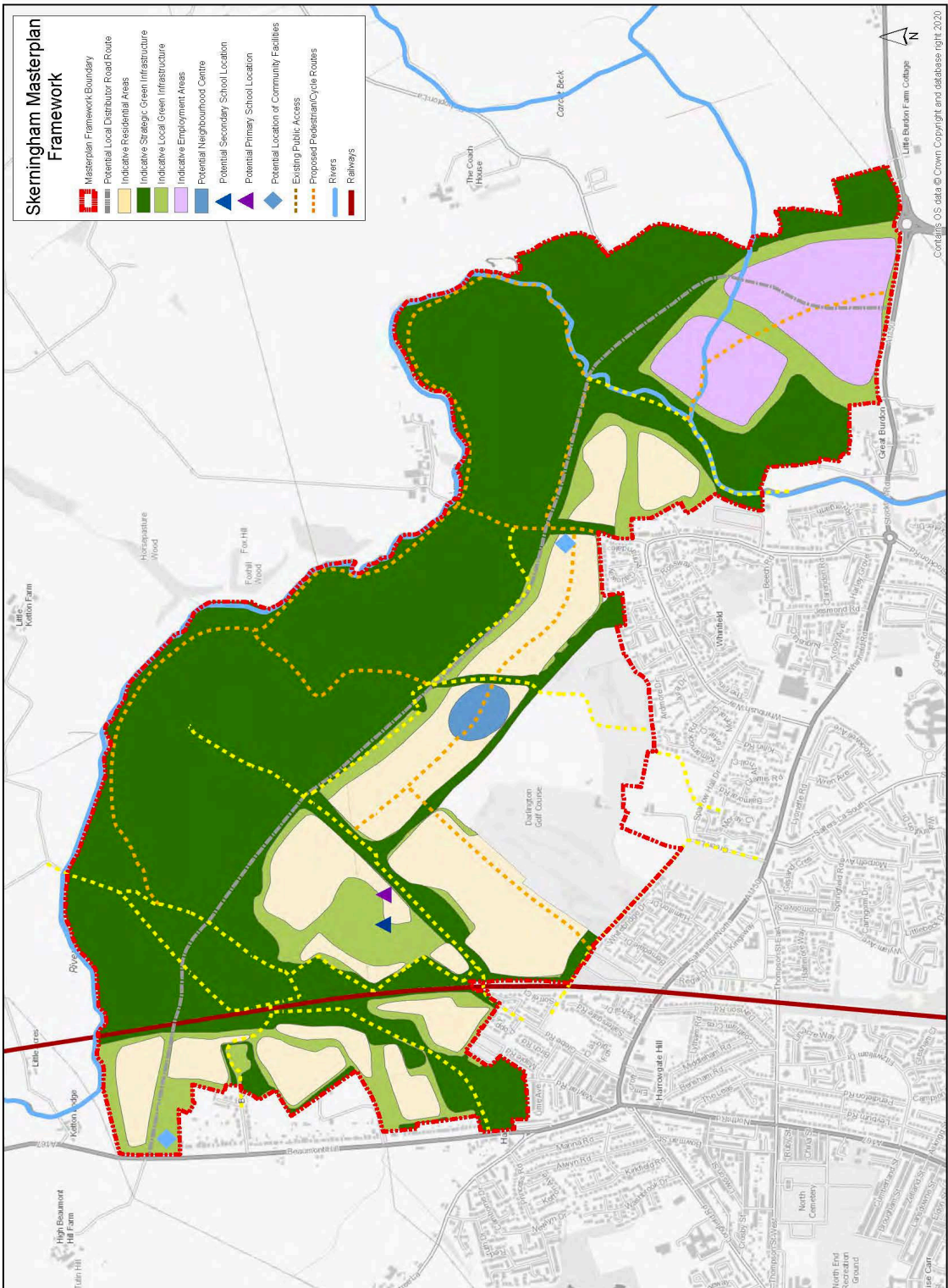
As the development is expected to extend beyond the plan period, in line with national policy and

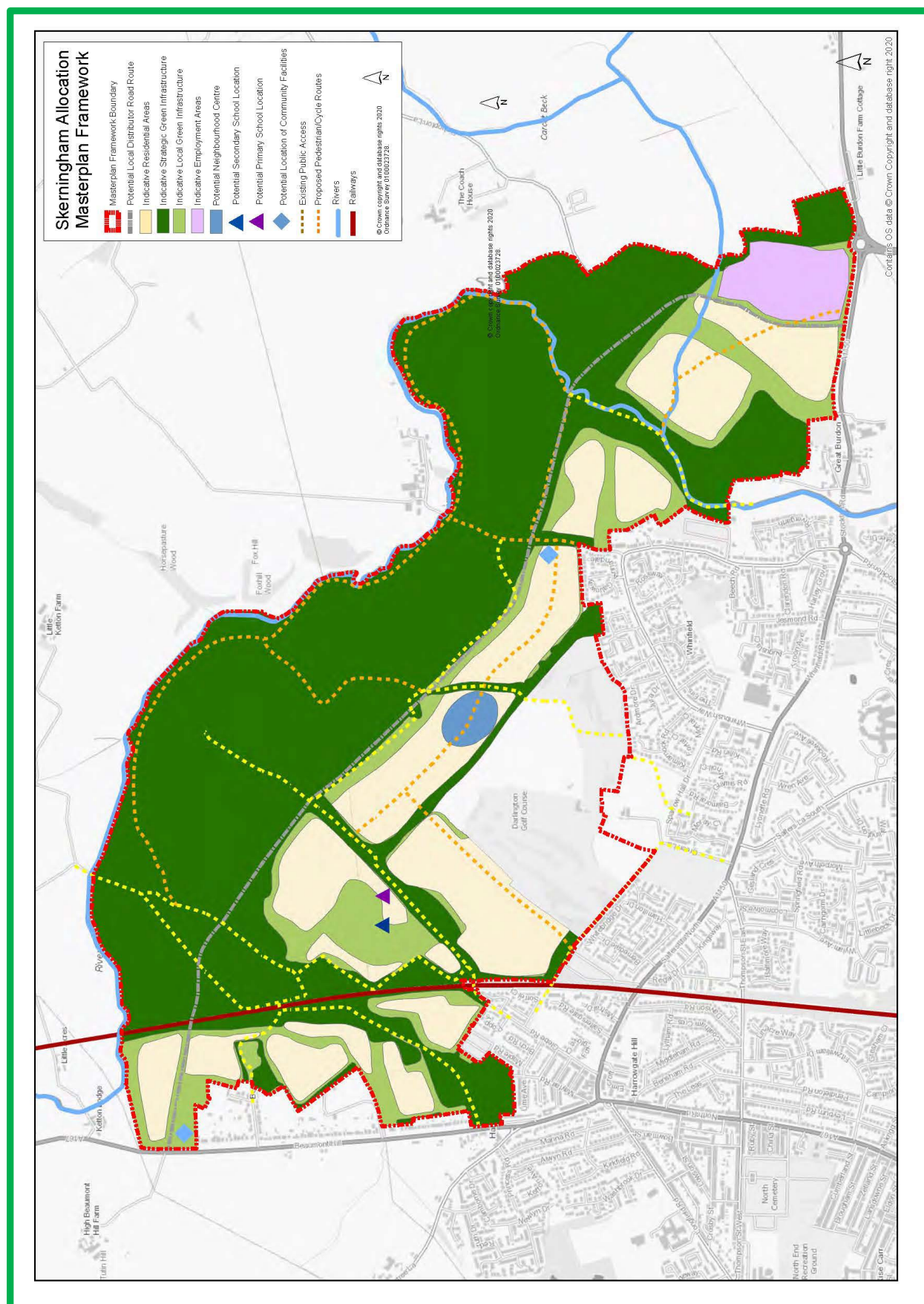
guidance, infrastructure requirements and the infrastructure phasing plan will be kept under review.

Given the need for early delivery of common infrastructure at Skerningham, most notably the East Coast Mainline Bridge and the Local Distributor Road, it may be necessary to forward-fund those items of infrastructure which are to be wholly or partly funded through Section 106 contributions, before all of those Section 106 contributions have been paid and/or secured via Section 106 obligations. However, it must be possible to recoup such forward-funding when planning applications for development which will be enabled by and/or benefit from such infrastructure come forward. In such circumstances, the Council will seek retrospective Section 106 contributions, at the appropriate contribution rate, in relation to such planning applications, even if they are not made until after the relevant item of infrastructure has been fully completed and/or fully (or partially) funded.

- 6.9.3** The Skerningham area to the North East of Darlington, was identified as having potential for housing development as part of the Local Plan Issues and Scoping consultation held in August 2016. In November 2016, the Council's Cabinet agreed to engage with the Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS), now part of Homes England, to investigate how this part of the Borough could contribute to meeting the Borough's housing needs in a planned, sustainable way.
- 6.9.4** Working with the Council, the sites promoters and major landowners started a masterplanning exercise for the site in 2017. The masterplan was prepared with a focus on the landscape and biodiversity context of the site, its heritage assets, and its relationship with existing communities, adopting the Healthy New Town principles to its layout and design (see Policy DC 3). The masterplanning process was informed by a number of studies to identify the opportunities and constraints of the area including landscape, ecology, ground conditions, historic assets, transportation and accessibility as well as establishing the infrastructure and community facilities that will be required to support a sustainable community, integrated with the existing urban area. A draft masterplan was also the subject of public consultation organised by the site's promoters during the Autumn of 2017. This work, along with the feedback from consultation, has in turn informed the ~~following~~ illustrative Masterplan Frameworks and the policy requirements for the strategic allocations.
- 6.9.5** The following Masterplan Framework illustrates the key principles for development of ~~the~~ Skerningham ~~site~~ emerging from the initial masterplan process and reflected in the policy, with the golf ~~club~~ course remaining ~~in-situ~~ undeveloped. This is the current approach to the development of Skerningham ~~Garden Village~~, and the agreed masterplan is based on this framework.

Figure 6.1 Skerningham Masterplan Framework





~~6.9.6 The following masterplan framework illustrates how the key principles for the development of the Skerningham site could be delivered should the Golf Club relocate. This situation is currently considered unlikely but has been included to cover all potential scenario~~

Skeringham Masterplan Framework

- Masterplan Framework Boundary
- Potential Local Distributor Road Route
- Indicative Residential Areas
- Indicative Strategic Green Infrastructure
- Indicative Local Green Infrastructure
- Indicative Employment Areas
- Potential Neighbourhood Centre
- Potential Secondary School Location
- Potential Primary School Location
- Potential Location of Community Facilities
- Existing Public Access
- Proposed Pedestrian/Cycle Routes
- Rivers
- Railways

Map labels include: High Road, Little River, River, Fox Hill Wood, Horseshoe Wood, The Coach House, Carrick Beck, Luffa Baston Farm Cottage, North Cemetery, and various residential streets like Harrogate Hill, Harrogate Road, and Harrogate Lane.

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- 6.9.7** The Skerningham allocation ~~Garden Village~~ will deliver a high quality, sustainable development based on garden community principles of up to 4,500 new homes on the north side of Darlington. Due to the scale and complexity of this site, and the level of supporting community and physical infrastructure required to support the development, in the order of 1,950 homes are expected to be delivered on this site during the plan period (as set out in the Housing Trajectory at APPENDIX A). This is not regarded as the maximum number of homes that the site could deliver during the plan period, additional homes could be provided subject to a review being undertaken by the Council and developers of all associated infrastructure requirements to ensure the delivery and appropriate phasing of required supporting infrastructure (see Policy H 2). The site has been allocated as a whole to ensure that it is planned as a single cohesive sustainable development, fully supported by necessary infrastructure provision and with appropriate mitigation measures, as required, delivered in a coordinated phased manner alongside development. It is expected that 600 homes delivered during the plan period will be located on the land adjacent to the A167 and west of the East Coast Mainline with the remaining 1,350 homes delivered during the plan period on the eastern part of the allocation with initial phases located on land adjoining Barmpton Lane.
- 6.9.8** The Masterplan Frameworks shows the potential location of a new neighbourhood centre to serve both new and existing communities in the area through the co-location of community services, local scale retail, food and drink (excluding hot food takeaways) and employment facilities, schools and a health hub for GPs and Dentists. The neighbourhood centre is to be located to coincide with sustainable transport routes and the green infrastructure network. A number of smaller centres providing local community facilities to meet the needs of residential areas will also be provided where required, located along walking, cycling and public transport routes.
- 6.9.9** An assessment of the likely education requirements for this site by the Council has indicated that the site should make provision for land to accommodate up to two 525 place primary schools, each with a 52-place nursery school, a combined total land requirement of 5.6 hectares. This level of provision would allow sufficient flexibility for future demand. It will also be necessary to reserve 5 hectares of land for a 600-place secondary school. The first primary school is expected to be delivered on land to the east of the East Coast Mainline before the occupation of the 450th dwelling on land to the east of the East Coast Mainline subject to available capacity within existing or other newly created local schools and any further phasing requirements established through the infrastructure phasing plan. The timescales for the phasing of the remaining education provision will be established through the infrastructure phasing plan. ~~and/or the a review of infrastructure requirements prior to the occupation of the 1,650th dwelling.~~
- 6.9.10** Skerningham ~~Garden Village~~ is also expected to deliver approximately ~~22 ha~~ 13.46ha (gross) 9.42ha (net) of ~~net~~ employment land within the allocation

boundary ~~Site 505~~. This is to be located in the southeastern corner of the allocation ~~garden village~~, close to the A66 Little Burdon roundabout.

- 6.9.11** Development should seek to reduce the use of car-based travel through thoughtful layout, including the provision of a network of convenient, safe and attractive walking and cycling routes, integrated into and aligned with the green infrastructure network and existing Public Rights of Way, with links to adjacent residential areas and community facilities both on and off the site. The development should also fully explore the potential to extend existing bus services into the site, or provide a new service to serve the site, routed through the proposed neighbourhood centre. Appropriate primary and secondary vehicular access points and routes should be provided that are suitable to accommodate evidence based traffic flows to, from and through the site.
- 6.9.12** The site will require the delivery of a new local distributor road between the A167 north of Beaumont Hill and the A1150 close to the Little Burdon roundabout. The specification of this road will be determined by the Transport Assessment submitted with a planning application for the site. Whilst the precise details and timetable for implementation of the local distributor road are to be agreed with the Council through the comprehensive masterplan, infrastructure phasing plan and planning applications stages, it is expected, based on the modelling undertaken to date, that the internal distributor road will need to be fully operational prior to the occupation of between the 900th and 1500th dwelling. As such, it may be necessary to forward-fund items of common infrastructure, as sufficient S106 contributions for their delivery may not yet have been collected. In such circumstances, the Council would seek to recoup such forward funding when planning applications for development enabled by and/or benefiting from such infrastructure come forward. The Council would therefore seek retrospective section 106 contributions, at the appropriate contribution rate, in relation to such planning applications, even if they are not made until after the relevant item of infrastructure has been fully completed and/or fully (or partially) funded. As the final costs of the relevant item of infrastructure may not be known at the time a section 106 agreement requiring a contribution towards that infrastructure is entered into, every section 106 agreement would, where appropriate, contain a mechanism for review once the relevant item of infrastructure (or, if more than one, all such items) has been fully paid for and constructed so as to secure payment of additional contributions to cover the costs of the infrastructure.
- 6.9.13** Any reviewed masterplan must continue to deliver a high quality, landscape led design that responds to, respects, and enhances its landscape and biodiversity context and builds upon the existing local green infrastructure assets in the area providing an attractive green edge to the town. Around 45% of the site area is expected to be retained and enhanced as accessible green infrastructure, and managed agricultural land ~~and/or (should the situation arise) the relocated golf club~~, as part of a wide green corridor on the south side of the River Skerne forming the river valley, and along the East Coast Mainline. In addition, further green space will be provided within the remainder of the site, creating an extensive network of green infrastructure connecting residential areas and community facilities, delivered in line with Policy ENV 4. With the golf course ~~club~~

remaining ~~in-situ undeveloped~~, around 55% of the site area is expected to be retained and enhanced as accessible green infrastructure, managed agricultural land and the existing golf club.

- 6.9.14** The River Skerne that runs along the northern boundary of the Skerningham site is identified in Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy as part of an existing and proposed strategic green corridor. Development will be expected to improve the value and ecological mix of the River Skerne corridor in line with the measures set out in Policy ENV 7 and must follow the sequence of actions laid out in Policy ENV 8 to identify how impacts of development on biodiversity can be avoided, or failing that adequately mitigated. The River Skerne must be protected and enhanced, with the provision of habitat buffers as part of any development alongside the river to the north east and west. The site is expected to deliver an increase in the area of woodland adjacent to the river, ~~to offset any loss resulting from the potential relocation of Darlington Golf Course, and~~ to help meet the site's wider green infrastructure needs. This will take the form of non-farmed areas incorporating habitat creation measures at least 50 metres in depth in order to create viable ecological corridors, providing movement corridors for wildlife within the landscape.
- 6.9.15** The site contains the Grade II Listed Skerningham Farmhouse, which was the home of the noted cattle breeder Charles Colling, and Low Skerningham cottage and stable. The site is adjacent to the Ketton Bridge Scheduled Monument, and close to heritage assets in and around the villages of Great Burdon and Barmpton. It is therefore necessary that the design and layout of development on the site conserves and enhances the significance of these assets and the contribution their rural settings makes to their significance in line with Policy ENV 1 and national policy. Also present on the site is the potential location of the deserted medieval village of Skerningham (indicated on Figure C.1: Area of High Archaeological Potential) and a burial site. Historic field boundaries should also, wherever possible, be maintained.
- 6.9.16** Development should retain and incorporate the World War II pillbox in the southwest area of the site, as well as preserve some, if not all, of its original intended views within the landscape. Improving interpretation and accessibility to this historic asset could increase its overall communal value and significance.
- 6.9.17** Under the provisions of Policy ENV 1, development proposals on the ~~within the~~ Skerningham allocations must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report. Development proposals will need to consider an appropriate programme of targeted archaeological evaluation and mitigation, in particular around the site of the posited Skerningham Deserted Medieval Village, previously demolished historic buildings, and other earthworks as identified in the Historic Environment Record.

Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ Allocations

- 6.10.1** Burtree ~~Allocation~~ ~~Garden Village~~ (also known as Burtree Garden Village or Greater Faverdale) is a 177.8 hectare ~~development comprising two allocations~~ (Site References: 185 & ~~506~~) to the North West of Darlington in the Brinkburn and Faverdale Ward and the Heighington and Coniscliffe Ward. The site is currently in agricultural use and is bordered to the west by the A1(M) and the A68, to in the south by Rotary Way, to the north by Burtree Lane and the east by the operational Bishop Line of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. The western part of the site (120 hectares) was allocated in the 1997 Local Plan as an Employment Reserve site.
- 6.10.2** The Council approved a design code (Greater Faverdale Design Code Supplementary Planning Document) for the development of Burtree Garden Village on 14th July 2022 which sets out the strategic design requirements that need to be applied in developing a successful scheme for Greater Faverdale. Subsequently, the site developers have prepared a comprehensive masterplan and infrastructure phasing plan, which has regard to the strategic design requirements set out in the Design Code SPD. This Masterplan was agreed by the Council as meeting the requirement of Policy H11 on 13th May 2024. A hybrid application (22/01342/FULE) for Phase 1 of Burtree Garden Village was granted on 31st January 2025.

Policy H 11

Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ - Site Allocations (Strategic Policy)

A site allocations ~~is~~ are identified at Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ (Site References: 185 ~~& 506~~) to support a mixed use development of approximately 2,000 homes and approximately 19.4ha (gross) or 13.58 ha (net) ~~13 ha (net)~~ of employment land on a 177.8 hectare site in North West Darlington.

Development ~~at~~ within the Burtree ~~allocation~~ ~~Garden Village~~ will be permitted in accordance with the principles set out below and other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

A comprehensive masterplan and infrastructure phasing plan must be maintained that informs the mix of uses, layout, scale, design, provision of local and strategic infrastructure including social and community facilities and phasing of the proposed development, and which incorporates the key principles for the development as set out in points a-j below. Reviews of the Masterplan should be led by the applicant(s), informed by community consultation and should be based on a strong understanding of the characteristics of the site and its surrounds. It should also have regard to the strategic design requirements established in the Greater Faverdale Design Code (or successor document).

To ensure that a cohesive development is delivered at Burtree ~~Garden Village~~, the Council will only approve planning applications that adhere to the agreed comprehensive masterplan, or any updated comprehensive masterplan agreed with the Council, and deliver the necessary local and strategic infrastructure identified in points a-j below, including social and community facilities, at the appropriate phase of the development identified in the infrastructure phasing plan to support the coordinated provision of infrastructure and development.

The key principles for development of the Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ site are shown on the illustrative Masterplan Framework (Figure 6.2), including broad indicative locations for land uses and facilities, which for the avoidance of doubt can be subject to review via agreed updates to the comprehensive masterplan. The site will provide:

- a. A mix of housing types, tenures and sizes, including ~~20~~ 30% affordable housing and a ~~proportion of 1%~~ self/custom build housing, informed by up-to-date evidence of the housing needs of the Borough and Policies H3, H 4 and H 5, with higher densities being incorporated close to public transport routes and the neighbourhood centre;
- b. Approximately 13 ha (net) of employment land for E(g), B2 and B8 use classes. This land should be located to the east of the allocation, as shown on the Masterplan Framework (Figure 6.3), unless otherwise agreed with the Council as part of a review of the agreed comprehensive masterplan.;
- c. Space for a well located and connected neighbourhood centre providing community facilities, including the potential for a health hub, primary school and local retail and food and drink facilities (excluding hot food takeaways). These should be of a scale and type proportionate to the nature and scale of the development and should be provided at appropriate phases of the development identified in the infrastructure phasing plan. Policies TC1, TC4 and TC5 will not apply to proposals in accordance with these requirements. The requirement and timetable for the provision of the primary school shall be agreed with the Council as part of the comprehensive masterplan, infrastructure phasing plan and any future planning applications for the site subject to the capacity of existing local schools (see Policy IN10);
- d. An appropriate buffer zone alongside the A1(M) for noise attenuation which is to be informed by a noise assessment;
- e. Principal vehicular accesses from Rotary Way and Burtree Lane;

- f. A link road between Rotary Way and Burtree Lane the precise details of which including development access points, together with a timetable for its implementation, shall be agreed with the Council as part of the comprehensive masterplan, infrastructure phasing plan and any future planning applications for the site;
- g. Further enhancements to the local road network of Burtree Lane, to include the:
 - i. western connection to the A68; and
 - ii. improvements to Burtree Lane, including a new or improved pedestrian and cycleway over the Bishop Line to connect the site to the Harrowgate Hill area or improvements to a suitable [existing](#) alternative route which would fulfil the same strategic purpose.

The implementation of these enhancements will be linked to appropriate phases of development with the exact details as agreed with the Council as part of the comprehensive masterplan, infrastructure phasing plan and any future planning applications for the site;

- h. Other necessary infrastructure as required by the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and identified at the time of submitting a planning application;
- i. An integrated transport network focused on sustainable transport modes; including public transport, walking and cycling with strong links to established networks, adjoining communities, employment locations and Darlington town centre. This should be provided at the appropriate phases of the development identified in the infrastructure phasing plan;
- j. A network of connected and good quality green and blue infrastructure, the phasing of which is to be agreed with the Council as part of the comprehensive masterplan and infrastructure phasing plan, that:
 - i. retains and enhances the network of safe, attractive and accessible public rights of way, footpaths and cycle routes across the site;
 - ii. provides a pattern of well-integrated and inter-connected green spaces (along with their long-term maintenance) across the site providing for the recreational needs of the local community, including nature friendly natural spaces, in accordance with Policies ENV 4, ENV 5 and ENV 9;
 - iii. retains and integrates the green corridor along ~~Dene~~ [West](#) Beck in accordance with Policy ENV 3;
 - iv. protects the amenity of existing residential properties (see Policy DC 3);
 - v. retains and enhances hedgerows and trees (see Policy ENV 7);
 - vi. mitigates the impact on biodiversity (see Policy ENV 7) [and aligns with wider ecological networks beyond site boundaries](#);
 - vii. incorporates sustainable drainage systems (see Policy DC 2); and
 - viii. incorporates improved pedestrian access and interpretation alongside the Stockton and Darlington Railway (see Policy ENV 2).

The site design and layout will be required to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets, within and in the vicinity of the site, including their setting in accordance with policies ENV1 and ENV 2 and the recommendations of the Darlington Local Plan Heritage Impact Assessment (2019).

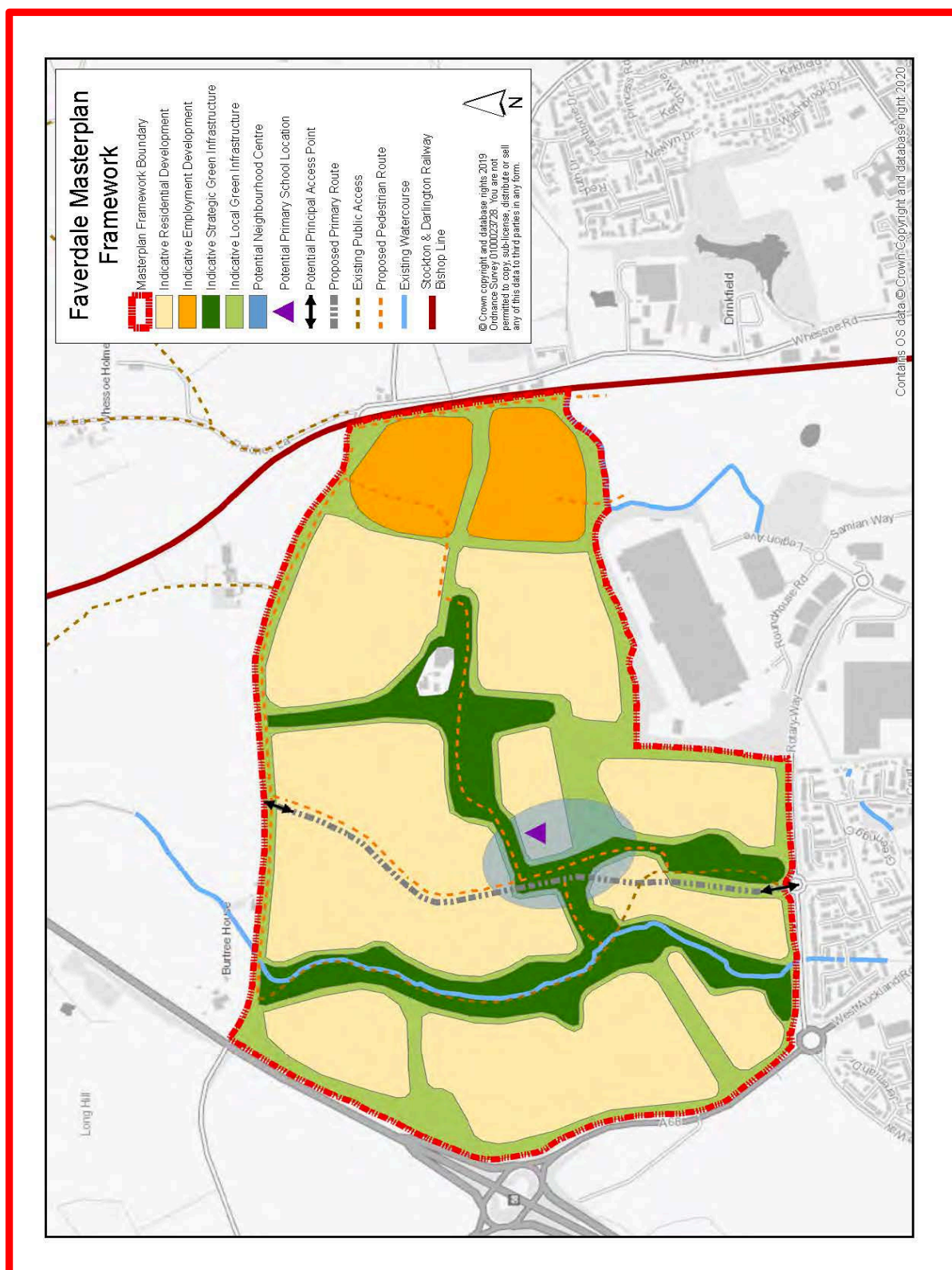
Development should be located outside of areas of flood risk, and should be planned sequentially (Policy DC3), placing the most vulnerable development in the lowest areas of flood risk. Proposals should be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment.

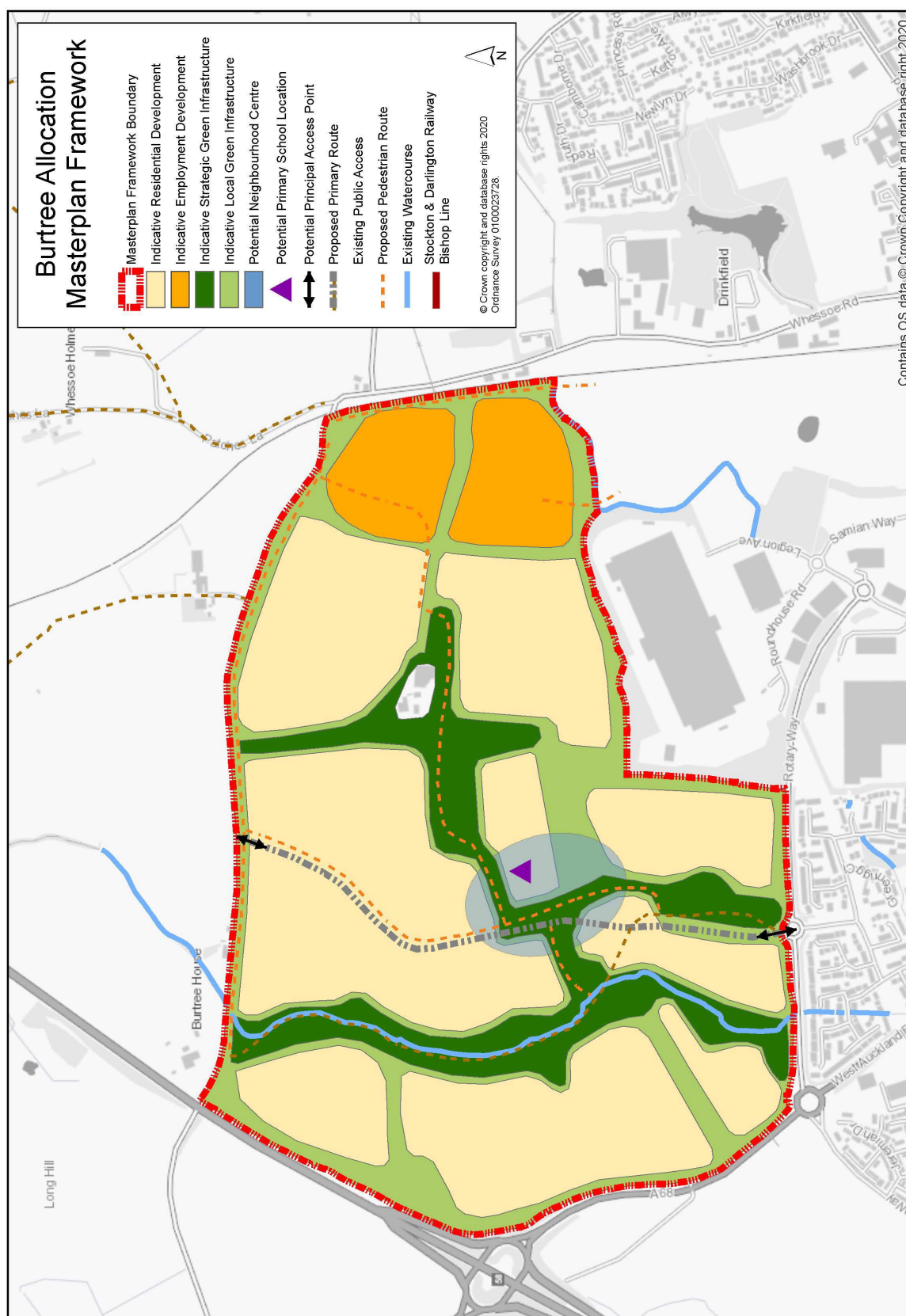
As the development is expected to extend beyond the plan period, in line with national policy infrastructure requirements, the infrastructure phasing plan will be kept under review. Therefore, in advance of the Council approving any application²⁵ for Phases 2 & 3 of Burtree Garden Village, as currently defined in the agreed masterplan, an updated comprehensive masterplan and infrastructure phasing plan must be agreed by the Council as meeting the requirements of [this policy](#) [Policy H 11](#).

- 6.10.3** The Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ allocation in the North West of Darlington was identified as having potential for mixed use development as part of the Local Plan Issues and Scoping consultation held in August 2016. [The](#) Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ allocation is supported by a Masterplan Framework initially created in January 2018 by the Greater Faverdale Site Group consisting of landowners, developers and consultants. Work on the Masterplanning Framework started in January 2017 and included consultation in September 2017. This work, along with the feedback from consultation, has informed the policy requirements for [the](#) Burtree [allocation](#) ~~Garden Village~~.
- 6.10.4** The following Masterplan Framework, which has been updated as part of this review, illustrates the key principles for the development of [the](#) Burtree [allocation](#) ~~Garden Village~~ which emerged from the initial masterplanning process and are reflected in the policy. The Masterplan Framework suggests a mixed-use development of approximately 2,000 housing units and approximately [19.4ha \(gross\) or 13.58 ha \(net\)](#) ~~13 ha (net) of employment land~~. It includes indicative access points, green and blue infrastructure, an indicative neighbourhood centre, a movement network, suggested indicative land uses and essential amenities.
- 6.10.5** The following Masterplan Framework illustrates the key principles for [the](#) development of [the](#) Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ [allocation](#) emerging from the masterplanning process and reflected in the policy.

²⁵ [Excepting Cell CH for which application 25/00665/FUL has been received by the Council.](#)

Figure 6.3 Greater Faverdale Masterplan Framework





- 6.10.7** In time, the comprehensive masterplan agreed with the Council on 13th May 2024 will need to be reviewed to cover delivery of Phases 2 & 3 of Burtree Garden Village. Such a review should continue to have regard to the strategic design requirements established in the Greater Faverdale Design Code SPD and be based on a strong understanding of the characteristics of the site and its surrounds and adopt the Healthy New Town principles to site design. The review will also need to take into account the impact of traffic generation on the local and national highway network.
- 6.10.8** For this site the balance of residential versus employment space will be dependent on the economic climate and viability assessment of the site.
- 6.10.9** In line with the recommendations of the Heritage Impact Assessment⁽²⁶⁾, development proposals should avoid dense development around the Grade II listed manor house ruins and wall south east of Whessoe Grange Farmhouse in order to preserve its original rural landscape context. Opportunities to improve accessibility to and interpretation of the site as part of the development whilst preserving the most significant elements of its setting should be considered.
- 6.10.10** Development proposals should incorporate the route of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, providing improved access and interpretation, and aim to avoid creating a continuous area of urban development with the permitted development to the east of the rail line to conserve and enhance its setting. An appropriate programme of targeted archaeological evaluation and mitigation in advance of groundworks will be necessary, in particular around the site of the posited Whessoe Deserted Medieval Village, Roman Faverdale site and the Stockton and Darlington Railway.

Accommodating Travelling Groups

- 6.8.1** Darlington has a long association with Gypsies and other Travelling groups with people from these groups accommodated on dedicated sites and within general housing. The Darlington Local Plan 2025-42 makes provision for travelling groups at the existing larger council owned sites together with other smaller, often private, sites within the Borough to accommodate for Gypsies and Travelling groups. It also indicates that additional accommodation to meet needs over the plan period should be allocated in accordance with a set of criteria, such criteria also being the basis for making decisions on windfall sites.
- 6.8.2** The requirement to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople is established through national guidance contained in the DCLG's August 2015 Planning Policy for Travellers Sites (PPTS).

Existing Sites and Commitments

- 6.8.3** To provide a robust evidence base for the pitch and plot targets set out in this policy.

²⁶ Darlington Local Plan Proposed Allocation Sites: Heritage Impact Assessment, Solstice Heritage, 2019.

a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (2025) has been carried out. This has been supplemented with information by the Council's Annual Caravan Count July 2025. Table 6.9 shows existing pitches in Darlington in 2025 ⁽²⁷⁾.

Table 6.9 Existing Gypsy and Traveller Pitches

<u>Pitches</u>	<u>Transit Pitches</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>152</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>168</u>

- 6.8.4** Two new sites which are owned by the Council have been provided by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA now Homes England) through the Traveller Pitch Fund (2011-2015) / Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) (2015-2018) funding. One site, Rowan East, has 16 pitches with amenity blocks and 4 chalet pitches and was completed in March 2015. A further site, formerly known as Neasham Road, was completely regenerated and upgraded in 2017 to a size of 22 pitches, all with enlarged amenity blocks. The standard of accommodation is of the highest standard and have been used as a 'quality of design demonstrator project' by the HCA in England for Gypsy and Travellers Sites based on the new caravan licence standard from 2014.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) 2025

- 6.8.5** The most recent Gypsy and Traveller Site Needs Assessment (GTAA 2025) ⁽²⁸⁾ came to the conclusion that Darlington Borough is well catered for in terms of supply for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. An annual need of 1.8 pitch per 5 years was identified from 2025-2029.
- 6.8.6** Further need arises for residential pitches in the period of 2030-2042 which has been calculated on a projection basis of 37 pitches, an annualised need of 2.8 pitches.
- 6.8.7** No need for Travelling Showpeople plots has been identified in the Local Plan Period until 2042.

²⁷ GTAA December 2025 / DBC Annual Caravan Count July 2025.

²⁸ By ORS Consultants December 2025

Policy H 12

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation (Strategic Policy)

The council will seek to address the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs over the Plan period, as identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment by:

- e. Safeguarding of existing larger Gypsy and Travellers Sites (20 pitches plus);
- f. Safeguarding of private dedicated smaller Gypsy and Travellers sites, and;
- g. The extension to existing Council sites at Honeypot Lane (8 anticipated pitches) and an extension to the Rowan West / East complex site (25 anticipated pitches) off Neasham Road, and;
- h. Allowing new sites to provide accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and/or Travelling Showpeople where:
 - i. the site is clearly demarcated with pitch boundaries using appropriate boundary treatment and landscaping sympathetic to, and in keeping with, the surrounding area;
 - ii. the site allows satisfactory access to local schools and other amenities;
 - vii. the site design takes account of the needs of residents, and provides an appropriate pitch layout and adequate facilities for parking, storage, play and, if required, grazing space for livestock;
 - viii. there is safe access for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, including for turning and parking, vehicles towing caravans, emergency services and servicing requirements, including waste collection;
 - ix. all necessary utilities can be provided on the site including mains water, electricity supply, drainage, sanitation and provision for the screened storage and collection of refuse, including recyclable materials; and
 - x. the proposal would avoid any unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity, health or living conditions of neighbouring residents or any other neighbouring uses, including as a result of flood risk, excessive noise, dust, odour, lighting, traffic generation, the keeping of livestock or other activities.

6.8.8 The three existing larger council owned sites at Honeypot Lane and Rowan East & West will continue to be safeguarded to provide for accommodation needs. A range of existing private dedicated smaller sites will complement these and be safeguarded for use as Gypsy and Traveller sites, for up to the number of pitches currently authorised and licensed.

6.8.9 In addition, there are a significant number of unimplemented planning permissions for Gypsy and Traveller sites within the Borough, all on private land, providing for small family units. These are anticipated to meet some of the need for additional pitches and for the five-year supply of pitches. These pitches are spread throughout the Borough, with some concentrations in the Hurworth Moor and North of Brafferton area.

Together, they make a considerable contribution to a particular need of some Gypsies and Travellers to own their own site. As some of these planning permissions are not for specific families, there is a potential that some will be let to families who wish to live on a smaller site, but who cannot afford to buy their own site.

- 6.8.10** National policy indicates that Local Planning Authorities can make an allowance for windfall sites in the five-year supply if they have compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply. Local evidence over the last 25 years supports making an allowance for 4 pitches per year coming forward as windfalls.

7. EMPLOYMENT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promoting New and Retaining Employment Opportunities

- 7.1.1** The Local Plan suggests where and how a continuous and diverse supply of employment land will be provided within the Borough to meet the needs of existing and future economic development. It plans for up to ~~94 hectares~~ 82 hectares (ha) of land allocations for employment land across the Borough in the period up to 2042. The current land available plus the allocations provides gross available employment land in the Borough of ~~245 ha~~ 227 ha. That translates to a net available plot portfolio of ~~168 ha~~ 155 ha developable for employment use for the Local Plan Period 2025-42.

Table 7.1 Employment Land Availability

	Total Employment Land	Gross Available ha	Net Available ha ⁽²⁹⁾
Existing Employment Opportunities	~~598.15 ha~~ <u>597.48 ha</u>	~~111.02 ha~~ <u>110.36 ha</u>	~~73.79 ha~~ <u>73.33 ha</u>
Employment Allocations	~~187.38 ha~~ <u>116.68 ha</u>	~~134.13 ha~~ <u>116.68 ha</u>	~~93.89 ha~~ <u>81.67 ha</u>
Total	~~785.53 ha~~ <u>714.16 ha</u>	~~245.15 ha~~ <u>227.04 ha</u>	~~167.68 ha~~ <u>155 ha</u>

- 7.1.2** National planning policy says that employment sites should not be protected over the long term if there is no reasonable prospect of them being used for that purpose. It also indicates that where this is the case, planning applications for alternative uses should be treated on their merits, having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.
- 7.1.3** In advance of the Local Plan, two Employment Land Reviews (2012 and 2017) have been carried out which supplements the evidence in the Darlington Borough Council Economic Strategy 2012- 2026.
- 7.1.4** Since the recession of 2007-2013 Darlington is again experiencing substantial new jobs growth, with the number of residents employed returning to pre-

²⁹ 70% of gross area (accounting for internal roads, car parks, verges, green space, utilities etc.)

recession levels. Current strong employment sectors include business services, subsea, public administration, education and health services, manufacturing, advanced engineering and logistics. Further growth is forecast in these areas and in a number of emerging sectors including digital and media, biologics, telehealth and healthcare. The Local Plan makes an allowance for ~~7,000~~ 6400 (full time equivalent) jobs over the plan period. This figure comes from projecting the most recent trend on actual number of jobs created in the borough available from national statistics (BRES 2005 – 2015) forward by twenty years. This was considered to be the most realistic and appropriate estimation of jobs growth over the plan period ⁽³⁰⁾.

7.1.5 Whilst the area's office stock has been enhanced by a number of recent developments such as Business Central, Innovation Central, Feethams House, Darlington Economic Campus and the Bishopsgate Department for Education building, the town still remains a secondary office location on a regional level behind Newcastle and Leeds.

7.1.6 The Employment Land Reviews and Economic Strategy suggests that:

- Embedding major 'footloose' businesses within the local economy should remain a key priority;
- About ~~94ha~~ 82ha of employment land should be allocated by the Local Plan;
- Land next to the main highway and rail infrastructure should be protected to support development within the advanced manufacturing and subsea sectors for Darlington; and
- More high-quality Grade A office premises of 20-50 sqm size and larger move-on space is needed in the Borough's main industrial estates, either a new build development or subdivision and refurbishment of larger, older buildings.

7.1.7 National initiatives such as the Industrial Strategy have been introduced to support employment growth and a strategy will be developed for the Tees Valley and Darlington in the next few years.

7.1.8 Additional evidence and recent developments suggest further economic growth potential for Darlington:

- ~~The creation of the~~ Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) provides enhanced public investment for key infrastructure for employment sites such as the Tees Valley Enterprise Zone in Central Park South;
- Developed by public and private sector partners, the updated Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2016 and the Tees Valley Growth Plan July 2026 sets out the ambition and priorities for generating economic growth through transformational change in the Tees Valley, with a target of achieving a net increase of 25,000 new jobs by 2026.
- Employment land and flexible premises offers are required to support and accommodate this growth. "Grow on" industrial space for existing

³⁰ As justified in the Evidence paper for Darlington Future Employment Land Needs ~~Report September 2017~~ September 2026

businesses, high quality office space and additional space for key growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing, biologics and logistics will be essential.

- In 2015 the TVCA (as the former Tees Valley Unlimited) researched the needs of the large scale logistics markets to better understand how large scale sites would enhance the Tees Valley's share in the sector. Sites such as those at Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ and Symmetry Park have been identified for Darlington as key employment sites to support the sector. A Darlington Borough Council Local Logistics Sector Study 2015 confirmed the locational advantages of those sites.
- There is new interest in certain sites, and interest from a number of companies for land and premises within the Borough. ~~Local Growth Fund bids via TVCA have been submitted for key employment sites such as Burtree Garden Village to reflect current employment interest in the site.~~

Policy E 1

Safeguarding Existing Employment Opportunities (Strategic Policy)

The following existing employment areas, as shown on the Policies Map, are promoted and safeguarded for existing and ongoing economic investment. Within these areas, planning permission will be granted on available land and for the change of use of existing buildings or developed land (subject to any permitted development rights) in line with the 'suggested uses' of each site set out below. Proposals for other employment uses not falling within the 'suggested uses' of specific sites will only be permitted where the Borough Council is satisfied that they will not have a detrimental effect on the amenities of the occupiers of adjoining or nearby properties or prejudice the development of adjacent sites.

The Council will consider the use of planning conditions for applications which are for offices, research and development or light industrial uses (Use Class E(g)) to ensure that they remain in that use in perpetuity.

Table 7.2 Existing Employment Opportunities

Site Ref	Name	Total Site	Gross Available	Net Available	Suggested Use
80	East of Lingfield Point	10.42 ha	0ha	0ha	B2 B8, E(g)
343	Faverdale Industrial Estate	115.75ha	30.89ha	21.62ha	B2, B8, E(g)
346	Meynell Road West	8.5 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2, E(g)
347	Cleveland Industrial Estate	14.6 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2, B8, E(g)
348	Red Barnes Way	3.03 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2, B8, E(g)
393	Darlington Farmers Auction Mart	78.11ha	45.5ha	31.85ha	B2, B8 E(a b c g)

352	Barton Street/Haughton Road	1.24 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2 E(g), Sui Generis
353	Haughton Road/Blackett Road	11.58 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2, B8, E(g)
354	McMullen Road East	2.72 ha	0 ha	0 ha	Sui Generis
355	Lingfield Point	33.58 ha	2.74 ha	1.92 ha	B2 B8, E(g)
357	Morton Park	18.28 ha	5.79 ha	4.05 ha	B2, B8, E(g)
358	Yarm Road Industrial Estate	63.86 ha	0	0	B2, B8, E(g) , Sui Generis
359	Morton Palms Business Park	~~7.97 ha~~ <u>7.37ha</u>	~~4.6ha~~ <u>4.0ha</u>	~~3.22 ha~~ <u>2.8ha</u>	B2, E(g)
363	Aycliffe	15.33 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2
364	Yarm Road South	~~45.65ha~~ <u>45.58 ha</u>	~~10.66ha~~ <u>10.60ha</u>	~~7.46ha~~ <u>7.42ha</u>	B2, B8 E(g)
366	Meynell Road East	10.28 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2 , B8, E(g)
367	Symmetry Park	36.03 ha	13.10 ha	9.17 ha	B2, B8, E(g)
368	Central Park South	9.84 ha	5.24 ha	3.67ha	B2 , E(g) . <u>F1</u>
376	Whessoe Road	4.88 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2, E(g)
378	Longfield Road	2.41 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2
379	Banks Road	9.70 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2, E(g), Sui Generis
380	Albert Hill Industrial Estate	16.02 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2, B8, E(g)
404	Teesside International Airport North	68.47ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2, E(g) and Airport related uses
409	Drinkfield Industrial Estate	13.51 ha	0 ha	0 ha	B2, E(g)
	TOTAL	~~598.15 ha~~ <u>597.48ha</u>	~~111.02 ha~~ <u>110.36ha</u>	~~73.79 ha~~ <u>73.33ha</u>	

7.1.9 The Employment Land Review (2013 and 2017) recommendations have been balanced against other considerations, such as the momentum that could be generated by more recent interest and initiatives and the need to have a range and choice of sites, the Borough's aspirations for economic growth and the suitability of sites for other uses.

7.1.10 Policy E 1 therefore recognises that there is still a reasonable prospect of employment uses being delivered on sites previously allocated. Their

Policy E 2

Employment Allocations (Strategic Policy)

The following sites, as shown on the Policies Map, are allocated for new employment. Within these areas, planning permission will be granted in line with the 'suggested uses' of each site set out below. Proposals for other employment uses not falling within the 'suggested uses' of specific sites will only be permitted where the Borough Council is satisfied that they will not have a detrimental effect on the amenities of the occupiers of adjoining or nearby properties or prejudice the development of adjacent sites.

The Council will consider the use of planning conditions for applications which are for offices, research and development or light industrial uses (Use Class E(g)) to ensure that they remain in that use in perpetuity.

Site Ref	Site Name	Total Site	Gross Available	Net Available	Suggested Use
506	Burtree Garden Village Employment	~~18.74ha~~ <u>19.40ha</u>	~~18.74ha~~ <u>19.40ha</u> for Employment	~~13.12 ha~~ <u>13.58ha</u> for Employment	B2, B8, E(g),
505	Skerningham Garden Village Employment	~~84.82ha~~ <u>13.46 ha</u>	~~31.57ha (less than 40% of site *due to terrain infrastructure restrictions and preservation as per Masterplan)~~ <u>13.46ha</u>	~~22.1 ha~~ <u>9.42ha</u>	B2 B8 E(g),
360	Heighington Lane North	5.70 ha	5.70 ha	3.99 ha	B2, B8, E(g)
474	East Street	1.25ha	1.25 ha	0.87ha	E(g)
362	Teesside International Airport South	39.3 ha	39.3 ha	27.51ha	B2, B8, E(g) & Airport related uses
433	Burtree Employment Park	37.57ha	37.57ha	26.30ha	B2 B8 E(g)
	TOTAL	~~187.38ha~~ <u>116.68ha</u>	~~134.13 ha~~ <u>116.68ha</u>	~~93.89ha~~ <u>81.67ha</u>	

- 7.1.11** Due to the amount of vacant and undeveloped sites within the existing portfolio of employment sites only 6 sites will be allocated through the Local Plan. Those sites are identified as key strategically placed employment sites which will be used to attract high value sector growth to Darlington.
- 7.1.12** Three sites have been identified through the Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA, 2025) of being able to cater for additional employment development opportunities due to their specific characteristics and locational factors. These are East Street; Burtree Employment Park and Skerningham Garden Village Employment sites.
- 7.1.13** The Local Plan also recognises the contribution that alternative uses can make to employment areas, where they comply with the objectives of the plan and are applied consistently, and can help to realise the development of employment uses, and the continued retention and attractiveness of employment sites. Acceptable uses are predominantly those that have a similar character to employment uses, but may not be in the same use class, and could include training centres related to employment in the industries on the estates or a particular occupier. Ancillary uses include small cafes or nurseries serving the employees of the industrial area, or more diverse uses where they relate to the function of the estate or the surrounding area.

Economic Development in the Rural Area

- 7.2.1** The Rural area for Darlington is the open countryside outside the Urban Settlement Limit including the Service Villages, Rural Villages and Hamlets.
- 7.2.2** Supporting economic growth in rural Darlington can mean accommodating acceptable farm diversification schemes, including developments like equestrian centres or livery yards, tourist accommodation (including static caravans, touring caravans and chalet-type accommodation), leisure uses, food and drink, small scale office space, restoration or arts and crafts businesses.

Economic Development in the Open Countryside

- 7.2.3** To safeguard the intrinsic character of rural Darlington, development associated with such uses (as set out in Policy E 3) should be appropriate in a rural setting and minimise its impact on its surroundings. For caravan sites and tourist accommodation this means compact and unobtrusive sites making use of natural or enhanced screening wherever possible, provided by trees and landscaping, and making use of any existing buildings where possible. Touring caravan and camping sites, although mainly involving temporary structures, should also be screened as much as possible by existing or enhanced landscaping, with any associated facilities and new buildings kept to a minimum, by making use of existing buildings where practicable.
- 7.2.4** Retail uses in rural Darlington can help support the rural economy. Appropriate forms of retailing in the countryside are those required to support the primary agricultural holding or rural development use which could include the supply of agricultural supplies or machinery. Other goods or produce not for agricultural

purposes should either have been produced on site or sourced from within the locality or should be ancillary to the primary activity on site. An example would be a shop selling fishing tackle and equipment at an established fishing venue.

Policy E 3

Economic Development in the Open Countryside (Strategic Policy)

Proposals for the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses located in the open countryside including the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses will be supported where:

- a) They enable the conversion or re-use of existing building(s), providing the buildings are:
 - i. sympathetic to their surroundings or can be made so, without significant demolition or rebuilding, and;
 - ii. remain in keeping with their surroundings and make use of retained features that contribute to local distinctiveness and historic interest if appropriate;
 - iii. capable and large enough for conversion without significant alteration and the need for additional buildings. Substantial extensions will not be permitted and any extensions that are required must be subordinate in scale and proportion to the original building.
- b) New buildings are well designed and, wherever possible, are physically well-related to existing rural settlements and/or existing buildings and building groups. The character, scale and design of all proposed new buildings must be appropriate to its open countryside surroundings.

All proposals should be sensitive to their surroundings, provide satisfactory access from and not have an unacceptable impact on the local road network. Proposals must also not unacceptably affect amenity, not prejudice any viable agricultural operations on an active farm unit, and not prejudice any planned community use.

Proposals that demonstrate that they will directly and significantly contribute to the retention and / or development of local services, community facilities and infrastructure which make a location more sustainable will be supported.

A) If the proposals are for equestrian related development then, in addition:

- i. There must be adequate land for commercial uses, adequate off-road riding facilities available safely nearby that is proportionate to the number of horses to be kept on the land and located where there is, or could be, ready and safe access to the bridleway network; and
- ii. Any buildings required should be commensurate in size with the number of horses to be kept on the land and the amount of land available for use by those horses; and
- iii. An agreed comprehensive scheme of management for any ancillary development including hard standing, access roads, parking, fencing, lighting, storage, waste disposal, ménages and the subdivision of fields will be required; and
- iv. The proposal, either on its own or cumulatively, taking account of any other horse related uses in the area, is compatible with its surroundings and protects water courses, groundwater and the safety of all road users.

B) If the proposals are for tourist accommodation then, in addition:

- i. New static and touring caravan sites, camping sites and chalet type accommodation or extensions to existing sites of this nature should be sited and screened through topography and/or vegetation in order to minimise visual impact. The materials and colours of the chalets or static caravans and associated site services and infrastructure should blend with its surroundings. All sites should have good access to the ~~road~~ highway and footpath network and will be subject to conditions to prevent the permanent occupancy of the site.

- ii. Other tourist accommodation should be located within development limits unless it can be demonstrated that the need is not met by existing facilities in Service Villages and villages with settlement limits.

C) Proposals for outdoor leisure uses will also be supported in appropriate locations, provided that their impact on the open countryside is minimised and they provide satisfactory access arrangements and protect amenity.

D) If proposals are for the establishment or expansion of main town centre use development outside of development limits then, in addition, it should be demonstrated that:

- i. The proposal is connected to or adjacent to the primary agricultural holding or existing rural business;
- ii. The proposal is economically related to the primary agricultural holding or existing rural business and is ancillary to the primary existing use; and
- iii. For proposals over 500 sqm the sequential approach (Policy TC1) has been applied and for retail use there would be no significant adverse impact on the vitality or viability of retail centres (policies TC1 and TC5); and
- iv. The proposal will not affect the retention of local services and community services including village shop, and public houses.

7.2.5 Proposals requiring significant vehicle movements to deliver or distribute goods will be required to demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable impact on the safe operation of the public highway. Proposals that do need significant traffic generation to operate would likely be better located in a more established and accessible location. Applicants will be required to demonstrate with supporting information how the proposal meets this requirement.

7.2.6 Developments in the open countryside also need to be sited to get the benefit of the open countryside location and should not adversely affect existing agricultural operations. Equestrian developments, for example should be located where there is, or could be, ready and safe access to the bridleway network and any developments should not limit the future viability or sever any existing farm holding to an extent where its viability is adversely affected.

8. TOWN CENTRE AND RETAIL

Darlington Town Centre

- 8.1.1** National planning policy indicates that the Council should pro-actively promote competitive Town Centre environments that provide consumer choice and a diverse retail offer. The Local Plan sets out the overall approach to town centres and retailing, to ensure the vitality and viability of the Town Centre is maintained and identifies opportunities to enhance the offer and continued provision of a range of retail, leisure and business uses. Darlington Town Centres role as the Sub-Regional Centre for the western part of the Tees Valley and neighbouring parts of North Yorkshire and South and West Durham, is protected and promoted, including its role as a market town.
- 8.1.2** The Local Plan sets out the hierarchy of centres in the Borough, defining the role and appropriate developments for each, to ensure that their function in providing food shopping and a range of local shops, leisure uses and services, is safeguarded and enhanced.

Table 8.1 Hierarchy of Centres in Darlington

Sub-regional Centre	i.e. Darlington Town Centre	> 100.000 sqm floorspace
District Centre	i.e. Cockerton	> 10.000 sqm floorspace
Local Centre	i.e. Mowden	1.000 sqm floorspace

- 8.1.3** The Local Plan seeks to focus retail activity within the Town, District and Local Centres in the Borough, and to avoid developments outside of these centres that would compromise their vitality and viability by drawing significant amounts of trade away from them. This policy does not prevent the development of small shops or convenience stores that serve local needs but does help to ensure that development within centres is consistent with a centre's scale, function and physical capacity to integrate extensions. Adverse impact on vitality and viability could result in local services and amenities not being available and accessible to local communities. It could mean that people with restricted mobility will lose services and others will have to travel further.
- 8.1.4** The Local Plan defines the extent of Darlington Town Centre, the Primary Shopping Area (defined on the Policies Map) and the District and Local Centres. This is important as it identifies where Town Centre uses will be acceptable, and when a sequential assessment will be required.
- 8.1.5** The Town Centre is the defined area where main Town Centre uses will be located. Main town centre uses⁽³¹⁾ are retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment, and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls); offices, and arts,

³¹ as defined in NPPF

culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities). Strengthening the town centre by channelling new main town centre uses is vital if Darlington is going to fulfil its role as a Sub-Regional Centre. The definition of the Town Centre has been tested and approved by two Town Centre Conference events in 2015 and 2017.

- 8.1.6** On appropriate sites, the Local Plan supports the change of use to residential within the Town Centre Boundary. Permitted Development Rights (PDR) and a flexible approach to changes of use ⁽³²⁾ will enable residential development in the Town Centre to ensure its continued vitality and enhance vibrancy.

Policy TC 1

Darlington Town Centre (Strategic Policy)

Proposals for main Town Centre uses should be located within the Town Centre Boundary identified on the Policies Map.

Where main town centre uses are proposed outside of the Town Centre boundary a sequential test should be applied in accordance with national policy.

- 8.1.7** The Town Centre boundary is shown in the policies map and includes south of St Augustine's Way (A68), south of Northgate Roundabout and St Cuthbert's Way (A167) to the north, Bondgate, Skinnergate and Coniscliffe Road to the west and is bounded by St Cuthbert's Way (A167) to the east and Grange Road / Victoria Road (A167) to the south.

Primary Shopping Area

- 8.1.8** The Primary Shopping Area (PSA) is defined as the area within the Town Centre where retail development, the main contributor to vitality and viability, is concentrated and should be densely focused. It covers all shopping frontages with the Town Centre.
- 8.1.9** There is a need for flexibility due to the changing role of town centres, which are no longer solely a shopping destination but provide a range of other leisure and social functions including housing and the use of upper floors.

³² As recommended by paragraph 90 f) of the NPPF (December 2024)

Policy TC 2

Primary Shopping Area

The Policies Map defines the Primary Shopping Area within the Town Centre.

To maintain vitality and viability, the Local Planning Authority will permit non-retail uses in shopping frontages where appropriate, subject to:

- a. Its position and attractiveness within the frontage; and
- b. The relative pedestrian flow associated with the unit compared with the wider centre.

Comparison and Food Retail Need

8.1.10 The Darlington Retail and Town Centre Study Update 2017⁽³³⁾ indicates that there is currently no significant quantitative need for additional convenience retail development but that there would be a need for comparison goods between 2,700 sqm and 15,800 sqm from 2027 - 2032. By 2036 the comparison goods need could increase to 9,300 sqm - 26,200 sqm in total. It is likely that this will be provided through several smaller developments throughout the plan period. Additional large-scale food retail development is not being planned for at this time. There may be a qualitative need for additional foodstore provision in new strategic site allocations but this will be addressed through the planning application process.

Commercial Street Site

8.1.11 Land at Commercial Street (circa 1.5ha), currently used as a car parking area, has been identified as a sequentially preferable location to provide for the comprehensive regeneration of a central location. It is envisaged that the site would significantly improve and re-shape the retail and cultural offer for the wider Town Centre.

8.1.12 The delivery of a regeneration scheme will be critical in enhancing Darlington's role as a Sub-Regional centre, as identified within Policy TC 1 of the Draft Local Plan, meeting the quantitative and qualitative retail needs of Darlington and the wider Borough.

8.1.13 The Commercial site should be brought forward through a comprehensive approach for the area. This approach can involve a positive mixture of uses including retail, cultural and residential uses, supplemented by leisure, employment and educational uses that will complement the existing centre and form part of a sustainable extension to Darlington Town Centre.

³³ White Young Green, November 2017.

Policy TC 3

Additional Site for Town Centre Uses

In order to meet any future need for Town Centre Uses the following site is shown on the Policies Map as a potential Town Centre Extension Site:

Table 8.2 Additional Site for Town Centre Uses

Site Name	Size
Commercial Street	1.5ha

The Council will support the regeneration of the Commercial Street site [which could be residential led](#) providing the following matters have been addressed:

- a. Ensuring sensitive integration of new buildings with old, seeking where possible to incorporate the existing historic fabric and retaining buildings that are of historic importance, and taking account of the key recommendations of the Darlington Local Plan Heritage Impact Assessment (2019);
- b. Development proposals must be of a high standard of design that are sympathetic and appropriate to the local area and makes use of local design styles and local materials;
- c. That any comparison and convenience retail element of the scheme are central and complementary to the wider regeneration of the Town Centre;
- d. Sufficient and appropriate provision is made for replacement vehicle parking, which minimizes surface car parking, to support the proposed development;
- e. Development should incorporate suitable linkages to the existing transport network and help mitigate issues of potential traffic congestion;
- f. Development proposals should utilise its frontage with St Cuthbert's Way to provide opportunities for innovative design and improved public realm.

8.1.14 Additional space to accommodate the expansion of Town Centre and Retail uses could be contained in this identified area which is currently made up of expansive ground level car parking areas. It would give the chance for investors to increase Darlington's market share in Town Centre Uses. The area has been previously identified by the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan (2013) and recommended in the Retail and Town Centre Studies (2014 and 2017). The Commercial Street site remains the sequentially preferable location to accommodate a comparison-led retail development within the town.

8.1.15 The Commercial Street site involves the regeneration of land and buildings to the North of Darlington Town Centre. Development proposals for this site should be underpinned by a masterplanning exercise for this site to reflect feasibility, place making ambitions and sustainable development. Developers and agents for this site will be expected to work with the Borough Council.

- 8.1.16** The regeneration of the Commercial Street site provides an excellent opportunity to address some of the accessibility issues within Darlington Town Centre. It is important that the regeneration of the site which could be residential led recognises the opportunities set out in the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan, particularly in relation to traffic improvements in Darlington Town Centre and the wider improvements to the cycling and walking network. The site-specific Masterplan needs to take account of including these improvements.
- 8.1.17** The regeneration of the Commercial Street site presents a significant opportunity for a generational change to Darlington Town Centre. However, it is important that regeneration of this area benefits the whole of the Town Centre to ensure that businesses and operators also benefit from the significant growth that this regeneration offers. The Council will seek to promote improvement throughout the Town Centre through the new Town Centre Strategy 2019-30 (which is currently under review). The strategy sets out a positive and proactive approach towards regeneration, improvement and renewal, ensuring that the benefits (in terms of investment and footfall) arising from a scheme in Commercial Street are shared over the wider Town Centre.
- 8.1.18** Development proposals should take their cue from the historic grain of development within the site, with the design, scale and density of development reflecting the distinct characters of the Northgate and Town Centre Conservation Areas. Development proposals will need to consider an appropriate programme of targeted archaeological evaluation and mitigation prior to redevelopment.

District and Local Centres

- 8.2.1** The District and Local Centres are important in meeting local needs, providing food shopping and a range of other local shops, services and leisure uses. They are both accessible and help reduce the need to travel. These centres are generally healthy with exceptionally low vacancy rates.
- 8.2.2** National planning policy indicates that policies should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs and ensure that established shops and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable so they are retained for the benefit of the community.

Policy TC 4

District and Local Centres

The boundaries of the District and Local Centres are identified on the Policies Map.

Cockerton (District Centre) Mowden (Local Centre)

Types of uses that will be acceptable within the boundaries of these centres include shops, financial services, restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments, hot food takeaways, and a range of community and leisure facilities (included within class E(a-f) and sui generis of the Use Classes Order) providing they:

- a. Are physically integrated with the rest of the centre; and
- b. Will ensure the vitality and viability of the centre is maintained.

Where main town centre uses are proposed outside the district or local centre boundary a sequential test should be undertaken in accordance with national policy.

Development Outside of Existing Centres

8.2.3 The Council's policy is that main Town Centre uses should preferably be located within the existing Town, District and Local Centres. However, where development does take place elsewhere, it is important that it does not undermine existing centres.

8.2.4 Those proposing development of main Town Centre uses that are not in an existing centre should undertake a sequential assessment, to ensure that consideration is given to sequentially preferable locations. This also applies to proposals that are below the local floorspace threshold of 500 sqm set out within the policy. A sequential test is not required for proposals for office development within the identified employment areas or other employment sites identified in this plan and is also not required where the proposal reflects the existing use of the site. Matters to be set out in a sequential assessment are set out in national planning policy and guidance.

Policy TC 5

Retail Impact Assessment Threshold (Strategic Policy)

Proposals for retail (convenience and comparison) and leisure development generating over 500sqm of additional floorspace outside Darlington town centre and which are not identified in the Local Plan policies will be required to undertake an Impact Assessment.

8.2.5 The locally set floorspace threshold of 500 sqm has been set as the requirement for impact assessments to be provided with development proposals, to ensure that the impact of proposals has been properly considered. Any proposals that are above these thresholds and on the edge of or outside of these centres must be accompanied by an impact assessment, to ensure that full consideration is given to the scale of development and any significant impacts that could result from retail proposals, when taken both individually and cumulatively with other proposals and developments. The impact assessment will be expected to be proportionate to the scale of the proposal. The 500 sqm thresholds are set as being broadly the maximum allowance in such locations before the Borough's retail strategy could be compromised. Matters to be considered in an assessment are set out in national planning policy and guidance.

8.2.6 An impact assessment would not need to be undertaken for proposals to create the neighbourhood centres required by policies H10 and H11 at Skerningham ~~Garden Village~~ and Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ where proposals satisfy the requirements established in these policies.

Darlington - Town Centre Fringe

- 8.3.1** The Town Centre Fringe is a priority location for brownfield development and regeneration within the Borough, and significant development activity started in 2016. The Fringe is an extensive area: over 79 ha of land, buildings and roads, much of which is underused. It contains a mix of employment, residential, retail, leisure, car parking and other uses, and much of the area's housing is occupied by deprived households. The area of the Town Centre Fringe as identified in the Local Plan (2025-2042) is wider than the Council's wider Town Centre Fringe Masterplan area and includes the Northgate Masterplan Area.
- 8.3.2** The Town Centre Fringe has a lot of advantages for future development - it is easy to get to by several modes of transport, close to the Town Centre, containing key buildings like the Hippodrome and other heritage assets and the River Skerne flows through it. It is also very visible from local roads and the east coast main line. The Bank Top Station Masterplan created in 2016 overlaps with the Town Centre Fringe area but synergies of development will be considered in the current implementation of the Darlington Station upgrade. This also includes synergy with development of the Darlington Economic Campus (DEC) Building at Brunswick Street.
- 8.3.3** The River Skerne was also identified as a strategic green infrastructure corridor. However, before the potential of the area to contribute much more to the growth, prosperity and quality of life of Darlington can be realised, there are significant issues to overcome, such as managing flood risk, changing the image of the area, tackling contamination and hazard, and improving connectivity across the inner ring road. Considering the area comprehensively provides the best way to ensure that both public and private investment is made effectively and in a timely and co-ordinated manner. Currently work with Homes England, the Environment Agency and the Tees Valley Combined Authority is ongoing to address funding gaps and ownership issues.

Policy TC 6

Darlington - Town Centre Fringe

Development and regeneration of the Town Centre Fringe will be promoted throughout the plan period to deliver a range of mixed use development and environmental improvements. The uses likely to be acceptable include economic, commercial and residential (main town centres use proposals would, where relevant, need to satisfy the sequential approach (Policy TC1) and Impact Assessment (Policy TC5)).

To support the delivery of the remaining priorities identified in the Town Centre Fringe and Northgate Masterplans, development in this area should:

- a. Manage flood risk along the whole of the river corridor that avoids most vulnerable development in areas at highest risk of flooding and incorporates enhanced river habitat and green infrastructure within the River Skerne Strategic Green Infrastructure corridor;
- b. Conserve historic buildings and where appropriate enhance the historic environment in the area, with an emphasis on creating opportunities for the celebration of Darlington's heritage;

- c. Provide an improvement of existing housing in the area;
- d. Provide improvements in connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport into and through the area to allow access to jobs, leisure and business opportunities.

9. ENVIRONMENT

Safeguarding the Historic Environment

9.1.1 National planning policy⁽³⁴⁾ requires Local Planning Authorities to set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. It emphasises the importance of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and acknowledges the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring.

9.1.2 Darlington's historic environment comprises heritage assets of varying degrees of significance including buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas and historical landscapes. It is a non-renewable, shared resource, and any loss or harm to it is usually irreversible. Understanding the significance of the heritage assets and the contribution that the setting makes to their significance is essential to guide good decisions about land use change and development affecting them.

9.1.3 Altogether, Darlington's historic environment is of considerable significance not least because of its railway, industrial and Quaker history. The Borough's designated heritage assets⁽³⁵⁾ include:

- 541 Listed Buildings;
- 19 Scheduled Monuments;
- 18 Conservation Areas; and
- 3 Registered Parks and Gardens

9.1.4 The Borough also contains a wealth of non-designated heritage assets including archaeology that is not scheduled but possibly of equivalent significance. Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by the Council as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. For Darlington this means all heritage assets excluding our scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks & gardens and conservation areas. Many non-designated heritage assets are likely to be on the [Heritage Historic Environment Record](#) held by Durham County Council, so this should be the first point of call for identifying them.

9.1.5 Darlington first appeared in writing in circa 1003 and it appears that it was already

³⁴ Chapter 16 of the NPPF (December 2024).

³⁵ Identified on the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by Durham County Council's Archaeology Service on behalf of Darlington Borough Council.

a place of importance by the Norman Conquest (1066). The small Anglo-Saxon settlement experienced medieval growth as a result of its position in the Durham bishopric (district under a bishop's control). The market flourished to serve an agricultural hinterland and those passing through the town on the Great North Road between London and Edinburgh. Around St Cuthbert's Church, now a grade I listed landmark building, grew an ecclesiastical complex, with the market place to the west surrounded by narrow burgage plots on three sides and the churchyard to the east. Sometime between 1535-1543, Darlington was described as the best market town in the bishopric outside of Durham. In 1585, a fire destroyed most of the town which soon after was rebuilt within its medieval street pattern. During the eighteenth century as pressure for accommodation increased, the burgage plots were intensively developed, resulting in a maze of alleyways and passage-like streets, known as yards and wynds, that were required for access. By the 1850s there had been little building beyond the confines of the medieval settlement, other than the residences of Darlington's wealthy inhabitants, who had fled the overcrowded and polluted town.

9.1.6 Opened in 1825, the Stockton and Darlington Railway was funded by Edward Pease a prominent Darlington Quaker as the world's first publicly financed passenger railway and the world's first public railway on which a steam locomotive hauled passengers. It is now regarded as the prototype for all modern railways and parts of the original 26 miles are ~~is~~ the longest continually operating modern railway in the world. This is covered by a standalone policy (see Policy ENV 2) due to its international significance.

9.1.7 Darlington has a particularly significant Quaker history and associated heritage assets. Darlington Quakers played an active part in the government, industry, commerce and consequently had a lot of influence on development in the town during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This included many of Darlington's designated landmark public buildings and manor houses, parks and cemeteries including South Park, the indoor market and clock tower, ~~Crown Street~~ Darlington Library, and the Friends Meeting House. They also contributed freely to a multitude of philanthropic causes, particularly connected with health and education for the poor e.g. drinking fountains, and schools. The value and significance of these heritage assets is recognised, for their contribution to the unique identity of the borough and their potential contribution to tourism. Non-designated heritage assets associated with the Quaker movement includes Elm Ridge Methodist Church and Carmel School.

9.1.8 Darlington has also played a significant role in the development of industry. It has a number of designated heritage assets linked to industries. These include Tees Cottage Pumping Station, the Cummins Engine Factory on Yarm Road, Skerne Bridge and the Goods Shed at North Road. The Cummins Engine Factory, constructed in 1965, being the most contemporary building to be listed.

- 9.1.9** The Darlington Cultural Strategy ⁽³⁶⁾ 2022-2026 embraces and seeks to promote Darlington's locally distinct heritage assets as a part of its culture for both residents and visitors to enjoy.
- 9.1.10** The vision for Darlington's Town Centre Fringe and its historic environment is set out in the Conservation Management Plan⁽³⁷⁾ and aims for the area to be transformed into a vibrant urban area with well-maintained historic buildings, exciting small-scale modern development, a thriving tourism industry based on railway heritage and a healthy, accessible river.
- 9.1.11** The character of the Borough's rural historic environment and the heritage assets integral to it will also be protected, enhanced and promoted. It contains several characterful rural villages and hamlets. The former being home to a high concentration of listed vernacular cottages and traditional farm buildings and are generally designated as Conservation Areas. This includes Piercebridge, a village, which was built on the grounds of a former Roman Fort, of which remains still survive. Some of the Conservation Area villages are located along the River Tees corridor and this relationship with the river setting is an integral part of their historic and aesthetic value. Walworth Castle is a prominent Grade I listed building in a picturesque rural setting within the Borough.
- 9.1.12** The Council will support proposals which conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment of Darlington. Particular consideration will be given to ensure that the significance of those elements of the historic environment which contribute positively to Darlington's distinctive identity and sense of place are not harmed. These include:
- The buildings, spaces, trackbed and other infrastructure associated with the Stockton and Darlington Railway.
 - The medieval streets and burgage plot layouts associated with medieval Darlington.
 - Evidence of Roman activity such as the fort at Piercebridge.
 - The mix of heritage assets associated with the Quaker movement including Victorian public buildings, manor houses, parks and cemeteries.
 - Remnants of Darlington's industrial heritage including leather, tanning, textiles and steel and its associated infrastructure.
 - The traditional farm buildings and rural villages and hamlets, including those along the River Tees.
 - The range of its places of worship.

³⁶ Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026, DBC

³⁷ A Conservation Management Plan for Darlington Town Centre Fringe, 2010, Archaeo-Environment.

- Key heritage assets encompassing parklands, landscapes, riversides, museums, libraries, art galleries, public art, food and drink, customs and traditions.

Policy ENV 1

Protecting, Enhancing and Promoting Darlington's Historic Environment (Strategic Policy)

A) Designated Heritage Assets

When considering proposals affecting all designated heritage assets (Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas) or non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, great weight will be given to the asset's conservation. Proposals should conserve those elements which contribute to such asset's significance, including any contribution made by their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm. Proposals resulting in less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets will be permitted only where this harm is clearly justified and outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal. Proposals resulting in substantial harm to or total loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset (or an archaeological site of national importance) will only be permitted where this is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or, all of the following apply:

- the nature of the heritage assets prevents all reasonable uses of the site;
- no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;
- conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back in to use

Development involving the alteration, extension or change of use of a listed building or construction of any structure within its curtilage must:

- protect its significance as a listed building; and
- protect existing historic hard and soft landscaping features including trees, hedges, walls, fences and surfaces; and
- protect historic plot boundaries and layouts; and
- ensure the optimum viable use of the building, where appropriate.

Any development affecting the setting of a listed building will be permitted if the proposal conserves or enhances either its significance and/or the contribution its setting makes to its significance. Proposals involving the demolition of a listed building or structure within the curtilage of a listed building will not be permitted, except in exceptional circumstances as detailed in national policy.

Development will only be permitted in Parks and Gardens of National Interest where it cannot be accommodated elsewhere, is directly related to the conservation management of the park or garden, and does not harm those elements which contribute to its enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance or setting (including key views from or towards the landscape).

B) Conservation Areas

In addition to the requirements in part A, proposals affecting a conservation area involving the alteration, extension or change of use of a building or construction of any structure should

preserve and enhance those elements identified in any conservation area appraisal as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of that area. Special attention should be given to:

- i. existing architectural and historic character and associations by having regard to the positioning and grouping, form, scale, massing, detailing of development and the use of materials in its construction; and
- ii. existing hard and soft landscaping features including areas of open space, trees, hedges, walls, fences, watercourses and surfacing and the special character created by them; and
- iii. historic plot boundaries and layouts; and
- iv. the setting of the conservation area.

Development will not be permitted that would lead to the loss of public or private open spaces within or adjacent to conservation areas where the existing openness makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area or its setting, including landscape and townscape and views into or from the area, unless the public benefit demonstrably outweighs the harm.

The demolition of buildings or structures in a conservation area will not be permitted if:

- v. the building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area (as identified within the conservation area appraisal); and
- vi. the structural condition of the building is repairable; and
- vii. there are no approved detailed plans for the redevelopment of the site and a contract has not been entered into for the implementation of that redevelopment; and
- viii. there has been insufficient consideration of other options to re-use the building in its current form.

C) Archaeological Sites

Proposals affecting archaeological sites of less than national importance should conserve those elements which contribute to their significance in line with the importance of the remains. In those cases where development affecting such sites is acceptable in principle, mitigation of damage will be ensured through preservation of the remains in situ as a preferred solution. When in situ preservation is not justified, the developer will be required to make adequate provision for excavation and recording before or during development. Subsequent analysis, publication and dissemination of the findings will be required to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and deposited with the Historic Environment Record.

Development proposals involving ground disturbance in Areas of High Archaeological Potential (as identified in APPENDIX C), must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report. Householder development and extensions, and alterations to existing commercial premises of 40 metres squared or less, are exempt from this requirement unless the proposed development is likely to affect a Scheduled Monument.

Outside Areas of High Archaeological Potential, planning applications on sites of more than 1 hectare must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report, unless the area is already known to have been archaeologically sterilised by previous development (such as mineral extraction).

D) Non-Designated Heritage Assets

In considering applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets a balanced judgement will be taken, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the effect of the application on the significance of the heritage asset. Proposals should seek to avoid harm to those features, including setting, which contribute to the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, through measures such as good design [and landscaping](#).

E) Heritage at Risk

Proposals that would help to safeguard the significance of and secure a sustainable future for Darlington's heritage assets, especially those identified as being at greatest risk of loss or decay, will be supported.

F) Securing the optimum viable use

If the existing or original use of a heritage asset is no longer viable development proposals will be required to secure the optimum viable alternative use consistent with its conservation.

- 9.1.13** The Council has a statutory duty to protect listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. Great weight will be given to the conservation of heritage assets in line with national planning policy⁽³⁸⁾.
- 9.1.14** In addition to the Council's statutory obligations regarding the historic environment⁽³⁹⁾, the Council will:
- a. Seek to identify, protect and enhance Darlington's heritage assets;
 - b. Promote heritage-led regeneration, including in relation to development opportunities in Darlington's Town Centre Fringe and proposals in relation to the Stockton & Darlington Railway;
 - c. Produce conservation area appraisals and management plans;
 - d. Maintain its positive approach to safeguard the future of heritage assets at risk;
 - e. Adopt a proactive approach to increase the promotion and understanding of the area's archaeology.
- 9.1.15** The Council will encourage developments promoting the educational, recreational and/or tourism potential of the locally distinct heritage, landmarks and historic villages of the Borough through sensitive management, enhancement and interpretation of these heritage assets as set out in the Darlington Cultural Strategy.
- 9.1.16** A Heritage Impact Assessment has been produced to inform the Local Plan that assesses the suitability of several allocation sites from an historic environment perspective. Design and mitigation measures recommended by the assessment have been incorporated into the development criteria contained in APPENDIX B HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATION STATEMENTS and the policies for the Skertingham and Burtree ~~Garden~~ **Village** strategic allocations.

³⁸ NPPF Paragraph 207 (2024)

³⁹ Town and Country Planning Act 1990; Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; and, Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Area Act 1979

Conservation Areas

- 9.1.17** In Conservation Areas special attention must be given in all planning decisions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. The Council will consider introducing Article 4 Directions where a conservation area is identified as 'At Risk' when annually surveyed by the Local Authority in conjunction with Historic England.
- 9.1.18** As part of the Council's positive strategy for the historic environment, it will prepare and review Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans for each conservation area, including any proposed new or extended areas, as the basis for determining proposals within or where it would affect the setting of conservation areas.

Listed Buildings

- 9.1.19** The Borough of Darlington is fortunate to have a large stock of important listed buildings within its boundary, including those associated with the early railways. A listed building can be any kind of structure, such as a signpost, post box, bridge, or telephone kiosk, for example, and not necessarily a building.
- 9.1.20** Any changes affecting the character of a listed building will require Listed Building Consent. For example, historic fabric such as doors, windows, fireplaces and so on or original/historical layout are important to the character of the building and consent will be required for their alteration, removal or replacement. Applications for Listed Building Consent are dealt with by the Council's Planning Team, alongside application for Planning Permission and other planning-related applications (e.g. proposals for a change of use, extension or other alteration to the envelope of the building, or development within its curtilage). It is always advisable to consult the Borough Council's Planning Services section before proceeding with any changes.

Archaeological Sites and Scheduled Monuments

- 9.1.21** Significant archaeology (designated and non-designated) in the Borough include those from the Iron Age, Roman and Medieval periods. New archaeological investigations and finds continue to be added to the Historic Environment Record (HER) allowing greater understanding of this element of the historic environment. Survey and recording prior to development should inform any new development and is an important way of adding to the record, particularly in areas of known local historical interest, such as Areas of High Archaeological Potential (see APPENDIX C), where archaeological finds are more likely unless the area has already been archaeologically sterilised by an activity such as mineral extraction.
- 9.1.22** In line with national planning policy⁽⁴⁰⁾, applications for development involving

⁴⁰ NPPF Paragraph 207 (December 2024)

ground disturbance within Areas of High Archaeological Potential will require the submission of an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation. Where archaeology is found to be present the Council will require a mitigation strategy involving either preservation in situ, or excavation, analysis and reporting, or a combination of the two. Proposals affecting archaeological sites or monuments will only be approved where satisfactory mitigation measures can be implemented. Exemptions are made in Policy ENV 1 for small scale householder and commercial development that are unlikely to affect a Scheduled Monument.

- 9.1.23** Outside of the identified Areas of High Archaeological Potential, desk-based assessment and field evaluation (consisting of geophysical survey followed up by targeted trial-trenching) is required for all development proposals affecting an area of 1 hectare or more, unless it is already known to have been archaeologically sterilised by previous development such as mineral extraction. The reasoning underpinning this is that archaeological investigation and research in recent decades has shown right across the country that the number and geospatial density of archaeological sites is far higher than previously imagined and so the likelihood of encountering archaeology on a site of this size or larger has increased.

Historic Parks and Gardens

- 9.1.24** A Register of Parks and Gardens of "Special Historic Interest" is maintained by Historic England to encourage their protection and conservation but has no associated statutory controls. The three registered sites within Darlington Borough are all Grade II Listed. South Park and West Cemetery are both publicly owned. The Landscape at Cummins Engine Factory is privately owned.

Non-designated Heritage Assets

- 9.1.25** The significance, character and setting of heritage assets of local interest will be identified using the criteria provided at APPENDIX C and protected through the development management process (including pre-applications), through plan making (including neighbourhood plans), the production of Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans, and other Council activities.

Heritage at Risk

- 9.1.26** Heritage at Risk includes buildings, structures and sites whose preservation is threatened, often by vacancy or lack of regular repair and maintenance. Historic England maintain a Heritage at Risk Register ⁽⁴¹⁾. The ultimate responsibility for a historic building lies with its owner. However, the Council has the authority to issue enforcement notices to require necessary works to ensure a heritage asset is no longer at risk. It is in the best interests of all parties if work is carried out voluntarily and before emergency work is required. The Council adopts a proactive approach to heritage at risk by actively engaging in advice for proposals to enhance Heritage at Risk resulting in sustainable uses. Proposals that either secure the future of heritage at risk

⁴¹ Historic England Heritage at Risk Register

or prevent assets from becoming 'at risk' in the first place will be encouraged where the significance of the asset can be adequately protected.

Securing the Optimum Viable Use

- 9.1.27** For statutorily protected buildings, those within conservation areas and non-designated heritage assets, the Council will seek to secure the optimum viable use. Keeping a building in its original use is preferred, as it generally has the least impact on its character or appearance and significance. It may be converted to a new use if it can be demonstrated that it will be consistent with its conservation and compatible with the character or appearance, significance and setting of the historical building, or unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are public benefits which significantly outweigh the harm.

Assessment of Heritage Significance

- 9.1.28** The Council has a responsibility to consider whether a building or structure is a heritage asset, either designated or non-designated, when exercising its planning powers. In Darlington many heritage assets will be related to the railways, Quaker's and industry but there are assets that have other local significance. The Council ~~intends to produce a Local List, with community involvement and support, that would also include the relevant content of adopted neighbourhood plans. In the meantime, the Council~~ has published a Criteria for Assessing Non-Designated Heritage Assets, based on Historic England guidance. This will enable the identification of non-designated heritage assets as they are brought to the Council's attention, particularly when proposals to alter them are received. Developing community skills and building capacity to identify non-designated heritage assets will help the Council to proactively meet its statutory duties in this regard. The Council is looking at options to set up an interactive way for people to nominate local heritage as well as comment on those put forward by the Council.
- 9.1.29** National planning policy⁽⁴²⁾ requires applicants to assess the significance of heritage assets likely to be affected by a proposal including any contribution made by its setting⁽⁴³⁾ and the impact of development on them. Further information is available on the Council's website to assist in compiling an assessment of significance. This should be submitted in a Heritage Statement or Heritage Impact Assessment. Potential developers are advised to contact the Council in advance to find out what level of detail will be required, as this will vary for the type and size of proposal, and the number and significance of heritage assets likely to be affected. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the

⁴² Paragraph 207 of the NPPF (December 2024).

⁴³ 48 Historic England defines the setting of a heritage asset as "The surroundings in which a place is experienced, its local context, embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape".

potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Planning Applications

- 9.1.30** Permission will not be granted for applications which are not fully justified and accompanied by the information necessary to fully assess the impact of the proposal on the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset or assets. Proposals that affect heritage assets should be accompanied a Heritage Impact Assessment to demonstrate that the architectural and historic interest of the structure has been understood and accounted for in any proposals. Proposals that affect heritage assets should also be accompanied by a Statement of Significance⁽⁴⁴⁾, which may form part of a Design and Access Statement.
- 9.1.31** Where permission is granted for a development which would result in the total or partial loss of a designated heritage asset, approval will be conditional upon the asset being fully recorded and the record and commentary deposited with the Local Planning Authority and the Historic Environment Record held by Durham County Council and the ~~National~~ [Historic England](#) Archive.

Protecting, Enhancing and Promoting the Stockton and Darlington Railway

- 9.2.1** The route of the Stockton and Darlington Railway through the Borough is mostly intact and still serves a transport function. The route includes several important structures, but only some, such as the scheduled Skerne Bridge, have statutory protection. The area around North Road Railway Station and within the Northgate Conservation Area has a particular concentration of railway heritage, including the Museum, Carriage Works, Lime Cells, Goods Shed and associated Victorian residential terraces and Railway Tavern Public House on Northgate. In addition to designated assets, Westbrook Villas and the Coal Drops to the rear of Westbrook Villas are examples of non-designated assets to be found in the Borough with strong links to the town's railway heritage.

⁴⁴ As defined in paragraph 213 b) of the NPPF (December 2024).

Policy ENV 2

Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) (Strategic Policy)

Development proposals that impact on the historic route of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (1825), the Darlington and Croft branch lines, together with their associated physical and archaeological remains, structures, features and setting, will be supported, where they:

- a. conserve and enhance elements which contribute to significance, consistent with Policy ENV1;
- b. include measures that preserve and enhance any physical remains along the route, include site interpretation and where appropriate reinstate a legible route where those remains no longer exist;
- c. do not prejudice the development of the S&DR as a visitor attraction or education resource; and
- d. retain and enhance access to, and alongside the route, branch lines, remains, structures, features and their setting and ~~support~~ enable the creation of walking and cycling paths along the route.

9.2.2 Where a development is on or within 50 metres of the trackbed or relates to a designated or non-designated heritage asset associated with the route, The 1825 Stockton and Darlington Railway: Historic Environment Audit, Northgate and Middleton St George Conservation Area Appraisals, where relevant, should inform proposals and accompanying Heritage Statements and Heritage Impact Assessments.

9.2.3 In partnership with Historic England, Durham County Council, Stockton Borough Council and other key stakeholders, the Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone initiative (2018-2023) has provided a greater understanding of significance through historic area assessments, historic buildings assessments and archaeological investigations. The project has also resulted in an improved sense of place and identity with several assets associated with the Stockton and Darlington Railway removed from the national heritage at risk register. Site-specific regeneration has delivered new uses for historic buildings and boosted the visitor economy around Hopetown. Proposals for development associated with the S&DR must be informed by the research undertaken as part of the Heritage Action Zone, and subsequent planning and conservation documents, adopted by the Council.

9.2.4 The Council, with its partners, has developed further planning and conservation guidance, including Conservation Appraisals for Northgate and Middleton St George, to ensure the protection, enhancement and promotion of this locally distinct and nationally significant heritage asset to coincide with the 2025 bicentenary celebrations.

9.2.5 Following the success of the S&DR bicentenary celebrations, ~~it is the long-term aspiration to create~~ a walking and cycling route along the full 26-mile route of the Stockton and Darlington Railway along with ~~providing~~ associated interpretation, ~~opening up~~ will need to be enabled by new developments along the route. The route will support ~~for~~ leisure and tourist visits, and ~~as be~~ an education resource. Further information on the route established to date is available at <https://sdr-trail-of-discovery.co.uk/home>

Local Landscape Character

- 9.3.1** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that valued landscapes should be protected and enhanced. The Darlington Local Plan protects and seeks to appropriately enhance the distinctive character of the Borough's natural and historic townscapes and landscapes, including unique features like rural gaps, green wedges, green corridors, historic routes and parklands. However, there are some parts of the inner urban area where landscape or townscape quality could be improved, in particular to better promote Darlington's railway heritage (see Policy ENV 2).
- 9.3.2** All perform an important role in helping to the keep the permanence of the landscape over the plan period particularly by protecting the Borough's settlement pattern and maintaining the openness between different neighbourhoods, so that each keeps their unique identity. As the Borough continues to grow each feature will in different ways help safeguard the identity of communities, particularly in areas that face growth pressures.

Policy ENV 3

Local Landscape Character (Strategic Policy)

Proposals will be supported where they protect and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the Borough's Landscape. This should be achieved by:

A) Retaining the openness and green infrastructure functions of:

1. The rural gaps, between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row, Middleton St George and Oak Tree, Hurworth on Tees and Hurworth Place, and between Darlington and the villages of Great Burdon and Barmpton; and
2. The green wedges of Cocker Beck/Mowden, Blackwell/Skerne Park and Haughton/Red Hall.

Within these areas, development will only be permitted where it:

- i. Protects and enhances the landscape character, setting and identity of the area and for rural gaps specifically maintains the physical separation of settlements and urban areas;
 - ii. Protects and enhances biodiversity value by promoting protected and priority habitats and species;
 - iii. Conserves and enhances ~~traditional~~ landscape features including ancient and semi-natural woodland, trees, ~~and~~ hedgerows and watercourses;
 - iv. Retains and enhances connectivity within the green infrastructure network; and
 - v. Is ancillary to a green infrastructure use.
- or:
- vi. The development proposed is for limited infilling on previously developed land, which would not have greater impact on the openness of the landscape than the existing development.

B) Retaining and enhancing the length, continuity, biodiversity, amenity and

heritage value of:

1. The existing green corridors in line with Policy ENV 4; and
2. The historic routes of the ~~Darlington/Middleton–St George/A66/A67/Stockton Corridor~~ Stockton and Darlington Railway, the Former Barnard Castle Trackbed, Salters Lane, Honeypot Lane, Nunnery Lane and Cemetery Lane.

Development that adjoins these corridors and routes should:

- i. Positively respond to the landscape setting;
 - ii. Conserve and enhance traditional landscape features including ancient and semi-natural woodland, trees and hedgerows;
 - iii. Retain and support their connectivity for people, habitats and wildlife;
 - iv. Protect and enhance their ecological and heritage value in accordance with Policies ENV 1, ENV 2, and ENV 7; and
 - v. Incorporate appropriate interpretation for ecological and heritage features.
- C) Retaining and improving the special landscape, heritage and ecological qualities of urban and rural parklands at South Park, North Lodge Park, West Cemetery, Blackwell Grange, Rockcliffe Park, Middleton Hall, Walworth Castle, Redworth Hall, Hall Garth, Newbus Grange and Neasham Hall.
- D) Protecting the qualities and key sensitivities of the landscape, commensurate with its status, along with traditional natural and built features and important views having regard to the Darlington Landscape Character Assessment (2015) or update.
- E) Enhancing the quality of the landscape through the provision or reinstatement of traditional natural and built features where appropriate.
- F) Seeking high quality design in areas of low landscape quality in the urban area, to strengthen local character and distinctiveness, having regard to the Darlington Characterisation Study, Darlington Landscape Character Assessment and the Revised Design of New Development SPD, or their subsequent replacement.

9.3.3 Rural gaps have allowed more than one village to develop separately but nearby over time, for many years. Today these relatively small gaps remain important to the rural settlement pattern, to the character and identity of the rural area and to its residents. This policy together with Policy H 7, will protect the rural gaps, conserving the character, openness and links to the wider landscape in order to maintain the attractiveness of the Borough's settlements and their settings.

9.3.4 The three green wedges, identified in the Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy, extend to the proposed development limit of the main urban area to ensure that their land uses, landscape components, openness, topography, nature of their urban edges and their relationship and importance to the character of Darlington is protected and appropriately enhanced.

9.3.5 The existing green corridors identified in Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy have a unique character that contributes to the identity and setting of adjoining neighbourhoods, such as the River Tees and the former Stockton and Darlington ~~and Stockton~~ Railway corridor. Their length, distinctiveness and width vary (see Policy ENV 4 ~~7~~). A number are also historic routes, that have historically connected nearby towns, villages, hamlets and scattered farms to

the market town of Darlington and provide insights into the past. Some, like Cemetery Lane, have kept much of their original width and features including walls and gateposts, others like Salters Lane have original hedgerows, ditches and banks in places.

- 9.3.6** Within and adjacent to these routes development should reflect variations in the local landscape character by enhancing local distinctiveness, guided by the Revised Design of New Development SPD and Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy, or their replacement. The use of interpretation and public art to provide greater understanding of ecological and heritage features will be supported.
- 9.3.7** The Borough has eleven historic ornamental parklands. The Local Plan seeks to protect and enhance the integrity and landscape quality of the seven rural parks and four urban parks. Any national and local designated features within their boundaries will be protected through national legislation and national planning guidance (see Policy ENV 1).
- 9.3.8** The Borough's landscape outside of the main built-up areas is characterised by mostly open, arable farmland with a mix of unique landforms, including ditches and cuts, village greens and in places traditional field patterns, hedgerows and wetlands. These natural and built features all help distinguish different parts of the Borough from one another, and so will be protected through this policy.
- 9.3.9** There are landscapes and townscapes in the Borough which detract from or do little to positively contribute to the Borough's attractive and distinctive character. If not addressed, these areas can adversely affect the image of the Borough and its attractiveness to businesses and investors. Development in these areas should include environmental quality improvements to restore or enhance the local landscape or townscape and help attract investment to the Borough, informed by the Darlington Characterisation Study, Landscape Character Assessment and the Revised Design of New Development SPD, or their replacement. Within the rural area, natural features such as hedgerows, field margins and wetlands should be re-created where appropriate.
- 9.3.10** As Darlington's unique environment contributes much to its distinctiveness, and that this is an objective of the Local Plan, the following policy identifies the key elements of the existing townscape and landscape that will be prioritised for protection and enhancement to help safeguard the distinctive environment of the Borough. Together with more specific detailed documents such as the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan, it will also help attract public sector funding and other investment to the Borough.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

- 9.4.1** Darlington benefits from an extensive green and blue infrastructure network; its multi-functional green spaces, green corridors, rivers and watercourses provide links within the Borough and to the rest of the Tees Valley, Durham and North Yorkshire. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, a landscape scale approach to green infrastructure will be adopted, using and managing land for what it is best suited to. Through investment, management and maintenance across the network, priority projects will be delivered that will make more of the network so that a range of green and blue infrastructure needs are delivered in each local area, and in the Borough, as a whole.
- 9.4.2** Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy facilitates the planning, design and management of the network to meet the environmental, social and economic needs of the community; by supporting recreation, sport and play, walking and cycling, food production, flood storage and sustainable drainage benefits (see Policy DC 3) as well as the biodiversity and geological features that are found within it (see Policy ENV 7). It can also contribute to achieving the appropriate sustainable building standards (see Policy DC 2) required in new developments and enhance amenity for residents (see Policy HC 2).
- 9.4.3** The Green Infrastructure network in Darlington is made up of numerous public and private green spaces, landscapes and features including:
- Green corridors;
 - Green wedges (see Policy ENV3);
 - Wildlife friendly green space, including designated wildlife sites ⁽⁴⁵⁾;
 - Informal recreational open space, children's play areas and landscape amenity space;
 - Playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities;
 - Formal parks, cemeteries and civic spaces;
 - Trees, woodland and community woodland;
 - Urban fringe;
 - Agricultural land;
 - Public rights of way and wider countryside access; and
 - Open countryside.

⁴⁵ In Darlington designated wildlife sites include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

Policy ENV 4

Green and Blue Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)

Green and blue infrastructure will be protected, and where appropriate, improved and extended to provide a quality, safe and accessible network of well connected, multi-functional open spaces for recreation and play and to enhance visual amenity, biodiversity, landscape and productivity. This will be achieved by:

- a. Development proposals within, or adjacent to an existing green corridor (as defined on the Policies Map) should conserve and enhance its function, setting, biodiversity, landscape, access and recreational value as appropriate to that location;
- b. Development proposals that are crossed by an existing or proposed green corridor (as defined on the Policies Map) should incorporate it into the sites layout and design having regard to green infrastructure functions appropriate to that location;
- c. Development proposals affecting a watercourse should, where possible, maintain a 10 metre buffer zone and explore opportunities to re-naturalise, improve fish habitat and watercourse connectivity including the removal and/or modification of barriers and de-culverting.
- d. Capitalising on opportunities to enhance and/or create green links between green and blue infrastructure features;
- e. Expecting development to protect and improve local water quality wherever possible, taking into account the Northumbria River Basin Management Plan;
- f. Working with partners and the community to bring forward priority projects and measures identified in Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Northumbria River Basin Management Plan;
- g. Providing green infrastructure as part of new residential and non-residential developments in line with Policy ENV 5;
- h. Refusing planning permission for development that would result in the loss of existing green space⁽⁴⁶⁾ unless it can be demonstrated that the loss of the space would not cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area or to local biodiversity (in line with Policy ENV 7), and one or more of the following criteria are met:
 - i) there is an identified surplus of that type of green space in the area and that its loss would not adversely affect the recreational needs of residents;
 - ii) satisfactory replacement green space is provided in a suitable location, accessible to current users and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality;
 - iii) the proposal involves the development of an alternative sports and recreational

⁴⁶ For the purpose of Policy ENV 4 criterion G the term green space refers to all public and private, formal and informal, types of green infrastructure listed under paragraph 9.4.3, including component parts of the green corridors, but excluding urban fringe, agricultural land, open countryside and private gardens.

provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

- 9.4.4** At the heart of Darlington's green infrastructure network is a network of green corridors. Four green corridors including the River Tees and the River Skerne function within and across the Borough's boundaries, and eight green corridors, including the former Barnard Castle Trackbed, connect neighbourhoods to the urban and rural areas. Most are used now, but some will be new corridors (or parts of) added over the lifetime of this plan. In particular these will connect the strategic development locations and the urban fringe, provide connectivity within the inner urban area and enhance biodiversity (see Policy ENV 7) and movement (see Policy IN 1) across the Borough.
- 9.4.5** The widths of the green corridors have not been defined on the policies map as they are distinct, and this will vary along the length of each corridor depending on its qualities, characteristics and surroundings in any particular location.
- 9.4.6** Development proposals on sites crossed by, or adjacent to a green corridor should positively protect, incorporate and enhance the functions and features of the corridor as appropriate. Sites related to a proposed green corridor will be expected to actively incorporate the corridor into the layout and design of the development, responding to the specific landscape characteristics of the site (see Policy ENV 3), retaining existing natural assets and distinctive features as appropriate. In all cases, developments will be expected to respond to the priorities for each corridor and seek to deliver the projects identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy⁽⁴⁷⁾.
- 9.4.7** In the long term the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan will guide the creation of a new green corridor adjacent to the River Skerne and development on the eastern side of Darlington should seek to establish an extensive new wildlife friendly space further upstream adjacent to the river. Both will help re-create a more natural course for the river, provide environmental and water quality enhancements and improve access for people and wildlife. In addition, development of the Skerningham Strategic Allocation (see Policy H 10) will include enhancements of the river corridor to the north of the town.
- 9.4.8** Policy ENV 4 protects green corridors as well as a range of green spaces in the urban area and the villages, sports facilities (see also Policy ENV 9) and the diverse landscapes they connect for recreation, play, nature, movement and amenity⁽⁴⁸⁾. The policy applies equally to land currently in use or last used for these purposes, including land that has been neglected for an extended period of time but is capable of being brought back into active use with reasonable endeavours. The decision on whether development proposals are assessed as involving the loss of green infrastructure will be determined on a case-by-case basis in line with this policy.

⁴⁷ The projects related to each corridor are set out in Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy: A Guide to Darlington's Green Infrastructure 2013-26, DBC, 2013.

⁴⁸ Individual green spaces have not been identified on the policies map but can be viewed on the online mapping resource on the Council's Planning Policy website.

- 9.4.9** Most people have easy access to good quality parks and other green spaces for formal and informal recreation and play, while Darlington's impressive play offer means that most children have easy access to adventurous play, for example at West Park and Broken Scar. Wildlife friendly spaces, including Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites, provide most people with access to a quality natural environment (see Policy ENV 7), and a complementary network of smaller spaces provide for informal recreation (e.g. walking, jogging) close to homes and work.
- 9.4.10** However, quantity, quality and access to different types of open space varies between localities within the Borough. Unmet needs will remain unless existing spaces are put to new uses and/or new spaces are provided. Projects such as the Salters Lane Community Garden have increased the use of existing spaces to meet the needs of residents, and other similar projects are underway, where community groups have got funding from organisations like the National Lottery for the works. Elsewhere planning obligations, secured with new development, may also be used to secure enhancements to existing open spaces and the provision of new spaces to meet the needs of new residents.
- 9.4.11** The EU Water Framework Directive became part of UK law in 2003⁴⁹ with the primary objectives of achieving good ecological status in water bodies and providing protection for drinking water sources and protected sites (Natura 2000 sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest). These requirements are reflected in the Environment Agency's Northumbria River Basin Management Plan which covers the Darlington Borough. In making decisions on spatial plans and planning applications, the Council has a duty to have regard to the Northumbrian River Basin Management Plan to ensure the protection and improvement of water quality. Changes to the design of development proposals will often avoid harm to water bodies. Development that would adversely affect the quality or quantity of surface or groundwater, flow of groundwater or ability to abstract water will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that no significant adverse impact would occur or mitigation can be put in place to minimise this impact within acceptable levels. Development should not adversely affect water-dependent water bodies or groundwater abstractions.
- 9.4.12** Applicants seeking to justify the loss of an existing green space on the grounds that there is a surplus of that type of green space in the area (under Policy ENV 4 criterion g. i.) will also need to demonstrate that its loss would not have an adverse affect on the wider recreational needs of residents. This consideration will include whether the land could be redesigned to serve an alternative green space function that would help to meet local shortfalls in a particular type of green space.

⁴⁹ Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations 2003.

Policy ENV 5

Green Infrastructure Standards

Developments including ~~20~~ 10 dwellings ~~(or 0.2 hectares)~~ or more, ~~or non-residential developments of 1,000 sqm gross floorspace or more~~, will, subject to the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing provision, be expected to deliver new green infrastructure, to meet the additional need generated calculated using the formula set out in paragraph 9.4.15 and ~~having regard to~~ in line with the most up to date Fields in Trust standards and costs contained in the Green Infrastructure Guidance Note (2024 standards currently set out in the tables 9.1 and 9.2 below).

Non-residential developments of 1,000sqm gross floorspace or more should deliver amenity greenspace appropriate to the number of employees on site. This should be multi-functional, accessible to all and integrate informal exercise opportunities to support health and wellbeing. These proposals should also maximise opportunities for the provision of natural and semi-natural greenspace including tree planting as part of a landscape-led approach to design.

Proposals meeting the thresholds above should provide a Green Infrastructure Plan (as part of a Design and Access Statement) setting out how they will achieve these standards and deliver the 15 Green Infrastructure principles in the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework where relevant. Proposals should also ensure arrangements are in place for the management and maintenance of new green infrastructure provided in the longer term.

Green infrastructure should preferably be delivered on-site and designed as multi-functional blue-green space to perform a range of green infrastructure functions and incorporate tree planting where possible. Provision should be prioritised subject to need and having regard to the types, ~~and~~ quantities and accessibility of existing green infrastructure in the area ~~as identified in the Darlington Green Infrastructure and Open Space Strategies along with any other relevant evidence. Where it is not feasible to deliver certain types of Green Infrastructure provision on-site or, in circumstances where it can be demonstrated that off-site provision would deliver greater benefits to the wider community (subject to still satisfying the accessibility standards), a financial contribution will be required towards the improvement of off-site green infrastructure in the local area, calculated using the formula set out in paragraph 9.4.15. This should be equivalent to the additional need generated by the proposal~~

~~In areas of open space deficiency (identified in the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy and Open Space Assessment or equivalent), schemes of between 11 and 19 dwellings (or 0.1 to 0.2 ha), or non-residential development of 500sqm to 1000sqm gross floorspace, will be required to make a financial contribution towards the improvement of off-site green infrastructure in the local area, calculated using the formula set out in paragraph 9.4.15. This should be equivalent to the additional need generated by the development and where this would deliver greater benefits to the wider community than on-site provision.~~

Table 9.1: Green Infrastructure Quantity and Accessibility Standards

<u>Green Infrastructure Type</u>	<u>Minimum Quantity Standard</u>	<u>Maximum Walking Standard (metres)</u>
<u>Amenity Greenspace</u>	<u>0.60 hectares per 1000 population (6 sqm per person)</u>	<u>400m</u>
<u>Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace</u>	<u>1.8 hectares per 1000 population (18 sqm per person)</u>	<u>800m</u>
<u>Parks and Gardens</u>	<u>0.8 hectares per 1000 population (8 sqm per person)</u>	<u>800m</u>
<u>Equipped Play – Local Areas of Play (LAP), Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP), Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP)</u>	<u>0.25 hectares per 1000 population (2.5 sqm per person)</u>	<u>LAP – 100m</u> <u>LEAP – 400m</u> <u>NEAP – 1000m</u>
<u>Informal Play (can include multi-use game areas, pump tracks, bouldering, skate parks and social areas amongst others)</u>	<u>0.3 hectares per 1000 population (3 sqm per person)</u>	<u>700m</u>

Table 9.2: Equipped and Informal Play Areas Size Standard

<u>Play Space Type</u>	<u>Minimum Size Standard</u>
<u>Local Areas for Play (LAP)</u>	<u>100 square metres distributed within a development as part of playable routes</u>
<u>Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)</u>	<u>400 square metres</u>
<u>Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play</u>	<u>1000 square metres</u>
<u>Informal Play</u>	<u>1000 square metres (a typical MUGA is 40x20m)</u>

- 9.4.13** The requirements in Policy ENV 5 will be used to ensure that there is enough accessible green infrastructure overall to meet the needs of development with priority given to the provision of ~~wildlife friendly~~ natural and semi-natural green space and features associated with water and flood management systems. Spaces must also be of the appropriate quality and within ~~a reasonable~~ the maximum walking standard distance of most people's homes to ensure they are used positively. The policy will also help support efforts to attract external funding for improvements, prioritise initiatives for planning obligations and help guide the Council's investment decisions. Guidance on integrating green infrastructure into new development is available in the Revised Design of New Development SPD, ~~Darlington Design Code~~ or its replacement.
- 9.4.14** As the Borough is relatively rich in the amount of open space it contains, new space will only be sought as part of major new development⁽⁵⁰⁾ where the amount and mix of development proposed requires substantial green infrastructure to deliver a sustainable new neighbourhood, or to create an appropriate business or leisure environment. The Council recognises it is not always possible to achieve this all on-site; in those cases, equivalent off-site provision will be sought. Also, for certain types of green infrastructure such as ~~playing pitches~~ equipped play it may be impractical to deliver as a standalone ~~pitch facility~~ and more beneficial to contribute to the enhancement of an existing accessible off-site facility. ~~For smaller developments in areas of open space deficiency a contribution towards improving the quality and functionality of existing open space may be required to ensure that the space is able to meet the needs of additional residents.~~ This approach will also ensure that the network can continue to provide for other functions that green infrastructure is needed to perform.
- 9.4.15** Proposals where it has been identified green infrastructure provision is required should use the following formula to establish the amount of green infrastructure type to be provided by each new home and the financial contribution required in circumstances where an off-site financial contribution is required. A dwelling occupancy average of 2.2 should be applied which is the figure for Darlington Borough from the latest Census (2021) until an updated average is provided. The green infrastructure type standard per resident to be used are set out in table 9.1 above. These are based on the Fields in Trust benchmark standards which are considered a robust basis as the current Open Spaces Assessment for the Borough is out of date. Should an updated Open Spaces Assessment be completed for the Borough which calculates locally tailored standards then these should be utilised. ~~Where proposals are providing a contribution towards quality improvement costs only this will be 50% less of the standard charge for quantitative provision. The same formula below will be applied to proposals for non-residential development where green infrastructure provision is required by replacing the dwelling occupancy with the employee occupancy of the proposal and applying a lower green infrastructure type standard per employee reflecting the lower level of usage. Further information on the inputs to the formula is~~

⁵⁰ Major new development: ~~20~~ 10 or more dwellings or 1,000 metres gross non-residential floorspace.

~~available in the Green Infrastructure Guidance Note or its replacement.~~

- **Step 1 – Establish quantity required** - Dwelling Occupancy (2.2) multiplied by (x) green infrastructure type standard per resident equals (=) amount of green infrastructure type required per proposed dwelling
- **Step 2 – Determine financial contribution required for off-site provision** - Amount of green infrastructure required per proposed dwelling multiplied by (x) cost of provision equals (=) standard charge per proposed dwelling
- ~~**Step 3 – Determine financial contribution required for off-site quality improvement costs** – Standard charge per proposed dwelling divided (/) by 2 equals (=) quality improvement costs per proposed dwelling~~

9.4.16 In exceptional cases where these requirements cannot be delivered a comprehensive, open book viability assessment should be submitted with the planning application to show why a development cannot achieve these requirements.

9.4.17 Provision should also be made for the maintenance of green spaces to ensure quality remains in the long term. For new large greenspaces, particularly those in the strategic locations, a maintenance levy⁽⁵¹⁾ will typically be applied to each household and/or business, to ensure long term maintenance by a management company. Elsewhere, a one-off maintenance contribution may be sought so that maintenance can be undertaken by the Council and in these circumstances the formula below should be used to calculate a contribution equivalent to 10 years maintenance. ~~Where the maintenance sum is for off-site quality improvements costs the amount will be reduced by 50%.~~ The same formula below will be applied to proposals for non-residential development where green infrastructure provision is required by replacing the dwelling occupancy with the employee occupancy of the proposal. ~~Further details on the approach to implementation can be found in the Green Infrastructure Guidance Note or its replacement.~~

- **Step 1 – Establishing maintenance sum required** - Dwelling Occupancy (2.4) multiplied by (x) average maintenance cost equals (=) maintenance cost per dwelling multiplied by (x) 10 = one off maintenance sum
- ~~**Step 2 – Determining maintenance sum for off-site quality improvement costs** – One off maintenance sum divided by (/) 2 equals (=) quality improvement maintenance sum~~

⁵¹ Maintenance levy: annual sum paid by the houseowner or property owner to an independent body or management company to enable the long-term maintenance of green space.

Local Green Spaces

9.5.1 Local Green Spaces are a relatively new type of designation enabling local communities to identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection through either a local or neighbourhood plan.

9.5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open spaces, and sets out that designation should only be used:

- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing pitch), tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Policy ENV 6

Local Green Space

Development will not be permitted within a Local Green Space, designated either within the Darlington Borough Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan, unless it is consistent with the National Policy approach for Green Belts.

The sites in Table 9.43, and identified on the Policies Map, are proposed for designation as Local Green Spaces:

Table 9.43: Local Green Spaces Identified in Darlington Local Plan

Site Reference	Site Name
LGS01	Beech Wood
LGS02	Springfield Park
LGS05	Fryers Field Recreation Ground
LGS12	North Park
LGS14	Merrybent Community Woodland
LGS15	Almora Hall Field, Middleton St George
LGS16	Middleton St George Playing Field
LGS17	Water Park, Middleton St George

LGS22	Tower Hill to The Front Middleton One Row
LGS23	Field to the East of Middleton Lane, Middleton St George
LGS28	Tommy Crooks Park
LGS31	Bellburn Field

- 9.5.3** In making the decision on whether or not a green area should be designated as a Local Green Space, the Council has considered whether any additional local benefit would be gained by its designation in addition to another existing designation, such as a Local Nature Reserve or Conservation Area.
- 9.5.4** Designation as a Local Green Space gives an area protection consistent with that in respect of Green Belt.
- 9.5.5** In addition to the Local Plan, communities have the opportunity to identify and designate land as Local Green Space in neighbourhood plans.
- 9.5.6** Whilst the Local Plan does not designate any Local Green Spaces that currently fall within sites allocated for development in the plan, future reviews of the Local Plan will enable these areas to be reconsidered once there is more certainty over the layout of proposed development on these sites and any necessary compensatory measures resulting from the planning application process.

Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 9.6.1** National planning policy sets out the importance of conserving and enhancing biological and geological diversity and statutory obligations are established for conserving and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity through Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (2019). The Environment Act (2021) introduced a range of measures including legally binding targets for nature recovery, mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements for new developments and the production of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. This policy aims to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity within the Borough, in particular, the effect of new development on biodiversity and geodiversity assets. It provides detail on how potential impacts will be considered, to give more certainty to applicants and decision makers.
- 9.6.2** Darlington Borough currently has 42 nationally and locally designated wildlife sites⁵², providing different levels of protection for a growing range of protected and priority habitats and species, including Skylark, [Yellow Wagtail](#), Grey

⁵² Designated sites in Darlington: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Community Woodland.

Partridge, Lapwing, Noctule Bat and Daubentons's Bat⁽⁵³⁾. Nationally protected sites (Neasham Fen, Hells Kettles, Newton Ketton Meadows and Redcar Field SSSIs) will continue to be protected and enhanced, consistent with national legislation⁽⁵⁴⁾ and the objectives in their management plans, whilst Local Nature Reserves (such as The Whinnies and Drinkfield Marsh), Local Wildlife Sites and Community Woodlands have local protection. There are also three Local Geological Sites that protect areas of geological value in the Borough.

- 9.6.3** The Council intend to investigate the potential of designating new Local Nature Reserves, and the enhancement or extension of existing to provide greater protection for the protected and priority habitats and species that live there. Other Local Nature Reserves may come forward through site development and involvement with communities. This will help the Borough meet the national standard for Local Nature Reserves.
- 9.6.4** In comparison to neighbouring authorities, Darlington does not have much designated land of a European or National standard, so the 300 hectares of other local wildlife friendly greenspaces, for example, Cocker Beck and Baydale Meadows, are therefore of high importance within the Borough. They allow wildlife, including protected Water Voles and Great Crested Newts to move between designated spaces for feeding, mating and migrating, so helping to ensure biodiversity remains viable in the long term.
- 9.6.5** 'More, better, bigger and connected sites'⁽⁵⁵⁾ across the Borough, linked by wildlife corridors, smaller wildlife rich 'stepping stones' and 'buffer zones', such as along the existing and proposed strategic green corridors, will help establish healthy ecological networks for all species⁽⁵⁶⁾, including the Brown Trout, Little Grebe and Grey Wagtail, and allow ecosystems to be sustained, with attendant benefits⁽⁵⁷⁾. The alternative, managing spaces in isolation, could lead to a decline in their number, quality and mix, potentially resulting in habitats being lost and the beneficial functions of ecosystems being reduced.

⁵³ New sites are capable of being designated and existing sites de-designated over the course of the plan period based on the results of up-to-date survey work. The Tees Valley Nature Partnership maintain a list of designated wildlife sites in Darlington Borough on their website: www.teesvalleynaturepartnership.org.uk

⁵⁴ Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

⁵⁵ Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services, DEFRA 2011.

⁵⁶ Identified by the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), Tees Valley Nature Partnership, 2013.

⁵⁷ E.g. breaking down waste products, regulating water and air quality, pollinating food and climate control.

Policy ENV 7

Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Development (Strategic Policy)

The Council will ensure that sites and features of biodiversity and geodiversity importance including soils are given full and appropriate recognition and protection. The Council will also permit proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity where they accord with other relevant policies in the Plan.

Development will be refused if significant harm to biodiversity or geodiversity, either alone or in combination, cannot in the first instance be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for.

Development will be expected to minimise the impact on and provide net gains for biodiversity, including establishing coherent and resilient ecological networks, by:

- a. Avoiding or mitigating adverse impacts upon BAP priority or protected species. Any potential adverse impact upon the ability of protected species to survive, reproduce and maintain or expand their current distribution will be monitored through application of the derogation tests detailed in the Habitats Regulations, and;
- b. Significantly and demonstrably enhancing the quality, extent and mix of priority and protected habitats and species identified in the NERC list⁽⁵⁸⁾ and the proposed Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy through:
 - i. Incorporating native habitats, or habitat opportunities, within or around the site and/or as part of building design; and
 - ii. Creating, improving or extending ecological networks; and
 - iii. Contributing to the implementation of the management plans of the Tees Valley Nature Partnership within the Borough and the aims and outcomes of the Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Enhancement measures must be compatible with existing biodiversity and ecosystems.

Development proposals located within the areas listed below are encouraged, where relevant, to support the achievement of these specific actions as follows:

A) River Tees Existing Green Corridor

Encourage the protection and enhancement of Protect and enhance connections between different parts of the ecological network through:

- i. Providing or retaining a minimum of a 10m buffer zone to watercourses and creating quality riverside habitats to support priority habitats and species in buffer zones (see Policies ENV 4 and ENV 5);
- ii. Managing agriculture less intensively;
- iii. Planting native trees and ground plants;
- iv. Diversifying the mix of wetland and wet woodland habitats;
- v. Management of invasive species; and
- vi. Creating artificial habitats such as otter holts and bird boxes.

⁵⁸ Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 - Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England.

B) River Skerne Proposed Green Corridor

~~Encourage improvements to~~ Improve the value and ecological mix ~~to~~ through:

- i. ~~Providing or retaining a minimum of a 10m buffer zone to watercourses and creating~~ quality riverside habitats to support priority habitats and species in the buffer zone (see Policies ENV4 and ENV5);
- ii. Restore the natural river course, systems and character, e.g. meanders and earth bank sides;
- iii. Retain the natural floodplains;
- iv. Incorporate sustainable drainage systems;
- v. Plant more native broadleaved trees, grassland and wetlands to accommodate a range of protected and priority habitats and species;
- vi. Incorporate green features, such as green roofs and green walls; and
- vii. Manage invasive species.

C) Rural area

Promote the reinstatement of traditional species rich field margins, hedgerows and trees, along with new opportunities for mixed habitats, including meadows, woodland and wetlands, to provide greater connectivity for wildlife (see Policies SD 3, H 7 and E 3).

D) Internationally, nationally and locally ~~designated wildlife~~ important sites

Protect, maintain and where appropriate manage (as it depends upon ownership) and extend, in accordance with their management plans. Sites will be protected as follows:

i. Internationally Important Sites

Development likely to have an adverse affect on any internationally important site, irrespective of its location, will be assessed in accordance with the relevant legislation.

ii. Nationally Important Sites - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

Development likely to have an adverse effect on any of the Borough's or neighbouring SSSI's either individually or in combination with other developments, will not normally be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the proposed development in that particular location, clearly outweigh its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the network of sites. The SSSI's located in the Borough are Neasham Fen, Hells Kettles, Newton Ketton Meadows and Redcar Field

iii. Locally Important Sites - Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites

Development likely to result in significant harm to any of the Borough's Local Nature Reserves or Local Wildlife Sites should be avoided by being relocated to an alternative site of less harmful impacts. Where this is not possible, and it is demonstrated development is required in that location it will only be permitted if the significant harm can be overcome by adequate mitigation or as a last resort appropriate compensation measures.

Investigate the possibility of designating new Local Nature Reserves which meet the Natural England Criteria to ensure the protection of land and species.

Local Wildlife Sites are identified and selected for their local nature conservation value. They protect threatened species and habitats acting as buffers, stepping-stones and

corridors between nationally designated wildlife sites. Darlington has sites such as Blackwell Meadows, Coatham Grange and West Cemetery.

iv. Community Woodlands and Ancient Woodland

New development will be expected to retain existing woodlands. Development will not be permitted that would result in the loss of woodland unless the benefits clearly outweigh the loss and suitable replacement planting can be undertaken which provides woodland types matching those identified as Priority Habitats in the NERC List ⁽⁵⁹⁾ that are found locally. Ancient woodlands, ancient and veteran trees are irreplaceable habitats, and new development will not be permitted that would result in their loss, fragmentation, isolation or deterioration unless there are wholly exceptional reasons (as defined in national policy) and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

E) Local Geological Sites (LGSs)

Protect and support the enhancement and positive management of the existing sites at Killerby (North Lane Quarry), Houghton-le-Side (Disused Quarry, Side Hill) and High Coniscliffe Quarries (Disused) and designate new sites as appropriate.

F) Wildlife friendly green spaces, parks and parklands, green wedges, rural gaps and green corridors

Protect and improve the biodiversity value of green spaces, parks and parklands, green wedges, rural gaps and green corridors and enhance their role as stepping-stones and corridors in the wider habitat network.

Policy ENV 8

Assessing a Development's Impact on Biodiversity (Strategic Policy)

Non-exempt development proposals will be required to provide and deliver net gains in biodiversity in accordance with the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement and framework and demonstrate achievement of this using the Defra Biodiversity Metric.

In order to maximise opportunities for the enhancement of ecological networks within Darlington and/or the Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy Area, and support nature-based solutions to climate change, development proposals should seek to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain onsite wherever possible. Where ecologically appropriate Biodiversity Net Gain is demonstrated not to be deliverable onsite, the applicant shall prioritise the delivery of Biodiversity Net gain offsite in accordance with the following locational hierarchy:

- a. Within Darlington Borough on designated wildlife sites and nature reserves;
- b. Elsewhere within Darlington Borough;
- c. Within the wider Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy Area; and

⁵⁹ Identified under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) on the England Biodiversity List as habitat of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity.

d. Within a neighbouring Local Nature Recovery Strategy Area

All development proposals will be required to include features which support priority or threatened species unless there are compelling technical reasons which prevent their use or make them ineffective. These are:

- i. Integrated nest boxes (swift bricks);
- ii. Integrated bat boxes; and
- iii. Hedgehog Highways

As part of their design all development proposals should include biodiversity enhancement measures including bird nest boxes, bee bricks, native plant and tree species planting, pollinator friendly planting including moon meadows and other wildlife features where appropriate.

Development proposals that are situated within or adjacent to sites of biodiversity importance as identified in Policy ENV 7, or that are likely to have an adverse impact upon such sites⁽⁶⁰⁾ or upon sites that have a reasonable likelihood of hosting protected and/or priority species, will need to follow the sequence of actions set out below to identify how harm to biodiversity has been avoided, or failing that, adequately mitigated. Applicants should submit evidence that this process has been followed with any planning application:

- 1. Undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to establish the type and mix of habitats and species present and any likely impacts;
- 2. For any habitats or species adversely affected, undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment and/or species/habitat specific surveys and identify appropriate mitigation, compensation and/or enhancement;
- 3. Where protected species are present (including species protected under the Conservation & Habitats Regulations, and Wildlife and Countryside Act), further survey work will be required to comply with Habitats Regulations including fulfilling the three derogation tests; and
- 4. Take account of, and reflect the detailed advice set out in, Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Design SPD or successor documents.

In relation to protected species and their habitats, all development which, alone or in combination, has a likely adverse impact on the ability of species to survive, reproduce and maintain or expand their current distribution will not be permitted unless:

- e. appropriate mitigation, or as a last resort compensation, can be provided, which maintains a viable population and where possible provides opportunities for the population to expand and;
- f. where the species is a European Protected Species, the proposal will be required to meet the licensing criteria (the 3 legal tests) of overriding public interest, no satisfactory alternative and favourable conservation status

⁶⁰ Sites situated further from a designated site may still have an impact - Natural England have developed buffer zones for SSSIs depending upon the type of development which may prove useful when considering applications.

Where a development proposal cannot avoid significant harm to biodiversity following the consideration of avoidance measures and mitigation, as a last resort, suitable compensatory measures must be incorporated, including the creation of priority habitats ⁽⁶¹⁾, with the first priority being on-site provision. Only with adequate reasoned justification will any off-site compensatory measures be permitted, with any such provision, agreed to be adequate and appropriate, secured by Section 106 contribution (or any other future delivery mechanism).

Where adequate compensation measures cannot be provided, and significant harm avoided, planning permission will be refused.

Where developers identify the presence of non-native invasive species on-site, measures will be required to contain the species and ensure it is effectively managed, or where possible, eradicated during development.

- 9.6.6** The NPPF ⁽⁶²⁾ states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other measures, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures. Net gain is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand. The Environment Act enshrines the requirement to deliver biodiversity net gains in law.
- 9.6.7** Connectivity will be improved along watercourses, including the strategic River Tees and River Skerne, public rights of way, railway lines and along field margins in the rural area, to ensure species can move easily across and beyond the Borough. Improving the biodiversity value of lower quality urban greenspaces will provide valuable habitats for species, including the Dingy Skipper, [White-letter Hairstreak](#), [Wall Brown](#) and Holly Blue butterfly, and nesting birds like the Song Thrush and Tree Sparrow, which are in national decline.
- 9.6.8** Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy includes a number of measures to improve the environmental and recreational value of the Borough's green corridors and should be read alongside this policy when considering development proposals affecting a green corridor.
- 9.6.9** There are also opportunities to increase the stock of protected and priority habitats and species through well-designed new developments⁽⁶³⁾, especially in the strategic locations. In addition, development in the Town Centre Fringe (see Policy TC 6) will provide opportunities to greatly enrich local biodiversity.
- 9.6.10** Biodiversity varies according to location and the presence of protected and priority habitats and species. The type and level of assessments required alongside new development proposals will reflect biodiversity value, and an

⁶¹ As detailed in the NERC list.

⁶² Paragraph 187d, NPPF (December 2024)

⁶³ In accordance with the Revised Design of New Development SPD, DBC, 2011.

Ecological Impact Assessment⁽⁶⁴⁾, tree surveys and/or detailed species surveys may be required if protected or priority habitats and species are likely to be present. Through a Landscaping Plan and/or the Design, Access and Sustainability Statement, the design and layout of new development should be informed by, and respond positively to, the ecological value of the site and the immediate environment and show how this will be protected and enhanced. Even where little biodiversity exists, functional ecological networks should be created; landscaping schemes and green roofs and walls can provide nesting sites, roosting sites and shelter for birds, bats and amphibians. Provision in or adjacent to a green corridor or a designated site, should be informed by the strategic aims of the corridor⁽⁶⁵⁾ and in the site's management plan.

- 9.6.11** It should be noted that the presence of protected species or habitats is not limited to the designated sites described above. Where internationally and nationally protected species, such as the otter and water vole are identified, development should protect them and their breeding and resting places from disturbance or injury. This will be monitored through application of the derogation tests set out in national legislation⁽⁶⁶⁾.
- 9.6.12** New development is required to support protected and threatened species such as bats, swifts, and other nesting bird species which rely on buildings to roost and nest. Integrated features such as bat boxes/bricks, and swift bricks should be installed into the development where feasible. These features should be relevant to the location and type of development and designed and installed using best practice guidelines. To ensure connectivity for wildlife within gardens, hedgehog highways should be installed into fences and other boundary features which allow access and egress into and between gardens. Other features such as bee bricks, invertebrate and amphibian refugia and hibernacula should be considered within developments at appropriate locations. [The Council's Ecologist will work with applicants through the planning application process to identify suitable locations for these features.](#)
- 9.6.13** With the exception of protected species where a licence may need to be sought from Natural England, impacts which are unavoidable should be fully mitigated for within the locality. Appropriate enhancements can include maintaining existing priority habitats, creating new habitats, providing sustainable drainage schemes with wetlands and reedbeds (see Policy DC 3), new native woodland and street trees and the protection of existing trees⁽⁶⁷⁾ (including ancient woodland and veteran trees) on or off-site, particularly in the strategic locations. Planning conditions and/or planning obligations may be used to

⁶⁴ Phase 1 Habitat Surveys assess habitats present, rare plant species, and whether the habitat has potential to shelter protected or BAP species.

⁶⁵ As identified in Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy, DBC, 2013.

⁶⁶ Detailed in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2017.

⁶⁷ Through Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).

secure mitigation.

9.6.14 Off-site mitigation measures will only be considered where there are justifiable ecological reasons that would result in a more appropriate solution to potential impacts on biodiversity as a result of development. This may include the relocation of a species or habitat to a more favourable location owing to existing circumstances or the creation of new habitats in an area nearby that will have a greater gain in biodiversity than that which can be provided on-site. Such provision would be an exception from the normally accepted choice of protecting species and habitats on-site or providing alternative on-site mitigation measures and will therefore be expected to clearly set out in the supporting ecological study why off-site provision would be an acceptable solution. It is not considered that geological mitigation could be provided off-site and satisfactory on-site solutions should be found if planning permission is to be granted.

9.6.15 The Council has identified a biodiversity offsetting site near Whessoe Road for the enhancement and establishment of open mosaic habitat. The Council is also exploring the potential to identify further biodiversity and nutrient neutrality offsetting sites within the Borough to help compensate for the impact of developments on biodiversity in the Borough where provision cannot be made on-site in line with Policy ENV 7 and ENV 8. There is also a potential need to identify an appropriate offset site for Great Crested Newts. Examples where this offsetting approach has been successful in the past include the creation of a large wildflower meadow at Baydale Farm on the Teesdale Way and a mosaic of wetland habitats off Staindrop Road, Cocker Beck.

9.6.16 The Council will continue to maintain access to up-to-date environmental and other relevant data, including Natural Network Mapping, and will continue to work closely with the Tees Valley Nature Partnership in implementing and monitoring policies and proposals affecting the natural environment.

Outdoor Sports Facilities

9.7.1 Access to good quality, accessible, managed outdoor sport and recreation facilities can have an important role on the health and quality of resident's lives. Consequently, the Council aims to protect, enhance and extend the sporting offer in the Borough, to ensure that provision meets residents' needs now and in the future.

9.7.2 Outdoor sports and recreation facilities cover playing fields and Artificial Grass Pitches (AGP) as well as a wide range of other facilities for tennis, bowling, golf, athletics and cycling, in the urban area and the villages. Between them, they enable people to enjoy sport at parks, schools and private clubs, either for casual, 'pay as you play' or competitive use. Within each playing field, a number of playing pitches can be marked out, sizes are different for adults and juniors, and the mix of pitches can vary to reflect the sporting seasons.

Policy ENV 9

Outdoor Sports Facilities

Outdoor sports facilities will be protected in line with Policy ENV4 and, where appropriate, facilities will be improved and extended, to provide a safe and accessible network of quality facilities for outdoor sport.

Through investment, management and maintenance, the most effective use will be made of the network in the future, consistent with the priority actions identified in the Playing Pitch, [Outdoor and Indoor Sport](#) ~~Built Facility~~ Strategy Update ~~2026~~ ~~2021~~ (or later updates).

When considering development proposals of ~~2~~10 dwellings or more the Council will use the Sport England Playing Pitch and Facility Calculator informed by the Playing Pitch, [Outdoor and Indoor Sport](#) ~~and Built Facility~~ Strategy (~~2026~~ ~~2021~~ or later updates) to determine the need, and where required, total amount of developer contributions required towards outdoor sport facilities.

Proposals for the development of new outdoor sports facilities will be permitted where:

- a. They are located within or adjacent to the development limit of a settlement, unless it can be demonstrated that they require a countryside location;
- b. The proposal would not give rise to significant traffic congestion or road safety issues;
- c. They can be accessed by walking, cycling and public transport in line with Policy IN 2;
- d. They protect the amenity of existing users of neighbouring land and buildings in line with Policy HC 2; and
- e. New buildings or structures are well designed and appropriately integrated into the landscape.

9.7.3 Playing fields are provided and maintained in accordance with a hierarchy of provision. The focus are the three managed hub sites at Blackwell Meadows, Eastbourne Sports Complex and Longfield Academy which provide facilities for different sports for adults and juniors and have changing rooms and car parking. All have secure community use and provide for competitive league matches as well as 'pay as you play'. A complementary network of smaller satellite sites including schools, parks and sports clubs provide for pitch sports closer to home and work. Single pitch sites in open spaces are the lowest tier and generally have no changing rooms or car parking. Continued use of this hierarchy will ensure provision best meets local needs and future demands and encourages greater participation in sport in a cost-effective way.

9.7.4 The amount, quality, carrying capacity and accessibility of each playing field in the urban area and villages has been assessed in the Playing Pitch, [Outdoor and Indoor Sport](#) ~~and Built Facility~~ Strategy (~~2021~~ ~~2026~~) to determine whether there is enough provision to meet the demand for football, rugby union, cricket

~~and~~ hockey, tennis, bowls, athletics and indoor built sport facilities for adults and juniors, now and in 2031. All playing fields will be protected by this policy and Policy ENV 4, and in line with national policy and that of Sport England⁽⁶⁸⁾. The Council will consult Sport England on applications involving the loss or alteration of a playing field as required by legislation⁽⁶⁹⁾. Indoor built sport facilities are protected by part c of IN10 relating to community facilities.

9.7.5

New outdoor sports facilities should, where appropriate, include changing and ancillary provision and meet with National Governing Body (NGB) standards and, wherever possible, should be developed in conjunction with existing clubs. The following general criteria should also be met:

- A high standard of design, construction and maintenance appropriate to the standard of play
- Adequate changing facilities that:
 - Are flexible, fit for a variety of purposes;
 - Fully comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act;
 - Provide for a number of different groups to use the facility at the same time, in safety and comfort, and
 - Meet current standards – Sport England and NGB guidelines.
- Managed community access
- Accessible by walking, cycling, public transport and by car
- Sufficient car and cycle parking (In accordance with standards in the Tees Valley Design Guide)
- Size of pitches and run offs complies with NGB specification
- Security of tenure (at least 20 years) if a club is to be based at the site.

9.7.6

The ~~Council is currently in the process of updating the 2021~~ recently updated Darlington Playing Pitch Outdoor and Indoor Sport and Built Facility Strategy (2026) ~~along with the accompanying needs assessment and evidence base.~~ This ~~work may identify particular areas of need and opportunities for providing~~

⁶⁸ Playing Fields Policy and Guidance, Sport England, 2021.

⁶⁹ The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

~~new sports facilities over the course of the plan period.~~ has identified a need for the provision of facilities including a new grass multi pitch football hub through either on-site provision in a strategic housing development or through the pooling of contributions from smaller housing developments. A need was also identified for the creation of up to 3 additional artificial grass pitches primarily at existing facilities and an informal athletics track.

Trees and Hedges

Policy ENV 10

Trees and Hedges (Strategic Policy)

Development proposals should retain and protect trees and hedges, both on and adjacent to the site and particularly those that have amenity, biodiversity, landscape or historic value or contribute to the setting and/or character of a settlement unless ~~the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the harm.~~ It can be clearly demonstrated that removal is unavoidable due to site specific constraints and appropriate compensatory replacement planting can be provided.

Trees

The layout of development proposals should treat trees, both on and adjacent to the site, as a constraint at the earliest stage of the design process and, where relevant, be designed to:

- a. retain and avoid the need to remove trees by integrating them fully into the design and layout, wherever possible;
- b. provide for the successful retention and protection of trees during development such as through root protection zones where necessary;
- c. safeguards trees future health, having regard to their future management requirements and growth potential, such as through the use of adequate stand-off distances; and
- d. avoiding future conflicts and unacceptable impacts on residential amenity and highway safety.

Development proposals resulting in the loss of, or damage to trees will be required to provide suitable replacement trees on-site, ~~or where this is not possible, suitable compensatory planting off-site in the locality,~~ including appropriate provision for management and maintenance.

Development proposals resulting in the loss or deterioration of trees and woodland that are irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland or ancient or veteran trees will be ~~refused~~ considered in accordance with national policy, except in wholly exceptional circumstances and where a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Applications to fell or carry out other works to trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order or located in a Conservation Area will be determined in accordance with the Council's policies set out in the Tree & Woodland Strategy (2021-2031) or its replacement.

Where trees are removed, the deadwood created should, where appropriate, be retained on-site to create invertebrate/amphibian/hedgehog refugia and hibernacula.

Where safe, and appropriate to do so, larger tree trunks/stems should be retained as standing monoliths to support wildlife such as woodpeckers and bats.

Development proposals should provide a Canopy Cover Assessment and demonstrate no net loss in tree canopy cover on site. ~~Where this is not possible compensatory provision should be made and secured in the locality.~~

Development proposals should contribute to the overall tree population incorporating trees into the development. New trees should be native or a climate appropriate species and planted using suitable methods to secure their future health.

Development proposals creating new streets should ensure that they are tree-lined unless there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate.

Appropriate measures should be put in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees.

Hedges

The layout of development proposals should treat hedges, both on and adjacent to the site, as a constraint at the earliest stage of the design process and, where relevant, be designed to:

- a. retain and avoid the need to remove hedges by integrating them fully into the design, wherever possible;
- b. provide for the successful retention and protection of hedges during development such as through root protection zones where necessary;
- c. safeguards the future health of hedges, having regard to their future management requirements and growth potential; and
- d. avoiding future conflicts and unacceptable impacts on residential amenity.

Development proposals resulting in the loss of, or damage to hedges will be required to provide suitable replacement planting or restoration of existing hedges on-site, ~~or where this is not possible, off site in the locality,~~ including appropriate provision for management and maintenance.

Development proposals should, where appropriate, seek to incorporate native or climate appropriate hedges into the development such as a natural form of enclosure to gardens, vehicle parking areas and open spaces creating habitat, shelter and foraging opportunities for wildlife.

Hedges should be planted using suitable methods to secure their future health and appropriate measures should be put in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted hedges.

9.8.1

Trees and hedges make an important contribution to the beauty, diversity and distinctiveness of Darlington's rural landscapes and the beauty and liveability of our town and villages. Tree and woodland canopies create shelter and shade,

intercept rainfall and airborne pollutants and regulate the movement of water through river catchments, reducing soil erosion and the leaching of pollutants into surface and ground water. This helps to regulate local temperatures and climate change impacts. The provision of ecosystem services by hedges makes them an important part of the area's natural capital.

- 9.8.2** Aged and veteran trees are those which, because of their great age, size or condition are of exceptional wildlife, landscape or cultural value. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says that planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including the loss of aged or veteran trees, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy is in place. Other trees of amenity, biodiversity, landscape or historic value or contribute to the setting and/or character of a settlement include rare native trees, trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and mature trees. The value of individual trees needs to be assessed on an individual basis.
- 9.8.3** The Council's intention is to protect all trees worthy of retention wherever possible. Trees are often lost to new development, or subsequently perish, through lack of thought at the design stage. Trees on or adjacent to development sites should be treated as a site constraint from the earliest stages of the design process, and their retention and integration into the development should be an objective in drawing up proposals. The unnecessary loss of trees and hedgerows should be avoided.
- 9.8.4** Mature trees and hedges are sensitive to the impacts of development, either directly through their removal or indirectly through the impacts of construction. Due to the length of time and the cost taken to replace mature features, and the contribution they can make to the quality of development, they should be retained and protected where possible.
- 9.8.5** Where trees, hedges and significant landscaping are within or adjacent to a proposal site and could be affected by development, a full tree survey and arboricultural implications assessment to BS 5837 (the British Standard for Trees) will be required as part of the planning application. This should indicate all landscape features, tree species, canopy spreads, trunk diameter and levels at the base of each tree. It should be carried out at a sufficiently early stage to inform the design of the development. The implementation of any protective measures it identifies, will be secured by the use of planning conditions.
- 9.8.6** The council's adopted Tree and Woodland Strategy (2021-2031) sets out our approach to the management of trees on our own land and also our policy for the protection of privately owned trees. In dealing with applications affecting, or works to, trees in Conservation Areas or protected by TPO, the council will be guided by the principles set out in that document (or any subsequent revisions).
- 9.8.7** Mature hedges can bring character and maturity to a new development and should generally be retained. Consideration needs to be given to the growth potential and shading characteristics of trees to ensure that they are properly

integrated into the new landscape without creating future conflicts and pressure for removal. Consideration also needs to be given to the growth potential and management requirements of hedges. Where the loss of trees and hedges is unavoidable, they should be replaced with suitable new planting either within the site or, if this is not possible, in the locality. The renovation of existing hedges in the wider area can be an appropriate form of mitigation.

- 9.8.8** Parts of the Darlington Urban Area, particularly in the west are characterised by their tree coverage and particularly street trees. The benefits for the natural and local environment and climate change of tree canopy cover are widely recognised. Developments should ensure that there is no net loss of existing tree canopy cover therefore any trees that are proposed to be felled as part of a development will need to be replaced to ensure there will be at least as much canopy cover as the existing situation. This will maintain the overall canopy cover of the Borough and enable sites to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- 9.8.9** A canopy cover assessment is an assessment of the area of ground directly covered by the leaves and branches of vegetation and is expressed as a percentage. Applicants should submit a Canopy Cover Assessment report which clearly details the percentage of existing canopy cover within the red line boundary of the development site, a Tree Planting Plan, the percentage of canopy cover post development. All tree surveys must be carried out by a suitably qualified arboricultural consultant.
- 9.8.10** Development can make a positive contribution to the tree resource in the area through on or off-site planting and national policy states the planning policies should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.

Nutrient Neutrality

Policy ENV 11

Nutrient Neutrality (Strategic Policy)

Development proposals that will result in a net increase in overnight accommodation or other types of development that would otherwise increase the discharge of nitrogen into the River Tees catchment will be required to achieve nutrient neutrality unless Natural England confirm this is no longer required in the Tees catchment or should an Environmental Delivery Plan be produced for the Tees Catchment and payment to the associated Nature Restoration Levy can be evidenced.

Planning permission will only be granted where the integrity of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site is not adversely affected by the proposed development and the requirements of the Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations, including appropriate assessment have been satisfied.

Applicants will be required to calculate the nutrient budget of their development proposal following the Natural England methodology [and using the most up to date Natural England Calculator](#). [Applicants are also encouraged to refer to the Council's Nutrient Budget calculator guidance note](#). Permission will only be granted where the Council has sufficient certainty that adverse effects can either be excluded, or if that is not possible, appropriately mitigated.

Where mitigation is required, it will need to be satisfactorily demonstrated that this is:

- a. appropriate;
- b. sufficient to mitigate the identified impact;
- c. located in the Tees Catchment, and;
- d. secured in perpetuity along with the necessary management and monitoring measures.

[Mitigation can be provided through:](#)

- i. [the purchase of credits from the Natural England Tees Catchment Nutrient Mitigation Scheme;](#)
- ii. [the purchase of credits from private Nutrient Mitigation Schemes located in the Tees catchment which have been approved by Natural England](#)
- iii. [the change of use of land, either on or off site within the Tees Catchment that results in a less intensive nitrogen input such as arable to woodland.](#)

9.9.1 In March 2022 Natural England notified the Council that the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site (hereafter referred to as the SPA) is in an unfavourable condition. This is due to nutrient enrichment, which includes pollution from nitrates, including nitrogen. The SPA is a wetland habitat comprising an area of complex coastal habitats. This is centred on the Tees estuary. It includes a range of habitats. These habitats support internationally important populations of breeding and non-breeding waterbirds. It also includes a high density of benthic (bottom-dwelling) invertebrates.

9.9.2 This notice included statutory advice for Local Planning Authorities within the River Tees catchment, setting out a requirement for new developments to achieve Nutrient Neutrality to avoid adversely affecting the protected site at the mouth of the river Tees.

9.9.3 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 are the UK's transposition of European Union Directive 92/43/EEC on the 'Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora' (the Habitats Directive). The Habitats Directive states:
 "[Whereas] an appropriate assessment must be made of any plan or programme likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a site which has been designated or is designated in future".

- 9.9.4** The SPA is a designated European habitat site, meaning it is offered the highest level of protection under the legislation. The Council, in its role as the Competent Authority, has a statutory duty to ensure that new development proposals accord with this legislation. It must not, therefore, allow development proposals to proceed if they are likely to have a significant effect on the SPA.
- 9.9.5** The statutory advice issued by Natural England means that certain developments that may lead to an increase in the level of nitrogen in the River Tees, cannot proceed without achieving Nutrient Neutrality. It covers all types of overnight accommodation including new homes, student accommodation, care homes, tourism attractions and tourist accommodation and permitted development (which gives rise to new overnight accommodation) under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. Tourism accommodation includes self-service and serviced tourist accommodation such as hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, self-catering holiday chalets and static caravan sites. Other types of proposal will be considered on their individual merits, for example conference facilities that generate overnight stays.
- 9.9.6** Other types of business or commercial development which have other (non-sewerage) activities which may result in additional nitrogen entering the River Tees will be covered and considered on their individual merits. For example: agricultural development which will result in an increase in stock numbers and anaerobic digestors.
- 9.9.7** The term ‘Nutrient Neutrality’ is used to describe an approach whereby the level of nutrients discharged from a site after a development takes place is the same, or lower, than before.
- 9.9.8** The Natural England Nutrient Neutrality Methodology enables a nutrient budget to be calculated for all types of development that would result in a net increase in population served by a wastewater system. The Natural England Tees Catchment Nutrient Budget Calculator will need to be used to calculate the nutrient impact of proposals and submitted with an application, in accordance with the latest Natural England guidance, to determine whether the development is nutrient neutral. If there is a nutrient surplus, appropriate mitigation will need to be demonstrated through on-site or off-site measures to ensure that any nutrient surplus is mitigated, otherwise development proposals will be refused. The delivery of this mitigation will be secured through an appropriate legal mechanism and/or planning conditions, as necessary. Mitigation will need to accord with the spatial and temporal principles set out in the latest Natural England guidance.
- 9.9.9** In January 2024 the Tees Catchment was designated as a sensitive area for nitrogen under the Water Industry Act (1991) which was published in the Notice of Designation of Sensitive Catchment Areas (2024). This means that Northumbrian Water Ltd have a duty to ensure wastewater treatment works serving a population equivalent to or over 2,000 meet specified nutrient removal

standards by 1 April 2030. In Darlington Borough this applies to Stressholme Wastewater treatment works and also Aycliffe Wastewater treatment works, which whilst located outside the Borough does serve some locations in the northern most part of the Borough. When considering development proposals draining via a sewer to these wastewater treatment works, subject to the upgrade duty, the Council will assume that the nutrient pollution standard will be met by the upgrade date for the purposes of the Habitats Regulations Assessments. The Natural England Nutrient Budget calculator has been updated to account for this.

9.9.10 Where mitigation is required, a range of mitigation options could be used including (but not limited to):

- On-site mitigation through sufficient greenspace/SUDS/wetlands where appropriate.
- Change of use of agricultural land to a use with less intensive nitrogen input such as woodland/greenspace within the site or elsewhere in the catchment, equalling or exceeding the necessary nutrient budget surplus resulting from the development.
- Purchase of mitigation ‘credits’ from an acceptable strategic mitigation scheme elsewhere in the River Tees catchment such as the Natural England Nutrient Mitigation Scheme.

9.9.11 Any proposal factoring in the use of SuDS into their nutrient budget calculations should ensure this is designed in accordance with the options set out in the CIRIA guidance document (C815) – Using SuDS to reduce nitrogen in surface water runoff

9.9.12 Mitigation that can be provided locally and within the borough will be encouraged and should incorporate opportunities for creating and improving habitats as identified through the forthcoming Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

10. TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- 10.0.1** The Local Plan seeks to improve connectivity, minimise the distance and length of the journey, and make best use of public transport and the highway network while delivering sustainable transport choices. The majority of new residential, commercial and employment developments are therefore guided to the main towns and larger villages where sustainable modes of transport can be provided.
- 10.0.2** Infrastructure can be physical (e.g. transport, utilities), community and social (e.g. education, health) and environmental (e.g. parks and green spaces). Environmental infrastructure is dealt with in the 'Environment' section of the plan. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan will accompany the Local Plan and will set out the types and levels of infrastructure required to accommodate the growth proposed.
- 10.0.3** If infrastructure is not delivered alongside new development, it can put pressure on existing facilities that may not have the ability or capacity to cope with the additional demand.
- 10.0.4** The provision of infrastructure is achieved by a wide range of organisations. The Local Plan, in conjunction with an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, will play a key role in securing public and private sector involvement in infrastructure delivery.
- 10.0.5** The local plan objectives relating to transport and infrastructure are to:

- Reduce transport's impact on the environment and support health and wellbeing by ensuring that new development is in places where it will be accessible by public transport, cycling and walking and where needed, to secure provision of necessary infrastructure including improvements to existing services including sustainable access to education. Development should create connected neighbourhoods, with local social infrastructure and inclusive public spaces that enable people of all ages and abilities from all backgrounds to access services.
- Connect people with job and training opportunities and link communities. By supporting development that enhances regionally and nationally important transport links including those offered by Darlington Station, Teesside International Airport and Teesport. Deliver strategic infrastructure such as broadband to enhance business and social interaction that supports economic growth including appropriate housing.
- Support a revitalized and transformed Darlington town centre by supporting development in locations where people can easily access the town centre by sustainable transport that leads to an increase in footfall supporting economic growth.

- Ensure that development provides safe roads for all highway users within the development extents and that the impact on the surrounding highway network is mitigated with suitable strategic and local highway improvements so that vehicle trips are undertaken on the most appropriate routes and active travel trips can be prioritised on the local highway network.
- Maintain and effectively manage a resilient transport system including enhancing the Public Right of Way network, managing car parking supply and managing the impacts of climate change on critical infrastructure.

Delivering a Sustainable Transport Network

- 10.1.1** It is vital that the Borough is accessible by a choice of transport modes and that improvements to the transport infrastructure and services encourage sustainable travel. This is important to unlock the economic growth opportunities within the Borough, and to connect to neighbouring regional centres and strategic national and international gateways such as Teesside International Airport, Teesport and the East Coast Mainline. Owing to its location and existing infrastructure, Darlington Borough also has a key role to play in delivering the wider vision for sustainable transport across the Tees Valley and beyond. The transport and travel needs of those with specific requirements (such as disabled and elderly people, parents with small children and wheelchair users) is also integral to this agenda.

Policy IN 1

Delivering a Sustainable Transport Network (Strategic Policy)

The Council is committed to delivering an efficient transport system with a focus on the provision of infrastructure and public transport improvements, to encourage greater use of sustainable modes, leading to less reliance on single occupancy vehicle journeys. We will work with partners and developers to make the best use of and improve existing transport infrastructure, where appropriate, using developer contributions to manage the impact of development on the transport network.

To achieve this, the following priorities and actions have been identified:

A) For cycling, walking and other sustainable transport:

- i. Protecting existing pedestrian routes, cycle routes, restricted byways and bridleways from development which would impair their functioning for recreation or as alternatives to the private car for accessing employment opportunities, shops and other community facilities;
- ii. Supporting the development of the key sustainable transport corridors identified within the Tees Valley Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and 'Local Green Corridors' identified in the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy and safeguarding their routes from development which would impair their functioning for recreation or as routes for pedestrians and cyclists to access employment opportunities, schools, shops and other community facilities;
- iii. Improving local connections to reduce severance caused by strategic infrastructure, ~~across busy transport corridors~~ which act as a barrier to local access. This will include working with strategic agencies such as National Highways and Network Rail to ensure the permeability of the A1, A66 and rail networks respectively;
- iv. Protecting, maintaining and ~~enhancing~~ improving registered public rights of way network as set out in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, 'Local Green Corridors' identified in the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy and links to long distance routes such as the Teesdale Way, S&DR Discovery Trail and National Cycle Network 14;
- v. ~~Identification and development of a~~ Deliver a walking and cycling route in keeping with the original Stockton and Darlington Railway line as close as practicable (See also Policy ENV 2);
- vi. Support the development of routes that allow residents in outlying villages to access Darlington, particularly by walking, wheeling and cycling.

B) For rail-based transport network:

- i. Improving inter and sub-regional links from neighbouring centres by ensuring that the Borough is served by high quality rail and bus links;
- ii. Improving connectivity between other forms of sustainable transport and the rail network mainly by providing improved interchange facilities;

Specific priorities for the rail network:

- iii. Supporting Darlington Station to improve interchange facilities at mainline, local and inter-regional routes, potential high speed rail services and sustainable access to the station including bus, walking and cycling.

C) For road-based transport network:

- i. Mitigate the impact of development at key junctions, on main arterial routes that form the town's Key Road Network and other important links that contribute to the effective movement of traffic to limit congestion.
- ii. Work with National Highways and adjoining authorities to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the strategic and local highway networks;
- iii. Provide new local access roads and key road links to open up the locations for development identified in the Local Plan. Such works will be linked to development phasing and secured by legal agreement.
- iv. Maintain an efficient public transport network by ensuring new developments accommodate the needs of bus users, facilitate new bus routes and stops where appropriate and mitigate the impact of development trips on bus journey times through the provision of bus priority measures.

Specific priorities for the highway network:

- v. Work with National Highways to ensure the existing route of the A1 and A66 is maintained and improved in line with its strategic function and enable residents and businesses to continue to benefit from good links to the strategic road network, with contributions sought from developers to a programme of highway improvements where applicable.
- vi. Provision of key routes as part of development proposals within the plan, in conjunction with existing infrastructure, provide additional road, public transport and high-quality pedestrian and cycle links to create an orbital route of the northern urban area of Darlington. These routes are:
 - Coniscliffe Park - link road connecting A67 to Staindrop Road;
 - Stag House Farm - link road connecting Newton Lane to Staindrop Road;
 - Burtree ~~allocation~~ ~~Garden Village link road~~ – link road connecting Rotary Way to Burtree Lane;
 - Skerningham ~~allocation~~ ~~link road~~ – link road between the A167 and ~~A66~~ A1150
 - Burdon Hill - link road connecting A1150 to B6279 Tornado Way and new link road to Red Hall; and
 - ~~Burtree Lane~~ Berrymede Farm – link road connecting new A167 Skerningham roundabout to Burtree Lane.

Regional and Local Context

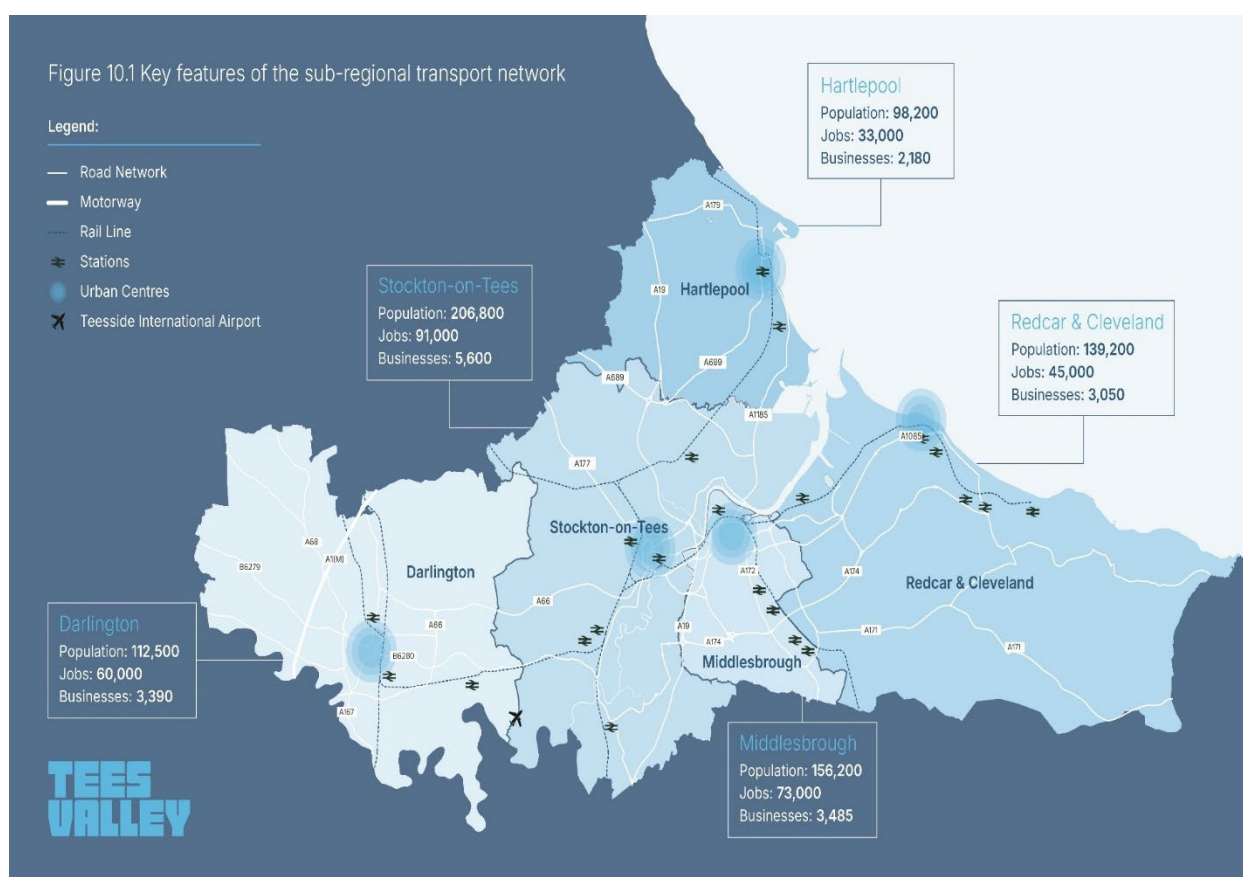
Transport for the North

- 10.2.1** Transport for the North (TfN) became the first Sub-National Transport Body in April 2018. Their Transport Plan sets out the case for strategic transport infrastructure investment through to 2050. Their vision is of a thriving, socially inclusive North of England, where communities, businesses and places will all benefit from sustainable economic growth, improved health and wellbeing and access to opportunities to all.
- 10.2.2** The plan has been developed which outlines how transport connections across the North of England need to be transformed with three strategic ambitions to achieve: Transforming economic performance, rapid decarbonization of the transport system and enhancing social inclusion and health.
- 10.2.3** As part of developing the evidence base for the Strategic Transport Plan, the Integrated Rail and Major Roads Reports identified a series of connectivity priorities to support economic growth in the North.
- 10.2.4** Seven corridors are identified across different modes (and multi modes) of transport, three of which are relevant to the Tees Valley and Darlington Borough.
1. Connecting the Energy Coasts (Multi-Modal) - This corridor seeks to enhance the strategic connectivity, for people and goods, between the advanced manufacturing and energy generation research centres and assets. This is crucial to support the transformational growth potential within this economic area. For Darlington improvements to the east-west linkages for both road and rail are key considerations relating to this corridor.
 2. East Coast to Scotland (Rail) - Strengthening rail connectivity and capacity along the East Coast Main Line and other key parallel rail lines, such as the Durham Coast Line, to provide enhanced strategic and local connectivity in the North East, Tees Valley, East Riding and North Yorkshire. The strategy identifies that investment is required at rail stations, including Darlington, to increase capacity, promote economic growth, and make the most of the opportunities provided by high-speed rail services.
 3. Yorkshire to Scotland (Road) - This road corridor looks to strengthen and complement the East Coast Road Corridor to Scotland and examines the transformational requirements to better connect the economic centres (including the Tees Valley) in this corridor beyond the current Road Investment Strategy commitments.

Tees Valley Combined Authority

10.2.5 Within the Tees Valley, Darlington contains many key elements of the sub-regional transport network. Darlington is the point of arrival for those arriving by road via the A1(M) and A66, by air via Teesside International Airport and by rail from Darlington Station on the East Coast Main Line. Figure 10.1 below shows the key features of the sub-regional transport network.

Figure 10.1 Key features of the sub-regional transport network



10.2.6 The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) drives economic growth and job creation and is the strategic transport authority. The five Tees Valley local authorities work closely with the business community and other partners to make local decisions to support the growth of our economy.

Under the devolution deal with the government TVCA have taken on responsibilities previously held by central government to enable investment decisions to be made locally based on the priorities of communities and businesses in the Tees Valley.

10.2.7 The Tees Valley Combined Authorities' Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)⁽⁷⁰⁾ identifies the aim to unlock future growth is being 'to be better connected'. It is identified within the document that there is a need to improve road and rail connectivity for the region, so that Tees Valley businesses can access UK and European supply chains, particularly in the North, and that Tees Valley residents can benefit from job opportunities. Four priorities for delivering new transport infrastructure across the Tees Valley are also identified within the SEP. Including the Darlington Station Improvement Project that has seen new platforms delivered to enhance rail services. A second of these priorities within Darlington is to improve east-west road connectivity to provide a high quality, resilient corridor along the A66 from the A1(M) to the international gateway at Teesport.

10.2.8 In addition, the devolution deal recognises Tees Valley's ambitions to continue to strengthen the bus network and the relationship and influence it has with local bus operators. The options to achieve this have now been formalised in legislation in the Bus Services Act 2025.

10.2.9 A Strategic Transport Plan has also been prepared by the TVCA to support the Strategic Economic Plan and sets out how we will improve and invest in the transport network to make this vision a reality. It is aimed at people living and working in the Tees Valley, as well as business owners, developers, Government, partner organisations and investors. The Strategic Transport Plan was adopted in January 2020.

10.2.10 In preparing the Strategic Transport Plan, a framework was developed based upon five themes, which are closely linked together and will all require improvement in order to meet the overall transport vision of Tees Valley. The five key themes are:

1. National Rail;
2. Major Roads;
3. Connecting Centres;
4. Supporting Economic Growth;
5. Local Journeys.

10.2.11 To support the Strategic Transport Plan itself, a series of supporting documents have been prepared which go into more detail on the current and future issues, and the interventions needed, across the five themes

⁷⁰ Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan: The Industrial Strategy for Tees Valley 2016-2026, TVCA.

listed above.

Darlington Borough

10.2.12 Adopted in March 2023 the Darlington Transport Plan (DTP) supports the delivery of the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan (STP). The delivery of the STP has been further developed in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) agreed with the Department for Transport. This provided funding over five years and a clear prioritization of decarbonisation, and economic growth.

10.2.13 The DTP identifies the following five objectives:

1. Reduce transport's impact on the environment and support health and wellbeing;
2. Improve safety for all road users;
3. Connect people with job and training opportunities and link communities;
4. Support a revitalized and transformed Darlington town centre;
5. Maintain and effectively manage a resilient transport system.

10.2.14 A good transport network contributes to the ambitions in the Council Plan by providing sustainable and accessible transport to meet the needs of a growing town.

Walking and Cycling

10.3.1 Providing convenient access to attractive and efficient pedestrian and cycle routes makes a major contribution to achieving sustainability and transport objectives as well as improving health and wellbeing by being active. Pedestrian and cycle routes for everyday journeys to schools and local shops are essential.

10.3.2 For cycling, National Cycle Network Route 14 has been developed between Darlington and Stockton towards Hartlepool and onwards to South Tyneside Regional Route 165 which runs inside the southern edge of the Borough from Barnard Castle to Whitby. Cycle infrastructure towards Durham is in place with a route to Newton Aycliffe. Any future improvements in this area will be safeguarded, promoted and developed as necessary.

10.3.3 The Borough's network of public rights of way, including permissive routes, provides an important sustainable, recreational resource that enables the public to experience and enjoy the natural, built and historic environments through activities such as walking, cycling and horse riding. As such, these routes play an important role in ensuring the physical and mental health and wellbeing of residents as well as contributing to the Borough's visitor offer.

10.3.4 Wherever possible, public rights of way should be retained in situ and their

recreational and amenity value enhanced as a result of development, for example through improvements to surface and boundary treatments, and through the provision of inclusively designed facilities such as signage. Developments that negatively affect the amenity of a public right of way will not be supported. In some circumstances, it may be more appropriate to divert the route of a public right of way along a suitable alternative route that provides at least as good recreational and amenity value of the existing routes. Important factors to consider where a route is to be diverted will include the safety, directness, convenience and attractiveness of the right of way following development. Where possible, routes should be diverted to maintain key views and long-range vistas. New development should not demonstrably deter the use of a public right of way.

10.3.5 New walking and cycling provision is identified in the Tees Valley Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy, and is covered by Policy ENV 4. These corridors have a key role to play in improving connectivity, particularly to the town centre, for pedestrians and cyclists.

10.3.6 Walking and cycling routes must, wherever possible, be integrated with other modes both in terms of access and connectivity and be associated with green infrastructure and public realm. New developments must provide inclusive access for all with specific regard to facilitating independence for elderly people and the disabled and providing safe and attractive routes to school and other required infrastructure. In common with roads, streets, green infrastructure and public spaces, natural surveillance should be achieved by overlooking, active frontages, good connectivity and through routes.

10.3.7 Developments identified in Policy H 2 Housing Allocations and Policy E 2 Promotion of New Employment Opportunities will also be required to provide a connected walking and cycling network which may also include the protection, improvement or rerouting of existing provision if appropriate. These include, but are not limited to:

- The Stockton and Darlington Railway - this is unique in the national context and is of national and international significance as reflected in the high number of designated and non-designated assets along its 26-mile route;
- Route to Hurworth - There are a number of options to create a useable route including using the track bed of the old railway line;
- Route to Heighington; to the north of Darlington lies the village of Heighington which is not directly connected to Darlington for cyclists.

Rail Network

10.4.1 Darlington is the main interchange hub in the Tees Valley as an East Coast Mainline and Transpennine Station making it a 'gateway' for national and pan northern rail journeys into and out of the Tees Valley. In 2024/25 over 2.8 million passenger entries and exits were recorded at Darlington station.

- 10.4.2** However, in comparison to its excellent north-south connectivity, Darlington is relatively inaccessible from other key centres within the Tees Valley and from nearby employment areas of South Durham via the Bishop Line. Journey times to Darlington from Middlesbrough and Stockton (as adjacent key centres) are improving, taking between 26-28 minutes which is comparable with car travel, however there are currently no direct train services from Stockton or Hartlepool to Darlington. The service is currently operated every 30 minutes with aspirations to a 15 minute frequency through to Saltburn. This relatively poor east-west connectivity by rail within the Tees Valley impacts on the external connectivity of the Tees Valley as a whole, reducing the attractiveness of the excellent north-south links from Darlington to potential users from the rest of the Tees Valley. The improvements at Darlington Station are designed to remove the capacity issue constraint to enhancing these local rail links.
- 10.4.3** Darlington to Bishop Auckland by train is around a 27 minute journey but is only operated on an hourly service. There are ambitions to increase this to a half hourly service.
- 10.4.4** Given the predicted increase in car ownership⁽⁷¹⁾ in the Tees Valley and the advantage of car journey times, increased trips are forecast on the road network. Therefore, improvements to local as well as long distance rail services are sought by 2042.
- 10.4.5** Ensuring that rail freight can move easily to and from Teesport will be an important issue during the Local Plan period. For example, the operation of the Hitachi train manufacturing at Newton Aycliffe is identified as being one of the key employment opportunities in the North East and it is intended that components and other supplies required by the plant are transported by rail as often as possible. For the site to be well served by rail from Teesport, that is an important port in the North East and the fifth largest in the UK, and it handled 35 million tonnes of cargo in 2015⁽⁷²⁾.

Creating a more efficient rail network

- 10.4.6** Working in partnership with the Combined Authority, Network Rail and LNER, significant investment is currently being made into Darlington Station providing two new platforms on the Eastern side of the station and a new, fully accessible and enclosed footbridge linking them to the current station building.
- 10.4.7** New cycle lanes will also be introduced, with bike shelters and a multi-storey car park which will adjoin the new station building. The car park will include secure parking for over 600 cars, including accessible parking bays and electric car charging points.
- 10.4.8** The Council, working with TVCA and other local authorities along the route of the East Coast Main Line continue to work collaboratively to ensure that investment in rail continues. This investment is seen as essential to improve journey times, service reliability, service frequency and the line capacity that is

⁷¹ Road Traffic Forecasts 2015, Department for Transport, March 2015.

⁷² Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).

needed to support the movement of people and freight envisaged for Darlington and the Tees Valley, as set out in Darlington's Economic Strategy and the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan. The local authorities are keen to have a strong partnership with the rail industry, to create a vision for, and the strategic development of, the ECML and connecting services and routes, both for passengers and freight that builds on the improvements and investment that has already taken place at Darlington Station, including the new footbridge, public realm as well as the improvements at the station to increase rail capacity.

Road Network

10.5.1 The main north-south road links to the Tees Valley are provided by the A1(M), a key national motorway network link for the west of the Tees Valley, while the east of the City Region is served by the A19(T). The main east-west links are provided by the A66(T) and A174(T). In Darlington, the priorities are to improve key junctions serving the area from the A66(T) Darlington Bypass and the A1(M) to avoid levels of predicted traffic congestion that will prevent regeneration of employment areas.

10.5.2 Whilst the Local Plan has been developed on the basis of ensuring that developments are in locations where sustainable transport options are available, motor vehicle traffic is an important consideration. It is therefore important that the road network is managed in a way that ensures that it continues to function, facilitates our aspirations for economic growth and accommodates the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and other highway users.

10.5.3 In doing this, the transport interventions need to:

1. Facilitate more jobs and homes without creating unsustainable levels of traffic congestion on the highway network;
2. Effectively manage the demand for roads space from all types of transport;
3. Provide people with the ability to travel to training, jobs and other important services; and
4. Improve Darlington's strategic links so that the economic benefits can be realized within the Borough and wider Tees Valley.

Creating a more Sustainable Road Network (including improvement to bus services & new road based transport technologies)

10.5.4 The road network is a vital part of the Strategic Transport Plan and the Darlington Transport Plan as it is essential that it functions efficiently for the movement of all traffic by all modes. The local road network is essential for walking, wheeling and cycling as well as public transport.

10.5.5 The continued growth of the economy should also take into account the use of all modes of transport and not just car-based transport. Research has shown

that the lack of public transport can lead to jobs being turned down by unemployed people. Bus networks in England are estimated to generate over £2.5bn in economic benefits – around £1.3bn reflect user benefits from access to jobs, training, shopping and leisure opportunities. The remaining £1.2bn of benefits accrue to other transport users and society at large, through reduction in congestion, reduced pollution, lower accident rates, improved productivity and the stand-by value of bus networks.

- 10.5.6** New development planned across the region will add significantly to trips on the strategic and local highway networks. Interventions will be required to mitigate the effects particularly in relation to congestion and highway safety.

Strategic road network

- 10.5.7** The strategic roads through the Borough (A1(M) and A66(T)) are forecast to see traffic growth during the plan period, as a result of background traffic growth and traffic generated by specific proposed new developments. Improvement works at the following locations on the strategic highway network are likely to be considered within the plan period:

- A1(M) Junction 58 (Faverdale)
- A1(M) Junction 59 (Newton Aycliffe)
- A66(T) Morton Palms – Junction with Yarm Road
- A66(T) Great Burdon
- A66(T) Blands Corner
- A66(T) Neasham Road (Arena) roundabout.

- 10.5.8** Initial work suggests that improvements can be largely accommodated within the existing highway network or on land in the ownership of the relevant highway authority, so it is not currently proposed to safeguard further and that could be designated as highway in the future. The Council works collaboratively with National Highways and other Tees Valley Local Authorities to identify improvements for the Tees Valley. Schemes identified will become contenders for funding. In addition major developments within the vicinity of these schemes may be required to contribute towards them in the form of developer contributions.

- 10.5.9** A long term improvement to the strategic road network is being pursued by a number of partners including TVCA, Transport for the North and the Borough Council to provide improved connectivity along the A66 corridor. As part of these improvements a new Darlington Northern Link Road has been identified to support the Tees Valley SEP.

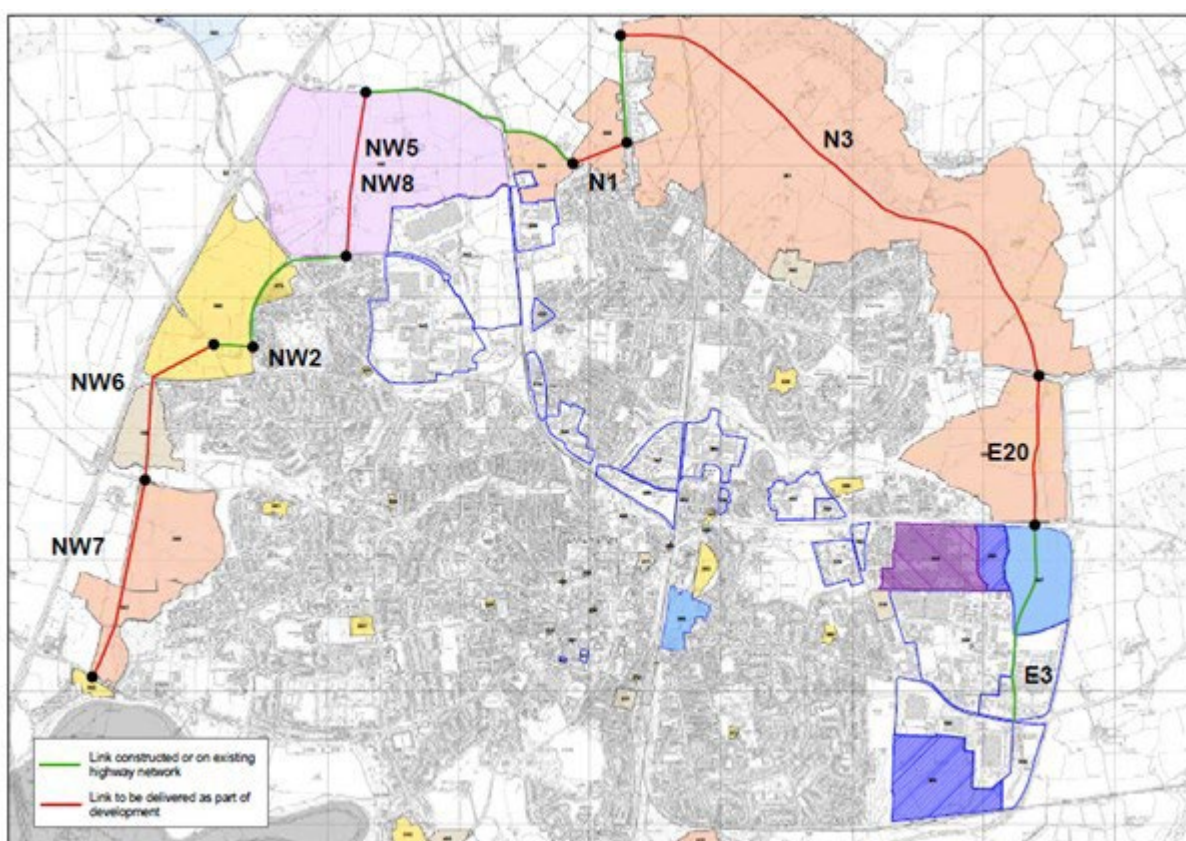
Local highway network extensions and improvements

- 10.5.10** The highway schemes detailed in Policy IN1 part C(vi) are intended to serve a dual function in creating access to development sites but also providing travel choices

for local trips. Through creating an interconnected orbital route this will improve connectivity for all modes of transport to the North of Darlington. These routes will be integrated into proposals for relevant sites and provide access to the development by road (including where appropriate public transport), cycleway and footway.

10.5.11 Figure 10.2 shows the sections of network already in place and those requiring delivery during the plan period.

Figure 10.2 Existing and Proposed Sustainable Transport Links



10.5.12 The schemes detailed in Policy IN1 and Figure 10.2 are from West to East:

- Coniscliffe Park (NW7) – link road connecting A67 to Staindrop Road;
- Stag House Farm (NW6) – link road connecting Newton Lane to Staindrop Road;
- Faverdale [Burtree Allocation](#) link road (NW5/NW8) [link road](#) connecting Burtree Lane to Rotary Way;
- Berrymead Farm (N1) – connecting Burtree Lane to the A167 and improvements to A167/Burtree Lane junction;

- Skerningham ~~Allocation~~ ~~access roads~~ (N3) – including ~~access and~~ local distributor road between the A167 and A1150 close to the Little Burton roundabout in the broad location identified in the Skerningham Masterplan Framework;
- Burdon Hill (E20) – link road connecting A1150 to B6279 Tornado Way and new link road to Red Hall and Skerningham access roads.

10.5.13 Two new link roads have already been constructed to support development proposals:-

- West Park ~~Link Road~~ (NW2) – This link road connects West Park ~~Garden Village~~ with Newton Lane and forms part of a longer route that will ultimately connect the A67 with the A68.
- Symmetry ~~Park Link Road~~ (E3) – This link road provides a parallel route to the A66 connecting the B6279 Tornado Way with B6280 Yarm Road.

10.5.14 The Council also remains committed to mitigating congestion locations around the Borough that may also include providing infrastructure, such as cycleways, to increase mode choice for local trips and contributing to reducing congestion. As these works can generally be achieved within the existing highway, no land safeguarding for these schemes is required.

10.5.15 The Darlington Transport Plan advocates a strong public transport network and in Darlington much of this is provided by buses. Key bus corridors are identified to ensure improvements can be introduced to manage punctuality and reduce bus journey times. In addition bus services also operate on marginal routes that sees a greater public transport offer for opportunities for employment.

10.5.16 The Council works in partnership with Bus Operators, TVCA and other local authorities in an enhanced partnership to deliver the vision and strategy for bus service, and infrastructure improvements focusing on benefits to passengers and access to a regular bus service remains a key policy for development, leading to a fully commercial bus network and service. This is key in the selection of sites to be developed, the design of the road network to serve new developments and to enable buses to serve their customers.

10.5.17 In 2021 TVCA published the first Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan. This has subsequently been updated with the most recent version published in 2024. At its core is a 5-point plan for improving bus provision in the Tees Valley:

1. Sustainable network for the future;
2. Bus priority improvements;
3. Improved fare offer;
4. Enhanced customer experience
5. Decarbonising the bus fleet.

Local Plan Highway Modelling

10.5.18 Extensive highway modelling was undertaken in support of the currently adopted Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 in relation to the significant new

allocations within the plan. Although most allocations remain unaltered further work will be undertaken to understand the impact of the proposals in this plan review prior to submission.

10.5.19 From this strategic model, travel demands have been extracted for more detailed analysis within the local microsimulation models that investigate the impact of Local Plan trips and evaluate the planned mitigations in more detail. These comprised:

- A66 Eastern Darlington Model
- North Darlington Aimsun Model
- A68 Western Darlington Model

10.5.25 The detailed traffic modelling indicates that the development within the Local Plan does not have a severe impact on the local strategic highway network subject to the schemes identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan being implemented.

Improving Access and Accessibility

10.6.1 Development that offers better access to all modes of travel helps the Borough to become more sustainable, healthy, green and prosperous. Sustainable modes of travel such as walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and facilities for zero emission vehicles will be promoted through travel planning as well as good design.

Policy IN 2

Improving Access and Accessibility (Strategic Policy)

The Council expects development to promote accessibility and permeability by creating places that are well connected with each other and with existing transport networks. The needs of pedestrians, cyclists, bus and rail users, as well as those with specific needs should be prioritised to reduce the need for travel by private vehicle.

Development will be appropriately located to reduce the need to travel by car and the number and length of car trips made to access local amenities.

In order to improve access and accessibility during the plan period:

- a. Proposals for new buildings or the change of use or alteration of existing buildings to which the general public and employees have access will be required to provide suitable access and facilities, particularly for people with mobility issues.
- b. Ensure that all new developments are permeable and legible by providing high quality, safe and easily accessible walking, wheeling and cycling routes to current standards, with roads designed to 20mph speed limits within residential developments.
- c. All new developments will provide good connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists to make walking, wheeling and cycling the first choice for short journeys to local services such as shops, particularly those selling fresh food, schools, primary

health care, employment and leisure opportunities, [including accessing the public right of way network](#). It should be ensured that the routes are attractive and in accordance with relevant guidance and following principles set out by strategic agencies such as Active Travel England.

- d. All new major development should be accessible by public transport. It is therefore expected that 80% or more of dwellings on a site will be within a 400 metre walking distance of a bus stop served by a regular daytime service (at least every 30 minutes). Where appropriate, financial contributions to provide a supported or extended bus service for up to 5 years, and bus stop infrastructure will be sought where sites are not currently served by regular services.
- e. Contributions will be sought from all developments, where considered appropriate [and/or necessary](#), for the following sustainable travel measures:
 - Provision of regular bus services and infrastructure in locations that is not served by public transport;
 - Safer Routes to School;
 - Measures to support the delivery of the Travel Plan (Policy IN 3);
 - Public Rights of Way improvements;
 - Walking and Cycling network improvements required to the wider network, for which a contribution will be sought on the following basis:

Residential Development - Per Dwelling £				
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed +
<u>Town centre, Local Service and Transport Node</u>	<u>£300</u>	<u>£600</u>	<u>£900</u>	<u>£1200</u>
<u>Remaining urban area</u>	<u>£375</u>	<u>£750</u>	<u>£1125</u>	<u>£1500</u>
<u>Rural area</u>	<u>£450</u>	<u>£900</u>	<u>£1350</u>	<u>£1800</u>
Non-residential Development - Per car parking space cost				
<u>Town centre, Local Service and Transport Node</u>	<u>£300</u>			
<u>Elsewhere in the Borough</u>	<u>£600</u>			

- 10.6.2** Darlington has a well-developed cycle network including over 40 kilometres of dedicated off road cycle routes based around seven radial routes which start in the town centre and end in various locations on the edge of the urban area.

These routes link major employment sites to the main residential areas within the town. The routes are signed using specially approved cycle signs which show typical cycle times rather than distances and are colour coded depending on the route. There is also a circular route which connects the main radial routes to each other and provides a longer leisure route for cyclists. Work in recent years has focused on connecting rural communities to the urban areas of Darlington and also connecting to County Durham in the north where a significant number of commuter journeys begin or end. The Borough already has an extensive network of cycle routes, but the contributions outlined in Policy IN2 will be used to provide high quality infrastructure to make cycling a more attractive option compared to the private car. Larger employers, particularly within the urban area, will therefore be encouraged to provide facilities such as secure cycle parking, changing and showering facilities, where practicable.

For larger strategic sites delivered across extended periods of the plan, the considered need for planning obligations relating to sustainable travel will take account of the work delivered to date on infrastructure delivery and previously agreed planning obligations. It will also account of the delivery of active travel measures within allocations which create a new community with access to new schools, retail and other services.

- 10.6.3** In 2022 the Government introduced a new agency, Active Travel England who have a responsibility for making walking, wheeling and cycling the preferred choice for people to get around towns and cities. As part of any new routes the Council follows the latest Government guidance and follows the Active Travel England process to ensure that the infrastructure is useable and accessible and promotes the active travel choice.
- 10.6.4** Whilst most roads have an adjacent footway the Public Rights of Way network⁽⁷³⁾ provides a comprehensive network of footpaths and bridleways in both the urban and rural areas. There are however still gaps in Public Rights of Way around the Borough, meaning it is difficult to connect to other modes of transport such as rail or bus. During the plan period, the Council will seek to improve these connections particularly where they are poor, near to proposed development. New development should provide walking, wheeling and cycling links into existing residential, leisure, retail and commercial developments to improve connectivity and permeability.
- 10.6.5** Major developments that are not within a 400m walking distance of existing bus services will be expected to contribute to provide a supported bus service for 5 years. Material considerations will be taken into account at the planning application stage including the distance to local services by non-vehicular traffic, such as walking, wheeling or cycling and the frequency of existing bus services on routes further than 400m away and the likelihood, or otherwise, that a supported service will become commercially viable.
- 10.6.6** The creation of safe, convenient and inclusive access to all buildings and public spaces is also a priority to help ensure that everyone can help create and benefit

⁷³ Including Public Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways

from a more prosperous Darlington⁽⁷⁴⁾.

10.6.7 The town is well served by a commercial and supported bus network. The commercial network comprises of a number of key routes which typically have between 2 and 4 buses per hour. The supported services routes provide half hourly or hourly services to areas of the borough that are not served commercially. Together these services provide a comprehensive bus service.

10.6.8 Darlington has good rail connections to national and sub-regional services utilising East Coast Mainline and trans-pennine routes. There are limited communities that are directly served by train services for local trips, however there are opportunities for growth in local train journeys, particularly at Dinsdale Station which serves Middleton St George and also at North Road Station.

Transport Assessments and Travel Plans

10.7.1 In accordance with National Policy development proposals that are likely to generate significant additional journeys should be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and a Travel Plan whilst smaller developments may require Transport Statements.

⁷⁴ One Darlington: Perfectly Placed Community Strategy 2008/2026, Revised May 2014

Policy IN 3

Transport Assessments and Travel Plans (Strategic Policy)

The Local Planning Authority will require the preparation and implementation of Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and other schemes and agreements to promote the use of sustainable transport for journeys to work, training and education. Proposals that have potential significant impacts should be accompanied by a Travel Plan where appropriate.

Major developments will be required to engage in the Travel Planning process and produce a Transport Assessment. Proposals will be supported that:

- a. Improve transport choice through the provision of information and encouragement to maximise opportunities to travel sustainably;
- b. Minimise the number of single occupancy vehicle trips generated by the development;
- c. Contribute positively to managing congestion, reducing environmental impact and maintaining safety.

Travel Plans must be iterative documents which must be site specific and guided by a framework of common principles and components. Travel Plans ~~must be prepared in line with~~ should have regard to the Council's latest Travel Plan ~~Policy~~ Guidance 2024 Document (or subsequent replacement).

A framework Travel Plan will be appropriate where there is no identified end user or there will be multi-occupancy of a site. Each organisation within a development will be expected to produce a site specific Travel Plan.

Travel Plans should identify the specific required outcomes, targets and measures, and set out clear future monitoring and management arrangements all of which should be proportionate. They should also consider what additional measures may be required to offset unacceptable impacts if the targets should not be met. A travel plan co-ordinator should be appointed to identify opportunities for the effective promotion and delivery of sustainable transport initiatives and to fulfil the management and monitoring requirements. The Council will work with businesses and specifically the travel plan co-ordinators to ensure the travel plans are being developed, maintained and monitored.

- 10.7.2** The Borough has effective sustainable transport networks and the council are committed to improve this network as part of development proposals. The promotion of Travel Plans is essential to encourage residents and employees to use these networks and to inform them of the travel choices available. Key elements include the marketing of public transport, cycling, walking and the provision of charging points for electric cars and the promotion of car sharing in trying to influence travel behaviour.
- 10.7.3** Complementary public transport, cycling and pedestrian initiatives to larger scale developments should be delivered through Travel Assessment/Travel Plan agreements between operators, developers, planning and transport authorities.

Parking Provision

- 10.8.1** The provision of high-quality parking for motorised vehicles throughout the Borough is seen as crucial in keeping Darlington as a competitive place to do business, whilst maintaining the environment that makes for its high quality of life.
- 10.8.2** National policy⁽⁷⁵⁾ requires local authorities to consider setting local parking standards for new development and to ensure there is an improved quality of parking in town centres that is convenient, safe and secure.

Policy IN 4

Parking Provision including Electric Vehicle Charging

In addition to supporting and facilitating the use of sustainable transport modes, the Council will continue to ensure there is an adequate supply of safe, secure and convenient public parking for vehicles within and adjacent to the town centre.

Throughout the Borough, new development (including change of use) will be required to provide safe and secure space for vehicle parking and servicing within the site. Provision should be made for residents, employees, customers, deliveries, visitors and others who may visit the premises, including people with disabilities. The number of spaces provided and the nature of the provision (including provision for motor cycle parking) will have regard to local circumstances and the standards set out in the Tees Valley Highway Design Guide or any successor.

Safe, secure and appropriate provision for cycle parking storage, and where appropriate changing and showering facilities will be encouraged, having regard to standards set out in the Tees Valley Highway Design Guide or any successor within all new developments including shared facilities within flats.

New residential properties and non-residential development are required to provide suitable electric vehicle charge points. These charge points must be located so that they are convenient, useable and when in use, do not cause vehicles to obstruct or impact highway safety.

- 10.8.3** Local parking standards for new development and changes of use are set out in the Tees Valley Highway Design Guide.
- 10.8.4** The adopted Parking Strategy proposes a zonal approach to provide enough convenient parking options to support the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. Within the inner ring road, parking will generally be short stay for shoppers and visitors to the town centre. Outside of the inner ring road existing parking provision will generally be protected for long stay parking and Residents

⁷⁵ NPPF Paragraphs 107 and 108 (July 2021).

Parking Zones, unless part of a wider regeneration scheme.

- 10.8.5** The Council will continue to support and facilitate sustainable development of businesses in the town centre by offering contract parking for operational needs to businesses with more than 5 employees who have a suitable employee travel plan in place. This initiative recognises that businesses located in the town centre can be more sustainable in terms of the transport movements that they generate yet need convenient parking for operational purposes to keep commercially competitive.
- 10.8.6** Developments should provide electric vehicle charge points in locations where it can be accessed and used without impacting on highway safety. In residential areas, cables should not be left to trail across the highway and off-road parking spaces with electric vehicle charge points should be of sufficient size and design including dropped kerbs to allow a vehicle to access the parking space and charge, without impacting on adjacent parking spaces.
- 10.8.7** In non-residential areas electric vehicle charging in car parks should be provided in locations that will not impact on highway safety, including allowing cables to be trailed across the highway.

Airport Safety

- 10.9.1** Teesside International Airport is recognised by the Council as essential to the economic performance of the Tees Valley, and to Darlington Borough. It is identified as a strategic location for airport-related employment uses in Policy E 2 'Employment Allocations (Strategic Policy)'.
- 10.9.2** The airport is a civil aerodrome of importance to the national air transport system⁽⁷⁶⁾. As such, the capacity of the airport to operate safely is protected by land use planning restrictions placed on the surrounding area. These include requirements to consult with the airport operator for proposed developments above a particular height or with certain other characteristics that may create a hazard for aircraft using the airport, if proposed developments are within identified zones (as detailed on map at APPENDIX D). Examples are developments likely to attract birds, developments with lights that could distract or confuse pilots, or developments that reflect, diffract or otherwise interfere with the radio signals used at the airport. Wind turbines can also have a distracting effect on radar, so the operator of Teesside International Airport and the Ministry of Defence will be consulted on all applications for wind turbines measuring 11 metres or more from ground to blade tip, or with a rotor diameter of 2 metres or more.
- 10.9.3** The airport also has an associated Public Safety Zone at the south-western end of the runway. This is indicated on the map at APPENDIX D and shown on the policies map, as required by Government policy⁽⁷⁷⁾. Various types of development will not be permitted in a Public Safety Zone if it increases the number of people living, working or congregating within the Zone and, over time,

⁷⁶ Joint ODPM/DFT Circular 01/2003

⁷⁷ DFT Circular 01/2010.

the number should be reduced, as circumstances allow.

Policy IN 5

Airport Safety (Strategic Policy)

Within the established 13km (bird strike hazard area) and the 15km (radius of critical airspace) safeguarding areas surrounding the airport, as identified on the policies map, relevant development proposals will require consultation with the operator of the airport, and must consider the operational integrity of the airport, its surveillance systems, and the safety of air traffic services, in accordance with Government Circular 1/2003, or any successor guidance.

Within the Public Safety Zones adjacent to the airport runway, as identified on the policies map, there is a general presumption against new development, unless the proposal accords with guidance in Government circular 1/2010 or any successor guidance.

Physical Infrastructure

- 10.10.1** The term ‘physical infrastructure’ embraces all services necessary for any development, including water supply, wastewater and its treatment, energy and telecommunications. In this document, transport infrastructure is addressed separately in Policy IN 1, flood risk and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in Policy DC 2.
- 10.10.2** National planning policy requires the Council to identify priorities for infrastructure provision, including the need for strategic infrastructure and to support the expansion of high-quality electronic communications networks, including telecommunications and high speed broadband. The Darlington Local Plan encourages enhanced infrastructure provision that supports delivery of its vision and objectives.
- 10.10.3** Tees Valley Combined Authority (Formerly Tees Valley Unlimited) prepared a Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP)⁽⁷⁸⁾, the conclusions of which inform this section. The SIP considers infrastructure themes which impact upon Tees Valley’s strategic sites including utilities, flood risk, energy and broadband. Further detail will be provided in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to accompany the submission of the Local Plan.

Utilities Infrastructure

- 10.10.4** The Council has consulted the utility companies to ensure there is sufficient capacity in existing infrastructure for the housing, employment and other growth proposed in the Local Plan.
- 10.10.5** Electricity and gas distribution strategic networks have sufficient existing capacity for most of the development requirements in the Borough during the plan period. However, for some larger strategic sites such as Skerningham,

⁷⁸ Tees Valley Strategic Infrastructure Plan, TVU, November 2014.

investment will be needed to provide an enlarged local distribution network. Sufficient water supply is guaranteed over the plan period owing to the large Northern England supply base through local reservoirs. Within the Borough the Stressholme sewage treatment works currently has sufficient capacity within ~~current~~ the discharge consent limits to accept and treat additional waste water flows from the proposed housing and employment allocations. Northumbrian Water has indicated their intention to increase capacity at Stressholme waste water treatments works from 2030. Again, for larger strategic sites new sewer system extensions would be required within the Local Plan period.

- 10.10.6** Unlike other infrastructure, the Council cannot seek planning contributions for utilities, as this type of infrastructure is delivered by others. It is therefore necessary to ensure that developments are accompanied by the utilities required to support the development at the time it is built, to ensure there is no net negative impact on the operation of existing networks.
- 10.10.7** All utilities companies have identified early consultation with potential developers as an important requirement in identifying the need for any reinforcement or upgrading of their infrastructure networks. Before submitting a planning application, those applying for new development or intensification of use will be expected to contact all the relevant utilities providers and regulatory bodies to ascertain how their development can be accommodated.
- 10.10.8** Future capacity is unlikely to present a barrier to major industrial, business and residential developments provided sufficient notice is given to utilities companies and therefore no specific planning policies to enable or facilitate improvements to physical infrastructure networks are required.
- 10.10.9** The Council will work in partnership with utility companies to ensure infrastructure networks continue to accommodate growth and support economic development.

Policy IN 6

Utilities Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)

Proposals for new development must be capable of being accommodated by existing or planned utilities (whether supplied by utilities providers or the development itself) and should not:

- a. Have a net negative impact on the operation of existing utilities networks; or
- b. Worsen the services or protection from risk enjoyed by the existing community.

Utilities include gas, electricity, off-site service infrastructure, surface water management, sewage disposal, flood risk defences and flood control facilities.

Telecommunication Infrastructure

- 10.10.10** Telecommunication infrastructure entails fixed and mobile telephony infrastructure and provisions for fixed and mobile broadband infrastructure, providing better telecommunication infrastructure whilst ensuring there are no significant adverse amenity or public safety impacts.
- 10.10.11** High quality advanced communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth. Whilst communications networks in the Borough need to be expanded and upgraded, the way this expansion is carried out should have due regard to public safety and visual amenity.

Policy IN 7

Telecommunication Masts

Development of electronic communications infrastructure will be permitted provided proposals meet the following criteria:

- a. Siting and appearance of proposed apparatus and associated structures seeks to minimise impact on the visual amenity, character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- b. If located on a building, apparatus and associated structures should be sited and designed in order to minimise impacts to the external appearance of the host building;
- c. If proposing a new mast, it should be demonstrated that the applicant has explored the possibilities of erecting apparatus on existing buildings, masts and other structures - such evidence should accompany any application made;
- d. Development should not have an unacceptable effect on areas of ecological interest, landscape importance, archaeological sites, conservation areas or buildings of architectural or historic interest.
- e. It is not harmful to visual or aural amenity or the safety of highway users and does not interfere with air traffic equipment.

- 10.10.12** Progression of speed and quality in mobile phone technology with aspirations for future 5G networks will see the renewal of current telecommunication mast infrastructure suitable for 3G / 4G services in Darlington Borough over the plan period. The Council is keen to facilitate such improvements to support quality of life for citizens and facilitate business growth. In line with national policy⁽⁷⁹⁾ we seek to support mast and asset sharing, network convergence and support siting of equipment on tall buildings and structures to support data speed and reception.

⁷⁹ UK's Electronic Communications Code based on the Digital Economy Act , OFCOM / DCMS 2017.

- 10.10.13** Evidence will also be required to demonstrate that telecommunications infrastructure will not cause significant and irremediable interference with other electrical equipment, such as air traffic services.

Broadband Infrastructure

- 10.10.14** In the last ten years Darlington's broadband fibre infrastructure network has been significantly improved by commercially driven upgrades from Openreach and Virgin Media and the impact of the government funded Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) programme in urban and rural Darlington.
- 10.10.15** The public funded Digital Durham BDUK programme phases enhanced broadband speed capability for the Tees Valley Combined Authority and other authorities in the North East since 2014. However, whilst gigabit capable broadband accessibility⁽⁸⁰⁾ in Darlington has significantly improved, several strategic housing and employment development sites have not yet been connected to futureproof broadband infrastructure altogether.
- 10.10.16** Broadband provision is now seen in the UK as the 4th utility and citizens are now able to demand access to minimum speeds by providers through the Governments Universal Service Obligation (USO) scheme which commenced March 2020.

Policy IN 8

Broadband Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)

Development proposals for housing sites of more than 50 homes and employment sites of more than 0.5 ha must ensure that gigabit capable broadband connectivity [\(or suitable alternative\)](#) and ducts are provided for the development.

- 10.10.17** The Council will ensure with developers that future broadband infrastructure provision in larger housing and employment sites will be identified and provision gaps are closed within the planning application process (and may include appropriate planning conditions) of these developments.
- 10.10.18** This includes several strategic housing development locations and new employment allocations such as Skertingham ~~Garden Village~~ (Policy H 10) and Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ (Policy H 11). For Rural Areas of the Borough public funding from TVCA and BDUK⁽⁸¹⁾ will be utilised to increase gigabit capable broadband coverage in the Tees Valley.

⁸⁰ Gigabit capable broadband = Fast internet speeds to 1 gigabit + through establishment of fibre networks

⁸¹ BDUK Superfast Extension Phase 2 + 3 2017-2024 and BDUK Project Gigabit.

Renewable Energy Infrastructure

- 10.10.19** Renewable Energy Infrastructure supports the mitigation of Climate Change and supports smart energy systems and energy flexibility. The council supports carbon neutral solutions and the overall reduction of carbon emissions throughout the development process.
- 10.10.20** The types of renewable and energy efficient infrastructure which are deemed applicable include:
- Wind Energy
 - Solar Energy
 - Hydro Power
- 10.10.21** One of the key aims of the Local Plan is to reduce energy use and carbon emissions. Appliances like industrial and new domestic scale renewable installations feeding into the electricity grid through existing connections, electric vehicles and heat pumps are anticipated to impact on supporting renewable or efficient energy solutions and reducing carbon emissions.

Policy IN 9

Renewable Energy Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)

Renewable and low carbon energy development including small scale and community-led initiatives will be supported across the Borough, where proposals are in accordance with the following relevant criteria. In determining planning applications for such projects applicants will not be required to demonstrate the overall need and significant weight will be given to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future.

- a. Wind energy development will be granted planning permission if the applicant can demonstrate that the proposal will not have unacceptable impact, either individually or cumulatively upon:
 - i. Residential amenity including shadow flicker and noise;
 - ii. visual dominance;
 - iii. protected species and habitats;
 - iv. landscape character and fabric;
 - v. the historic environment, including heritage assets and their settings;
 - vi. communication links; and
 - vii. aviation and radar.
- b. Solar Power developments will be granted planning permission if the applicant can demonstrate that the following considerations have been taken into account:

- i. the importance of siting systems in situations where they can collect the most energy from the sun;
 - ii. need for sufficient area of solar modules to produce the required energy output from the system;
 - iii. the colour and appearance of the modules;
 - iv. demonstrate effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of higher environmental value;
 - v. where a proposal involves agricultural land it has been demonstrated that:
 - 1. the land has been shown to be poorer quality land in preference to higher quality agricultural land; and
 - 2. the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around solar arrays;
 - vi. the proposal has adequately mitigated the individual and cumulative visual impact on the landscape and the effect of glint and glare on neighbouring uses, highway and aircraft safety;
 - vii. need for, and visual and landscape impact of security measures such as lighting and fencing.
- c. Hydro Power: Applications for hydropower will need to be accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment. Early engagement should take place with the local planning authority and the Environment Agency.

In considering applications for the re-powering and life-extension of existing renewable sites significant weight will be given to the benefits of utilising an established site.

- d. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS): Proposals should be carefully sited and adequately mitigate the individual and cumulative visual impact on the landscape including through the retention or creation of locally occurring vegetation. Batteries and inverters should be co-located within existing buildings or structures where possible or new buildings should match with the local character. Proposals for Battery Energy Storage Systems 1MW or over are encouraged to consider the National Fire Chiefs Council BESS guidance and engage with the County Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Service before submitting a planning application.

Community and Social Infrastructure

- 10.11.1** Access to a wide range of good quality community facilities is identified as a key contributor to the health and well-being of people who live and work in the Borough and is one of the key objectives of the Local Plan vision, aims and objectives (Section 2). The timely provision and upgrading of facilities is required to ensure Darlington's future growth brings more prosperity, safety, sustainability and inclusiveness and maintains and improves health and well-being.

Policy IN 10

Supporting the Delivery of Community and Social Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)

A) Education

If need is demonstrated ⁽⁸²⁾ then a planning obligation will be sought to provide additional places or enhance existing educational facilities, based on a calculation of:

- (Pupil place generation per family dwelling)⁽⁸³⁾ – (existing space capacity in local schools) x (Department of Education (DfE) standard cost per place) ⁽⁸⁴⁾;

Planning obligations for education provision will not be sought for:

- Residential developments of 9 units or less;
- Non-residential development;
- Affordable housing schemes;
- Single bed properties;
- Specialist housing for the elderly (Use Class C2);
- Student accommodation (unless if specifically includes provision for families;
- Purpose built hostel or holiday accommodation which are incapable of occupation for general residential purposes because of their layout, ownership, management or occupancy restrictions.

Land will be reserved for education uses within the following sites:

- South of Yarm Road in Middleton St George (site 247)
- Land at Berrymead Farm (site 008)
- West Park ~~Garden Village~~ (site 068)
- Coniscliffe Park North (site 249)
- Provision on strategic sites of Skertingham and ~~Greater Faverdale~~ Burtree are dealt with in Policies H 10 and H11.

Such land will be reserved until an agreed trigger point linked to phasing, to be stipulated in a legal agreement prior to the granting of planning permission. If there are no firm plans for the school at that time, the land may be made available for alternative community uses. If none of these can be delivered within a reasonable time (to be agreed in advance), the land may be considered for additional new housing.

B) Health Contributions for GP Provision

In circumstances where sufficient capacity does not exist, developments including 20 or more dwellings will be expected to contribute towards the physical expansion of existing GP practices to meet the additional need generated by the proposal. This should be established in consultation with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and be calculated using the step-by-step methodology

⁸² The nearest school or ~~another~~ any other school, within 2 miles for primary schools and 3 miles for secondary schools, is operated within 5% of its capacity.

⁸³ Latest ~~TVCA Pupil Projection Report~~ DBC Pupil Place Planning Projections (currently based on 20 primary places and 12 secondary places per 100 dwellings).

⁸⁴ DfE place generation settlement figure as detailed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-places-scorecards> (currently ~~£13,115~~ £19,122 per primary place and ~~£17,050~~ £26,301 per secondary place).

set out in paragraph 10.11.7 and the inputs provided in the Health Contributions Guidance Note or its replacement.

In circumstances where it is not possible to provide mitigation at existing facilities and the provision of a new GP surgery may be required, or provision included within the development of buildings for wider community use, this will need to be negotiated with the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

C) Protection of Existing Community Facilities

The loss of any community facilities will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:

- i. There are sufficient other suitable alternative community facilities either within the neighbourhood or accessible nearby; or
- ii. The community facility is no longer needed; or
- iii. There is no management and funding resources existing or that could be generated within the local community that could secure and sustain a facility that meets identified needs; or
- iv. The community facility cannot be secured or sustained through the partial redevelopment of the site.

D) Provision of New Community Facilities

Proposals for new and expanded community services and facilities will be supported in accessible locations providing that the scale of development is appropriate to the area in which it is proposed.

For new indoor sports provision and arts and cultural facilities, priority will be given to new proposals according to the settlement hierarchy set out in the plan. Proposals will be permitted elsewhere if it is demonstrated that:

- i. There is a need for it in the location proposed; and
- ii. It will be easily accessible by a choice of means of [walking, cycling and public](#) transport; and
- iii. For arts and cultural facilities that, through market research and/or an impact assessment, it can be shown that there would not be any damaging impact on the vitality and viability of the Town Centre, including the evening economy.

Secure community access, outside of core school hours, will be required for any new provision on education sites.

Education

10.11.1 Access to good schools is critical to the quality of life of residents, and improving it is a key ambition of the Council. The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities⁽⁸⁵⁾.

⁸⁵ NPPF paragraph 100 (December 2024).

- 10.11.2** The Council has to assess the local need for school places and ensure that every child resident in the Borough can have a place in a state funded school in Darlington⁽⁸⁶⁾. It works with a wide range of education providers, such as Academies⁽⁸⁷⁾ and Free Schools⁽⁸⁸⁾ to ensure this.
- 10.11.3** The main planning issue is how to meet any need for additional school places arising from planned housing growth and population change.⁽⁸⁹⁾ However, uncertainty around future projections, due to changes in birth rate and fluctuations in build rate of housing developments means that predicting the school place requirement over the entire Plan period is difficult.
- 10.11.4** It is envisaged that an additional need for school places is likely to arise in the medium to long term where significant new housing is proposed, particularly in the north, north-west and east of the Borough. Following the same strategy of supporting existing schools, expansion of existing school facilities to accommodate additional demand will be considered in the first instance. An updated SOP is currently under preparation that will identify existing schools that will be expanded next.
- 10.11.5** To ensure new schools can be delivered close to the strategic housing growth areas if they are required, the Skerningham and Burtree ~~Garden Village~~ Strategic Allocations (Policy H 10 and H 11) will safeguard land for future education provision. In addition, land will be safeguarded at Berrymead Farm (site 008), South of Yarm Road in Middleton St George (site 247), Coniscliffe Park North (site 249) and West Park ~~Garden Village~~ (site 068).

Health Contributions for GP Provision

- 10.11.6** During the plan period a significant proportion of new housing is proposed in north, west and eastern fringes of Darlington. This development will generate additional needs for primary health care. Some GP practices near these areas are already experiencing pressure on patient lists so it is necessary for development to contribute towards the expansion and or creation of premises to accommodate the additional need generated.
- 10.11.7** For development proposals for 20 dwellings or more the following methodology will be used to firstly determine whether a contribution will be required towards the expansion of an existing GP practice or towards a new

⁸⁶ A High Quality Place for Every Child, School Organisation Plan (SOP) 2013-17, DBC.

⁸⁷ State funded schools directly funded by central Government and independent of the Local Authority.

⁸⁸ State funded independent schools.

⁸⁹ Every 100 new houses is expected, on average, to produce ~~between 18 and~~ 20 primary school age children and ~~13-15~~ 12 pupils of secondary age.

facility. In circumstances where there isn't sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional patients generated by the developments then the remaining steps of the methodology will be used to calculate the additional GP space required and the total contribution required.

Step 1 – Calculate the increased population from the proposed development:

No. of dwellings multiplied by (x) Average Occupancy Rate equals (=) Population Increase

Step 2 – Calculate the new GP List size:

Current GP patient list plus (+) Population increase equals (=) Expected patient list size

(If expected patient list size is less than existing capacity a contribution is not required otherwise continue to Step 3)

Step 3 – Calculate the additional GP space required to support proposed development:

Population increase multiplied by (x) Space Requirement per patient equals (=) Total space (m2) required

Step 4 – Calculate the total contribution required:

Total space required multiplied by (x) Premises Cost equals (=) Financial Contribution

- 10.11.8** Contributions will be calculated using occupancy rates, current patient list sizes, size and space standards and cost guidance using the methodology in paragraph 10.11.9 above. To determine the expected increase in population to be generated by a development, the number of dwellings proposed should be multiplied by the average household occupancy rate in Darlington.
- 10.11.9** Once the expected population increase has been identified, this should be added to the relevant current GP patient list to give an overall expected patient size list. If the expected patient list size is within the existing capacity of the relevant surgery, then a contribution is not required. In cases where an application forms part of a wider allocation, existing capacity will be shared proportionately, and contributions sought to reflect this. Similarly, if a development is located within the catchments of more than one surgery, the patient list sizes will be considered as a whole, and contributions shared proportionately.
- 10.11.10** Using the expected patient size list, the appropriate space requirement per new patient can be identified from using the Premises Maxima Size Schedule. The space requirement per new patient can then be multiplied by the expected population increase to give the total space (m2) required. The total space (m2) required can then be multiplied by the premises cost identified by NHS Property Services to give the final contribution calculation.

- 10.11.11** The various inputs into the calculations including occupancy rates, current patient list sizes, size and space standards and cost guidance will be routinely updated so these should be obtained from the Health Contributions Guidance Note.
- 10.11.12** Any contributions collected would be for physical infrastructure only (i.e. new or extensions to physical premises) and not services (i.e. more GPs).

Community facilities

- 10.11.14** Policy IN 10 seeks to safeguard local services and facilities that meet people's day to day needs. Local shops and other retail outlets are also covered within the policy. This policy covers community centres, village halls, social clubs, children's centres, ~~churches, mosques~~ places of worship and other community resources, such as libraries, which are important for socialising and other community activities. Public houses are also important venues for community engagement and venues to host community activities and are covered in the policy as a community facility.
- 10.11.15** Many community facilities are experiencing reduced income, arising from either reduced use or reduced public sector or other external funding. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to maintain a list of community assets⁽⁹⁰⁾. This provides certain community groups with an opportunity to protect and preserve local assets of community value. If these assets are put up for sale, in the first instance community groups have the 'right to bid' for them in an attempt to retain the facility⁽⁹¹⁾.
- 10.11.16** The loss of a community facility will be resisted where it is the only remaining facility in a community, where there is an identified need for it, and where a source of funding for ongoing management and maintenance could support the facility. Evidence in support of retaining the last community building must show there is no accessible alternative suitable facility. A 'lack of need' argument would need to be backed up by evidence, e.g. by surveying all community groups in the area, and a 'lack of funding' argument would need evidence that no other community group in the neighbourhood would be prepared to take over the facility. Loss of healthcare facilities will only be supported where they are formally declared surplus to the operational healthcare requirements of the NHS or identified as surplus as part of a published estates strategy or service transformation plan.

Indoor Sports Facilities

⁹⁰ Community assets can be land or buildings in public or private ownership.

⁹¹ Darlington Borough Council Policy on The Community Right to Bid for Assets of Community Value.

- 10.11.17** Indoor sports facilities include swimming pools, sports halls, health and fitness facilities and dance studios, and other specialist provision such as indoor bowls, squash courts, gymnastics centres, boxing gyms and indoor tennis⁽⁹²⁾. These facilities can be provided by academies, schools and colleges, private sports clubs, parish councils and at community and village halls.
- 10.11.18** The policy seeks to protect and where appropriate, enhance a range of quality, accessible and safe facilities, to support more participation in indoor sports and promote healthier lifestyles. In recent years, access to sports facilities at educational sites has improved, as several schools have successfully converted to Academy status and new and improved facilities have been provided, e.g. at Longfield Academy, which has provided a third strategic 'hub' site for indoor sports provision in addition to the Eastbourne Sports Complex and the Dolphin Centre. Improvements to facilities at other key education sites will provide a network of complementary satellite sites for indoor sports provision.
- 10.11.19** However, access to and quality of existing facilities can be improved further. A key action⁽⁹³⁾ is to ensure sport and physical activity facilities and spaces (including schools) are available for community use. Although an indoor BMX and skate park has been provided at Faverdale, there is evidence to suggest that not enough specialist sports provision, specifically indoor tennis courts and indoor active play facilities are available in the Borough.
- 10.11.20** As most indoor sports provision is market led or otherwise outside Local Authority control, quality and access improvements can only be secured through the planning system by attaching conditions to planning permission for extensions, alterations or for new facilities. The policy requires community use to be secured for new provision on educational sites in priority locations.

Arts and Cultural Facilities

- 10.11.21** The Council's Cultural Strategy (2022-2026)⁽⁹⁴⁾ is focussed on maximising the social and economic benefits which art and culture can bring to residents. The Creative Darlington vision identifies arts and culture as being central to Darlington's future identity and economic success. Through bringing people together, the arts have a key role to play in promoting and enabling social inclusion and cohesion. The Town Centre remains a focus for cultural heritage and an ideal setting for cultural activity and events.
- 10.11.22** Darlington Hippodrome (formerly the Civic Theatre) has, in recent years, had a £13.7m restoration and upgrade that has seen the creation of Theatre Hullabaloo for children. Funding has been provided by Heritage Lottery and Arts Council funding to facilitate these projects.

⁹² as defined in Darlington's [Sport and Recreation Facilities Playing Pitch Outdoor and Indoor Sport](#) Strategy (2026).

⁹³ Darlington Physical Activity Strategy 2025-2035.

⁹⁴ Darlington Culture Strategy (2022-2026)

- 10.11.23** Hopetown Darlington, Darlington's Railway Museum, is another successful facility which promotes the town's distinct heritage. It is also a focus for social and cultural events and activities and played a key role in the celebrations for the 200 year anniversary of the launch of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. The Crown Street Art Gallery is another key venue managed by Creative Darlington, an organisation who encourage the development of arts in the Borough.
- 10.11.24** Cultural and arts facilities are facing new challenges as income sources, including public sector funding, are increasingly under pressure. It is likely that not all arts and cultural facilities can be sustained through the Plan period, and any new facilities will need to be largely privately provided and supported. It may be possible to sustain some existing provision or to deliver new facilities, by sharing facilities and/or support with other community uses. As recognised within the Creative Darlington vision, the sustained development of the sector will depend on the support, co-ordination and prioritisation across arts organisations.
- 10.11.25** Cultural and arts facilities are facing new challenges as income sources, including public sector funding, are increasingly under pressure. It is likely that not all arts and cultural facilities can be sustained through the Plan period, and any new facilities will need to be largely privately provided and supported. It may be possible to sustain some existing provision or to deliver new facilities, by sharing facilities and/or support with other community uses. As recognised within the Creative Darlington vision, the sustained development of the sector will depend on the support, co-ordination and prioritisation across arts organisations.

11. MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Policy	Indicator	Target	Source	Responsibility for Delivery
Sustainable Development				
SD 1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development (Strategic Policy)	<i>(Although in the Local Plan, this policy didn't feature in previous monitoring framework table)</i> Number of schemes approved using sustainable development solutions	Favour schemes containing sustainable development solutions.	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
SD 2 Settlement Hierarchy (Strategic Policy)	Amount of development by type within each settlement	Deliver overall distribution of sites in accordance with the settlement hierarchy	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
SD 3 Development Limits (Strategic Policy)	Number of developments outside the development limits	No inappropriate housing development	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
Sustainable Design and Climate Change				
DC 1 Sustainable Design Principles (Strategic Policy)	New developments that demonstrate that they accord with the Design of New Development SPD	100% applications accord with Design of New Development SPD	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
Policy	Indicator	Target	Source	Responsibility for Delivery
DC 2 Climate Change (Strategic Policy)	Indicator TBC	Target TBC	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC

DC 3 Flood Risk and Water Management (Strategic Policy)	Number of proposals granted consent to Environment Agency advice on flooding	No applications granted contrary to EA advice on flooding	Development Management Records	DBC
Healthy Communities				
HC 1 Health and Wellbeing (Strategic Policy)	Number of proposals granted which support health and wellbeing	Target TBC	Dependent on indicator and target Development Management Records	DBC
HC 2 Safeguarding Amenity	New developments that demonstrate they accord with the Design of New Development SPD	100% applications accord with the Design of New Development SPD	Development Management Records	DBC
HC 3 Hot Food Takeaways	Number of Hot Food Takeaway proposals granted vs refused permission.	Target TBC	Development Management Records, Environmental Health	DBC
HC 4 Gambling Premises	The number of gambling premises granted vs refused permission.	Target TBC	Development Management Records	DBC
HC 5 Skills and Training	<i>(Although in the Local Plan, this policy didn't feature in previous monitoring framework table)</i> The number of schemes granted which feature training initiatives	Target TBC	Development Management Records	DBC
Policy	Indicator	Target	Source	Responsibility for Delivery
Housing				
H 1 Housing Requirement (Strategic Policy)	Supply of ready to develop housing sites	Maintain a 5 year rolling supply	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Forward Planning, Development Management Records	DBC
H 2 Housing Allocations (Strategic Policy)	Net additional dwellings delivered	Deliver 490 dwellings per annum	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC

H 3 Housing Mix	% of dwellings which category 2 and 3 requirements	~~57%~~ <u>59%</u> of dwellings will meet Building Regulations Approved Document M category 2 requirements, ~~8%~~ <u>7%</u> will meet category 3 requirements	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
H 4 Self-Build and Custom Build Housing	% of dwellings on sites of ~~500~~ <u>450</u> dwellings or more which are self-build or custom build plots	1% of the housing plots on sites of ~~500+~~ <u>450</u> units will be self-build or custom build	Development Management Records, Housing Section	DBC
H 5 Affordable Housing (Strategic Policy)	Number of affordable dwellings delivered	10-30% affordable delivered	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
Policy	Indicator	Target	Source	Responsibility for Delivery
H 6 Exception Sites (Strategic Policy)	Number of dwellings delivered through rural and entry-level exception sites	Target TBC	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
H 7 Residential Development in the Countryside (Strategic Policy)	Number of dwellings provided outside of development limits	No dwellings provided unless for agricultural or forestry purposes	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
H 8 Housing Intensification	Number of extra bedrooms in homes of multiple occupation, in accordance with HMO SPD <i>Needs amending in light of new H9 –</i> <i>Number of dwellings refused for back land or garden development</i>	Number of applications refused	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
H9 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's)	Number of extra bedrooms in homes of multiple occupation	Number of applications approved	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax,	DBC

			site visits), Development Management Records, Housing Section	
H 10 Skerningham Site Allocation (Strategic Policy)	Masterplan agreed by Council	Masterplan agreed prior to applications received	Committee records	DBC
H 11 Burtree Garden Village Site Allocation (Strategic Policy)	Masterplan agreed by planning committee	Masterplan agreed prior to applications received	Committee records	DBC
H 12 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation (Strategic Policy)	Net additional traveller pitches permitted (permanent or transit)	To meet identified demand	Development Management Records, Planning Policy Monitoring	DBC
Policy	Indicator	Target	Source	Responsibility for Delivery
Employment for Economic Growth				
E 1 Safeguarding Existing Employment Land (Strategic Policy)	Safeguard existing employment land	No net loss of existing employment land/buildings to other uses	Development Management Records	DBC
E 2 Employment Allocations (Strategic Policy)	Amount of vacant employment land available for development type: a. Allocated b. With planning consent	Amount and type of employment provision delivered (unit floorspace and site size)	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
E 3 Economic Development in Open Countryside (Strategic Policy)	Amount of development permitted in the open countryside	Development limited to appropriate development	Planning Policy Monitoring (using trusted sources eg Building Control, NHBC, Council Tax, site visits), Development Management Records	DBC
Town Centres and Retail				

Policy	Indicator	Target	Source	Responsibility for Delivery
TC 1 Darlington Town Centre (Strategic Policy)	Net floorspace developed for town centre uses per annum, by: a. Town centre b. Edge of centre c. Out of centre location	Increase the vitality of the town centres and reduce vacant premises	Planning Policy Monitoring, Development Management Records	DBC
TC 2 Primary Shopping Area	Maintain the attractiveness of the primary shopping area	Number of vacant units within the town centre	Annual survey, Planning Policy Monitoring	DBC
TC 3 Additional Site for Town Centre Uses	Provision of additional retail floorspace within the town centre boundary	Amount of additional floorspace/number of additional units	Planning Policy Monitoring, Development Management Records	DBC
TC 4 District and Local Centres	Maintain the vitality and viability of district centres	Number of vacant units or changes of use from acceptable uses	Planning Policy Monitoring, Development Management Records	DBC
TC 5 Retail Impact Assessment Threshold (Strategic Policy)	Retail Impact Assessments submitted when required	Number of retail impact assessments received on developments between 500 sqm and 2,500 sqm	Planning Policy Monitoring, Development Management Records	DBC
TC 6 Darlington – Town Centre Fringe	(In the Local Plan, this policy didn't feature in previous monitoring framework table) Indicator required	Target required	Planning Policy Monitoring, Development Management Records	DBC
Environment				
ENV 1 Protecting, Enhancing and Promoting Darlington's Historic Environment (Strategic Policy)	1. Number of proposals granted permission contrary to Historic England advice on the grounds of impact on locally, regionally or nationally designated sites. 2. Reduction in the number of assets that are classified as heritage at risk. 3. Preparation of a local list. 4. Completion of conservation area action plans and management plans	No applications granted contrary to Historic England advice. Monitor Heritage at Risk Register. Track progress on local list preparation. Track progress on conservation area action plans and management plans.	Council's Conservation Officer, Development Management Records	DBC

	where one has not been produced and review others where necessary.			
Policy	Indicator	Target	Source	Responsibility for Delivery
ENV 2 Stockton and Darlington Railway (Strategic Policy)	Protect the integrity and associated assets of the S&DR railway	Number of applications determined which have an impact on the railway route asset	Development Management Records	DBC
ENV 3 Local Landscape Character (Strategic Policy)	Loss of important landscape areas	Target TBC	Development Management Records	DBC
ENV 4 Green and Blue Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)	Protection of green infrastructure assets	Target TBC	Development Management Records	DBC
Policy	Indicator	Target	Source	Responsibility for Delivery
ENV 5 Green Infrastructure Standards	Creation of new green infrastructure provided	Amount of new green infrastructure provided	Development Management Records	DBC
ENV 6 Local Green Spaces	Protection of designated local green spaces	Any net loss identified	Development Management Records	DBC
ENV 7 Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Development (Strategic Policy)	Protection of biodiversity and geodiversity	No net loss	Development Management Records including S106 agreements securing funds	DBC
ENV 8 Assessing a Development's Impact on Biodiversity (Strategic Policy)	Ensure measures are taken to protect important sites/species	Sites are protected or adequate mitigation is undertaken	Development Management Records	DBC
ENV 9 Outdoor Sports Facilities	Protecting and improvement of sports facilities	No net loss of sports facilities	Development Management Records	DBC
ENV 10 Trees and Hedgerows (Strategic Policy)	Indicator required	Target required	To be agreed	DBC
ENV 11 Water Quality (Nutrient Neutrality) (Strategic Policy)	Indicator required	Target required	To be agreed	

Policy	Indicator	Target	Source	Responsibility for Delivery
Transport and Infrastructure				
IN 1 Delivering a Sustainable Transport Network (Strategic Policy)	Number of travel plans submitted as part of decision making process	Monitor	Development Management Records, Sustainable Transport Records	DBC
IN 2 Improving access and accessibility (Strategic Policy)	All schemes to incorporate designs which allow alternatives to private motorised transport	Monitor	Development Management Records, Sustainable Transport Records	DBC
IN 3 Transport Assessment and Travel Plan (Strategic Policy)	Number of major developments that have submitted Travel Plans/Travel Assessments with their application	100% of applications have submitted a Travel Plan/Travel Assessment where required	Development Management Records, Sustainable Transport Records	DBC
IN 4 Parking Provision including Electric Vehicle Charging	Number of electric charging points permitted	Increased provision	Development Management Records	DBC
IN 5 Airport Safety (Strategic Policy)	Any developments within the defined safeguarding area around the airport	The airport operator are consulted on 100% of applications within the safeguarding area as defined on the Policies Map	Development Management Records	DBC
IN 6 Utilities Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)	Impact of development on utilities network	No net negative impact	Development Management Records	DBC
IN 7 Telecommunication Masts	Total of Telecommunications notifications received by a) new location; or b) on existing telecommunications locations	Monitor	Development Management Records	DBC
INV 8 Broadband Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)	Provision of broadband infrastructure within qualifying developments	All qualifying developments to provide broadband infrastructure	Development Management Records	DBC
IN 9 Renewable Energy Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)	Number of renewable energy schemes submitted	Number of schemes approved	Development Management Records	DBC
IN 10 Supporting the Delivery of Community and Social Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)	Contributions and community facilities provided	The amount of contributions secured for education and other community facilities	S106 records	DBC

12. GLOSSARY

Affordable Housing	Defined by the National Planning Policy Framework MHCLG, 2024.
Amenity	A broad concept that refers to the pleasant or satisfactory aspects of a place which add positively to its overall character and to the enjoyment of residents or visitors. For example, it encompasses human health, quality design, provision and protection of local services, local economy and the protection of the countryside, historic environment, environmental character and visual, air and noise quality. Amenity also encompasses leisure and sporting areas, such as playing fields and other open spaces used for sport.
Ancillary Uses	A subsidiary or secondary use or operation closely associated with the main use of a building or piece of land.
Ancient or Veteran Tree	A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.
Ancient Woodland	An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).
Biodiversity	Variety of life including different plants, animals and micro-organisms, and the ecosystems of which they are a part.
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	An approach to planning and land management that leaves the natural environment in a better state than it was before and is defined as delivering more or better habitats for biodiversity. BNG is a mandatory requirement under the Environment Act 2021.
Blue Infrastructure	Blue Infrastructure is a term used to describe a wide range of landscape elements linked to water including rivers, streams, lakes, pools, ponds and other water courses. Blue Infrastructure can include both natural and man-made landscape elements.
Canopy Cover Assessment	An assessment of the area of ground directly covered by the leaves and branches of vegetation and is expressed as a percentage.
Climate Change Adaption	Adjustments made to natural or human systems in response to the actual or anticipated impacts of climate change, to mitigate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

Climate Change Mitigation	Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
Conservation Area	A designated area of special architectural and/or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. It is a recognition of the value of a group of buildings and their surroundings and the need to protect not just individual buildings but the character of the area as a whole.
Developer Contributions	Section 106 contributions, planning obligations and /or Community Infrastructure Levy.
Embodied Carbon	The CO2 emissions associated with materials and construction processes throughout the whole lifecycle of a building or infrastructure. This is typically associated with any processes, materials or products used to construct, maintain, repair, refurbish and repurpose a building.
Flood Risk Assessment	Ensures that flood risk to a proposed development is considered, as well as the impact the development will have elsewhere on people and property. Its scope will reflect the scale, nature and location of the development.
Footloose Businesses	An industry that is not tied to any particular location and can relocate in response to changing economic conditions.
Green Corridor	Linear green feature connecting different greenspaces, can incorporate walking and cycling routes. Most are also wildlife corridors.
Green Infrastructure	A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Includes locally important green spaces, green wedges, wildlife sites, allotments, urban fringe, trees, woodland, rights of way and countryside.
Geodiversity	The range of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and landforms.
Historic Environment	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
Infill Development	The development of a small area of vacant land between existing buildings.
Local Green Space	A designation either in a local plan or neighbourhood development plan that provides special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	A spatial strategy established by the Environment Act (2021) to reverse the decline of nature. The LNRS will map existing, valuable habitats and identify specific local priorities to create or improve them. Darlington will be covered by the Tees Valley LNRS produced by the Tees Valley Combined Authority.
Main Town Centre Uses	Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).
Major Development	For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m ² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
Material Consideration	A material consideration is a matter which the decision maker must take into account when assessing a planning application.
Market Signals	Local demand/pressures indicated by price signals or other indicators of market preference.
Maintenance Levy	Annual sum paid by the house owner or property owner to an independent body or management company to enable the long-term maintenance of green space or sustainable drainage
Masterplan	A type of planning brief outlining the preferred usage of land and the overall approach to the layout of a development. To provide detailed guidance for subsequent planning applications.
Neighbourhood Plan	A plan prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
Non-Designated Heritage Assets	Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by the Local Planning Authority as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

Nutrient Neutrality (NN)	Nutrient Neutrality is a means of ensuring new development does not cause increased nutrient pollution to specific protected habitat sites. For proposals in Darlington Borough this is the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area.
Open Space	All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.
PDL - Previously Developed Land	Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for mineral extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds, and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.
Primary Agricultural Holding	An applicant's main holding registered as an agricultural holding used solely or mainly for the purposes of agriculture, horticulture.
Ramsar Site	Wetlands of international importance designated under the Convention on Wetlands especially as waterfowl habitat.
Rural Exception Sites	Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

Setting of a Heritage Asset	The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
Significance (for heritage policy)	The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
Site of Special Scientific Interest	Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	Areas designated to protect habitats for rare or migratory bird species, including their breeding, feeding and wintering grounds.
SPD - Supplementary Planning Document	Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.
Stepping Stones	Pockets of habitat that, while not necessarily connected, facilitate the movement of species across otherwise inhospitable landscapes.
Strategic Policies	Policies and site allocations which address strategic priorities in line with the requirements of Section 19 (1B-E) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
Sustainable Drainage Systems	Reduces and slows the quantity and rate of surface water run-off from new development, dealing with it as close to the source as possible.
Sustainability Appraisal	An appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.
Townscape	The general appearance of a built-up area, for example, a street, a town or a city.

Transport Assessment	A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out transport issues relating to a proposed development. It identifies measures required to improve accessibility and safety for all modes of travel, particularly for alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport and measures that will be needed to deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development.
Transport Statement	A simplified version of a transport assessment where it is agreed the transport issues arising out of development proposals are limited and a full transport assessment is not required.
Travel Plan	A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives and is regularly reviewed.
Wildlife Corridor	Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.
Windfall Sites	Sites not specifically identified in the development plan.

Darlington Borough Council

Local Plan Review 2025-2042

Regulation 19

Draft Version

Appendices

Appendices

Appendix A	New Local Plan Housing Trajectory
Appendix B	Housing and Employment Allocation Statements
Appendix C	Darlington’s Heritage Assets
Appendix D	Civil Aviation Authority Safeguarding
Appendix E	Affordable Housing Requirement
Appendix F	Nationally Described Space Standards

Appendix A Housing Trajectory

Site ref number	Site Name	Planning Status	Site Location	Total Units	Size (ha)	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38	2038/39	2039/40	2040/41	2041/42	Total within plan period
78	East of Middleton Road, Sadberge	Complete	Village	25	0.75	3																	3
424	182 Northgate	Complete	Urban	14	0.1	14																	14
426	Sherborne Close	Complete	Urban	14	0.6	14																	14
429	Eldon Street	Complete	Urban	12	0.13	12																	12
3	South of Burtree Lane	Commitment	Urban Extension	380	17.02			15	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	5		380
8	Berrymead Farm	Commitment	Urban Extension	348	21.24	107	32																139
41	South Coniscliffe Park	Commitment	Urban Extension	475	28.32	3	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	32					475
45	High Stell	Commitment	Village	198	8.49	13	20	20	20	20	20	7											120
68	West Park Garden Village	Commitment	Urban Extension	1200	79.32	98	130	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	10					538
89	Land west of Oak Tree, MSG	Commitment	Village	61	2.66		15	15	6														36
99	Maxgate Farm, MSG	Commitment	Village	260	13.71	47	50	30	30	30	30	30	13										260
146	Land South of Railway, MSG	Commitment	Village	326	14.8			30	60	60	60	60	56										326
249	Coniscliffe Park North	Commitment	Urban extension	985	50.08		30	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	930
390	West Park Garden Village North	Commitment	Urban extension	125	5.54									30	30	30	30	5					125
394	Lakeside, The Old Brickworks, Neasham Rd.	Commitment	Village	115	5.59	4	10	10	1														25
395	Dr Piper House, King Street.	Commitment	Urban	46	0.13		46																46
403	Blackwell Grange East	Commitment	Urban	44	5.26	15	12	12	5														44
410	Snipe Lane, Hurworth Moor	Commitment	Urban extension	449	23.64	131	60	60	8														259
412	12 - 18 Skinnergate	Commitment	Urban	16	0.22			16															16
422	Reservoir (Disused) Darlington Road, Sadberge	Commitment	Village	46	2.8			20	20	6													46
425	Former Rise Carr Club, Eldon Place	Commitment	Urban	18	0.05			18															18
11	Cattle Mart	Allocation	Urban	76	2.16				30	30	16												76
20	Great Burdon	Allocation	Urban Extension	1250	91.44						50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	600
95	Beech Crescent East, Heighington	Allocation	Village	20	1.53							20											20
100	Hall Farm, Branksome	Allocation	Urban Extension	353	21.89				30	60	60	60	60	60	23								353
185	Burtree Garden Village	Allocation	Urban extension	2000	178.48			90	120	120	120	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	1110
251	Skerningham	Allocation	Urban extension	4500	492.19			20	70	90	120	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	1950
392	Elm Tree Farm	Allocation	Urban Extension	200	7.1			20	45	45	45	45											200
467	Tees Grange	Allocation	Urban	75	7.09			15	30	30													75
468	Kendrew Street Car Parks Regeneration Area	Allocation	Urban	125	1.34							30	30	30	30	5							125

Site ref number	Site Name	Planning Status	Site Location	Total Units	Size (ha)	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38	2038/39	2039/40	2040/41	2041/42	Total within plan period
471	Land east of Maidendale (former Ingenium Parc)	Allocation	Urban	720	42.5				30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	420
504	Snipe Lane Hurworth Moor, Phase 2	Allocation	Urban	180	10.28							30	30	30	30	30	30						180
Small Sites (Less than 10 units)						25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	425
Total Gross Completions						486	470	546	690	706	736	757	664	625	588	540	535	452	405	405	380	375	9360
							2026/27 - 2030/31 Total				3148	2031/32 - 2035/36 Total				3174	2036/37 - 2040/41 Total				2177	375	
Total net completions						460												Total dwellings 2026/27 - 2041/42				8874	

*Please note that the housing trajectory is not a track changed version.

APPENDIX B HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATION STATEMENTS

Housing Sites

Urban Extensions

Site 20 - Great Burdon

The site is an urban extension to the east of the main urban area. It is bounded by the A66 to the east, Darlington Road (A1150) to the north and Tornado Way (B6279) to the south. The site is greenfield land in agricultural use and is proposed for allocation for residential development with an indicative yield of 1250 dwellings; 600 of which are estimated to be delivered during the plan period.

Issues and requirements

- a. Site vehicle access is to be taken from Darlington Road (A1150) and Tornado Way (B6279).
- b. Site layout should make an allowance for a distributor road which will run north south across the site, linking Darlington Road (A1150) and Tornado Way (B6279).
- c. Development should be concentrated on the southern part of the site to the south-east of Burdon Hill. Any development proposed to the north of Burdon Hill must converse those elements which contribute to the significance of listed buildings in Great Burdon, and the Haughton-le-Skerne Conservation Area. Avoid development on or immediately around Burdon Hill.
- d. The western area of the site is within flood zones 2 and 3. This should be reflected in the site layout and development directed away from this area in line with the sequential approach. No development should be within FZ3b (with exception to essential infrastructure or water compatible development).
- e. Parts of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. ~~Development should be directed away from these areas in site layout.~~ This should be taken into account when devising the drainage strategy for the site.
- f. The river corridor of the Skerne along the western boundary (existing green corridor) should be protected and enhanced including significant new green infrastructure provision. Robust links should be created to this area.
- g. A proposed green corridor intersects the eastern part of the site, and another also follows the western boundary. These corridors should be enhanced as part of the development.
- h. Local recreation and green infrastructure links surrounding Red Hall Local Wildlife Site could be strengthened.
- i. There are opportunities to strengthen vegetation along existing road corridors in order to enhance green connectivity.
- j. Historic field boundaries should, where possible, be maintained.
- k. A gas pipeline, electricity pylons, water mains and sewers cross the site. Appropriate easements or diversions should be provided.
- l. A scheduled monument (a World War II bombing decoy control shelter) is located to the north east of the site. Consideration of the Scheduled Monument must inform the site layout and design including a significant buffer to the monument. Improve interpretation and accessibility to this historic asset as part of the sites development whilst preserving its setting. An appropriate programme of archaeological evaluation and monitoring will need to be undertaken during groundworks to identify and record the location of decoy fires and safety enclosures related to the shelter.
- m. The historic routes of the Stockton & Darlington Railway runs along the sites southern boundary and should be incorporated into the development with interpretation and access provided.
- n. Development proposals need to consider an appropriate programme of targeted archaeological evaluation and mitigation of features identified during earlier geophysical survey and ensure they are suitably investigated and recorded prior to development.
- o. A public right of way crosses the western part of the site, north to south, and should be considered in site layout.

- p. There is the potential of great crested newts on the site. ~~An ecological survey~~ Ecological assessment in line with Policy ENV8 would be required to support a planning application.
- q. A robust and appropriately landscaped boundary would be required along the north western edge of the site to maintain the openness and green infrastructure function of the adjoining Great Burdon Rural Gap (see policy ENV3).
- r. The openness and green infrastructure functions of the Haughton/Red Hall green wedge on the western part of the site should be retained and enhanced (see Policy ENV3).

Site 100 - Hall Farm, Branksome

The site is an urban extension to the west of the main urban area. It is bound by the A1(M) to the west and Malvern Crescent to the east. The site is greenfield land in agricultural use and is proposed for allocation for residential development with an indicative yield of ~~400~~353 dwellings.

Issues and requirements

- a. Allowance should be made in the site layout for an outer distributor road, running north south across the site.
- b. A proportion of the site along the southern boundary is within flood zone 2 and 3. This should be reflected in the site layout and development directed away from this area in line with the sequential approach. No development should be within FZ3b (with exception to essential infrastructure or water compatible development).
- c. There is also a watercourse along the eastern boundary of the site and no floodrisk data is available for this area. As a minimum there should be ground level surveys undertaken to determine risk from the river and hydraulic modelling may be required.
- d. Parts of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. ~~Development should be directed away from these areas in site layout.~~ This should be taken into account when devising the drainage strategy for the site.
- e. Beck valleys (Baydale and Cocker Beck) within and adjacent to the site should be protected and opportunities taken to extend and enhance green corridors / green infrastructure. They are identified as existing and proposed green corridors. Significant green infrastructure should be provided along the southern boundary to mitigate potential flooding.
- f. A significant landscape buffer should be provided along the A1(M).
- g. A public right of way extends along the sites western boundary. This should be considered in site layout and opportunities for enhancement.

Site 392 - Elm Tree Farm

The site is an urban extension to the north east of the main urban area. The site is to the north of Sparrow Hall Drive. It is a greenfield site which is largely in agricultural use and is proposed for allocation for residential development with an indicative yield of 200 dwellings.

Issues and requirements

- a. Vehicular access is to be taken from Sparrow Hall Drive.
- b. The Green Lane historic track runs adjacent to the site and should be protected.
- c. Old farm buildings on site could contain biodiversity interest. ~~An ecological survey~~ Ecological Assessment in line with Policy ENV8 may be required to support a planning application.
- d. There is opportunity for reinforcement of local recreational and green infrastructure links particularly west towards Springfield Park and north towards the River Skerne.
- e. Parts of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. ~~Development should be directed away from these areas in site layout.~~ This should be taken into account when devising the drainage strategy for the site.
- f. A public footpath crosses the southeastern part of the site and should be considered in layout.

Site 504 - Snipe Lane, Hurworth Moor, Phase 2

The site is an urban extension to the south of the main urban area and is adjacent to an existing housing commitment. It is bound by the housing development under construction to the east, the A66 to the south and railway lines and Geneva Woods to the west and north. The site is greenfield land in agricultural use and is proposed for allocation for residential development with an indicative yield of ~~445~~180 dwellings.

Issues and requirements

- a. Vehicular access to the site should be taken from the adjacent development site to the west and Neasham Road.
- b. There is a small area of landfill on the site and areas of gypsum which should be considered in any development proposal.
- c. Site is adjacent to the A66 to the south and railway lines to the west and north. Site layout should mitigate any potential impacts.
- d. The site is located adjacent to the Geneva Wood Local Nature Reserve and a proposed green corridor crosses the western part of the site. There is also a small area of priority habitat (deciduous woodland) in the south-western corner of the site (see policy ENV10). A scheme should include provision of appropriate landscaping and other mitigation, including landscape buffer, to reduce impact on the LNR. The opportunity could also be taken to create new green links to this area.
- e. There is the opportunity to strengthen boundaries along the A66 with planting to create green corridors.
- f. There is the potential for Great Crested Newts on the site. ~~An ecological survey~~ Ecological assessment in line with Policy ENV8 will be required to support a planning application.
- g. A number of public rights of way cross the site which should be considered in the site layout.
- h. There are a number of railway cottages on the site which should be integrated into the scheme.
- i. Parts of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. Development should be directed away from these areas in site layout.

Urban Area

Site 11 - Cattle Mart

This brownfield site was previously a cattle and auction mart but has been cleared and currently in use as a surface car park. It is located to the south west of the town centre. Although not currently available work is underway to develop a new multi story car park for Bank Top train station and once complete this site will no longer be required. The site is proposed for allocation for residential development with an indicative yield of 76 dwellings.

Issues and requirements

- a) The East Coast mainline and Bank Top Station lie to the east of the site; appropriate mitigation should be provided.
- b) The site will likely have some contamination that should be remediated as part of a development scheme.
- c) Numerous TPO trees are present along the sites northern boundary. Development need not impact on the trees and could result in new planting (see policy ENV10).
- d) The Grade II* listed Bank Top Station is located adjacent to the site. Development of the site will need to enhance the setting of the listed building and also reflect railway terraced development which is prevalent in the area.
- e) Development should be concentrated on the western half of the site set back from Park Lane maintaining open views of heritage assets.
- f) Development should respect the historic grain of development, use sympathetic materials, and be of an appropriate scale and design so as not to compete with the more prominent buildings in the area, particularly Bank Top Station.
- g) Wherever possible, non-designated heritage assets (identified by the Heritage Impact Assessment) on the site should be retained and re-used as part of the sites redevelopment. Development proposals will need to consider an appropriate programme of targeted archaeological evaluation and mitigation during groundworks, in particular in the area of the previous car park.
- h) Parts of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. Development should be directed away from these areas in site layout.

Site 467 – Tees Grange

The site is located within the south western part of the main urban area. It is greenfield land used for grazing with woodland along the eastern and western boundaries. Hummersknott Academy is located to the east, Broken Scar Water Treatment works to the west and residential uses to the north and south. Coniscliffe Road (A67) is also located to the south which is a main route into Darlington town centre. The site is proposed for residential development with an indicative yield of ~~89~~75 dwellings.

Issues and requirements

- a. Vehicular access to the site should be taken from Coniscliffe Road and will involve the demolition of 506 Coniscliffe Road.
- b. The site has existing biodiversity value and wildlife habitats and features which should be protected and enhanced.
- c. There is priority habitat deciduous woodland along the eastern boundary of the site. There are also a number of TPOs on the site (see policy ENV10) and it is in close proximity to ponds with great crested newts. ~~An ecological survey~~ Ecological assessment in line with Policy ENV8 will be required to support a planning application.
- d. Broken Scar Local Wildlife Site is located to the north-west. An appropriate buffer should be provided in this area and there are opportunities to enhance the surrounding green infrastructure network.
- e. The site is within an area of ~~special~~ high archaeological potential ~~interest~~. A planning application must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report.
- f. Pockets of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. Development should be directed away from these areas in site layout.

Site 468 – Kendrew Street Car Park Regeneration Area

The site is brownfield land to the north of Darlington town centre. It consists of a surface car park and a mix of commercial units and office use. St Augustine's Way (town centre ring road) is located to the south with car parking and the town centre beyond. To the north is North Lodge Park and Council offices at Central House. To the west is largely residential and to the east a mix of commercial uses. The site is ~~allocated for housing, with a yield of approximately 125 dwellings~~ proposed for allocation for mixed use development with an indicative yield of 125 dwellings, including compatible commercial development and potential for specialist housing.

- a. Vehicular access to be taken from Gladstone Street.
- b. The site is partly within Northgate Conservation Area and adjacent to a number of listed buildings and structures including Central School, Central School Annexe, North Lodge, 138 – 148 Northgate and the Band Stand at North Lodge Park. The impact on these heritage assets should be carefully considered in the development of the site. Any scheme would require appropriate design and layout to mitigate any harm.
- c. The site is within an area of special archaeological interest. A planning application must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report.
- d. Pockets of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. Development should be directed away from these areas in site layout.
- e. Consider amenity impacts from the ring road and include appropriate mitigation.

Site 471 – Land east of Maidendale (former Ingenium Parc)

The site is located to the south east of main urban area and is largely agricultural land with some associated buildings and a car park linked to the adjacent employment area. The site is bound by the railway line to the south and A66 to the east. There is green space and employment uses to the north, with Maidendale Nature Reserve to the west. The site is to be allocated for approximately 720 dwellings.

Issues and requirements

- a. Vehicular access to be taken from Salters Lane and/or Alderman Best Way.
- b. Development should provide new road infrastructure connecting the site to Morton Palms Business Park.
- c. The site has existing biodiversity value and wildlife habitats and features which should be protected and enhanced. This is particularly the case in the southern area of the site adjacent to the railway. There is the potential for great crested newts on the site. ~~An~~ ecological survey Ecological assessment in line with Policy ENV8 would be required to support a planning application.
- d. Existing and proposed green corridors bound the site along the southern and western boundaries. This provides opportunities to strengthen vegetation along these corridors and create new linkages to them in order to enhance the green infrastructure network.
- e. The site is adjacent to Maidendale Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site. Suitable buffering should be provided and there is the opportunity to create enhanced habitat links to the area.
- f. Site design should give consideration to the listed buildings at the Cummins site to the north and the associated landscaping which is a registered park and garden.
- g. Salters Lane historic route runs along the western boundary of the site and should be protected and where possible enhanced.
- h. Development proposals will need to consider an appropriate programme of targeted archaeological evaluation and mitigation, particularly in the southern part of the site.
- i. Historic field boundaries should, where possible, be maintained.

- j. A public footpath follows the south-western boundary of the site. This should be considered in site layout.
- k. Consider amenity impacts from surrounding employment uses and railway line. Suitable mitigation should be provided.
- l. Pockets of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. Development should be directed away from these areas in site layout.

Villages

Site 95 - Beech Crescent East, Heighington

The site is located to the north of east of Heighington village and is bound by the A6072 to the east. It is greenfield land currently in agricultural use. The site is proposed for allocation for residential development with an indicative yield of 20 dwellings.

Issues and requirements:

- a. Vehicular access to be taken from the adjoining housing development to the west.
- b. The impact on the Heighington conservation area and the grade II listed buildings to the south should be carefully considered in the development of this site. Any scheme would require appropriate design and layout to mitigate any harm to these heritage assets and should be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the Heritage Impact Assessment.
- c. The site is within an area of ~~special archaeological interest~~ high archaeological potential.
- d. Areas along the site boundaries are susceptible to surface water flooding. Development should be directed away from these areas in site layout.

Employment

Site 360 - Heighington North

The 5.7 hectare Heighington North site is part of the cross-boundary Merchant Park development with County Durham in which the Hitachi factory in Newton Aycliffe is located. The sites East and South boundaries are with the remainder of the Merchant Park site. The sites Northern boundary is with Heighington Lane.

Issues and requirements

- a. Vehicular access is to be taken from Heighington Lane.
- b. Development proposals should be in line with the Merchant Park Masterplan.
- c. Retain and enhance the wooded areas along the sites North and West boundaries.
- d. A small part of the site is within flood zone 2 and 3 as Demon's Beck runs through the site. In the future, climate change is expected to increase the area at risk of flooding. Any alterations to flow path, ground levels or other blockages within existing and future flood zone 3 areas will require hydraulic modelling of the Heighington Industrial Estate to determine the impacts. The site is also at risk from surface water flooding along the beck corridor. ~~Development should be directed away from this area in line with the sequential approach and appropriate mitigation provided. This should be taken into account when devising the drainage strategy for the site.~~ No development should be within FZ3b (with exception to essential infrastructure or water compatible development).

Site 362 - Teesside International Airport South

The 39.30 hectare Teesside International Airport South site lies to the south of the operational airport and its eastern boundary is defined by the borough boundary with Stockton-on-Tees. The southern and western boundaries of the site are with agricultural land running towards the river Tees.

Issues and requirements

- a. Vehicular access should be provided across the site's boundary with Stockton-on-Tees Borough via the adjoining allocation site in Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan
- b. Development must not interfere with the operation of the airport.
- c. A joint design approach with the neighbouring allocation site in Stockton-on-Tees is required.
- d. A detailed masterplan for the site that describes the significance of heritage assets on the site and seeks to conserve and enhance them must be submitted in support of any planning application.
- e. The scale, layout and design of development should respond sympathetically to the historical significance of the site, preserving the overall layout of the Second World War and Cold War airfield, and securing the future of the remaining heritage assets on the site as identified in the Heritage Impact Assessment.
- f. Development should look to retain the form and layout of the former military airfield by locating buildings of an appropriate scale and design over the dispersal areas and former administrative building footings, interspersed by grassland areas, and by maintaining the existing access plan. Development proposals should include signage and information that helps to interpret the history of the site.
- g. Development proposals should acknowledge the historical association between the former military airfield and the adjacent Grade II Church of St George, protecting the setting of the building.
- h. Targeted archaeological evaluation will be required prior to development and any resulting mitigation secured in line with Policy ENV 1.
- i. Careful ecological assessment, [in line with Policy ENV8](#), and planning is required, taking into account existing landscape features.

Site ~~474~~ [433](#) – Burtree Lane Employment Park

The 37.57 hectare Burtree lane Employment Site is a strategic employment site close to Darlington's Junction 68 on the A1(M) and the A68. The site is located north of the A1(M) and east of the A68. The western end of Burtree Lane runs through the allocation site. Burtree Garden Village south of the A1(M) is adjoining and the Darlington Farmers [Auction](#) Mart Site with Burtree Caravan Centre and the Burtree Inn public house are to the North and west of the site. ~~Minimal topography change on the site makes the site suitable for industrial and logistic development.~~

Issues and requirements

- a. Providing suitable plots for of mixture of mid-sized and large-sized B2 and B(8) land use plots.
- b. A masterplan for the site should be developed to ensure that a [cohesive and](#) high quality ~~of design is delivered that meets the aspirations of Burtree Lane~~ [designed](#) Employment Park [is delivered which protects the qualities and key sensitivities of the landscape.](#)
- c. Burtree Gate Marsh Local Wildlife Site is located to the north-east. ~~An appropriate~~ [Suitable](#) buffering should be provided ~~in this area~~ and there are opportunities to [create enhanced habitat links to the area and](#) enhance the surrounding green infrastructure network.
- d. Provide a suitable landscape buffer to A1(M), Burtree Lane and adjoining sites.
- e. Enhance connectivity and mitigate any significant adverse impact to the A1M and the A68, as well as providing connectivity to Burtree Lane.
- f. Provide suitable connectivity with sustainable transport networks. This should include footway, cycleway and public transport connections [\(including enabling connectivity to Site 393- Darlington Farmers Auction Mart\).](#)
- g. [An appropriate buffer should be provided around the ordinary watercourse in the northern section of the site. There is no flood risk data available for this watercourse which is culverted immediately downstream and may cause flooding issues on site. As a minimum, ground level surveys should be undertaken to determine risk of flooding from the watercourse and hydraulic modelling may be required. The capacity of the culvert should](#)

Site 474 – East Street

East Street is a 1.25 hectare strategic Town Centre employment site adjoining ~~Crown Street~~ Darlington Library, the River Skerne, St Cuthberts Way and Priestgate. It is a key regeneration area in Darlington with high potential for ~~Office development~~ office led, mixed use development , including commercial and other town centre uses reflecting its sustainable location and regeneration role opposite the Darlington Economic Campus at Brunswick Street which is currently under construction

Issues and requirements

- a) Providing suitable plots for Office development E (g) on high specification of Grade A and above and other appropriate E - and Town Centre uses.
- b) Ensure that a high quality of design is delivered in line with DC1 that meets the aspirations of Darlington Town Centre
- c) The site is adjacent to the Town Centre Conservation Area and the Grade II listed buildings to the east, including the library building. The impact on these heritage assets should be carefully considered in the development of this site. Any scheme will require appropriate design and layout to mitigate any harm to these heritage assets
- d) Provide a suitable landscape buffer to the River Skerne Proposed Green Corridor and St Cuthberts Way and support the achievement of the actions set out in Part Bi-vii of Policy ENV7 where relevant.
- e) ~~Ensure that Flood risk from the River Skerne is mitigated efficiently.~~ The site is in flood zone 2 and 3. This should be reflected in the site layout and development directed away from this area in line with the sequential approach. No development should be within FZ3b (with exception to essential infrastructure or water compatible development).
- f) Enhance connectivity to Crown Street and St Cuthberts Way in Darlington Town Centre.

APPENDIX C DARLINGTON'S HERITAGE ASSETS

Summary of Designated Heritage Assets

Listed Buildings (541)

All Listed Buildings in Darlington Borough can be found on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>. It is advisable to use the map-search function. If you do word-search, please keep in mind that the official name of your listed building may differ from the current property name.

More information on Listed Buildings can be found on our website:
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regs/planning/conservation-historical-environment/listed-buildings/>

Scheduled Monuments (19)

All Scheduled Monuments in Darlington Borough can also be found on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>. Again, it is advisable to use the map-search function.

- Archdeacon Newton: medieval site
- Bishopton: Castle Hill earthworks
- Brafferton: Ketton Bridge
- Coatham Mundeville: medieval village
- Darlington: Coniscliffe Road waterworks
- Great Burdon: World War II bombing decoy control shelter
- Heighington: camp on Shackleton Hill
- High Coniscliffe: Smotherlaw round barrow
- High Coniscliffe: Ulnaby deserted medieval village
- Low Dinsdale: earthworks of manor house
- Low Dinsdale: Angle-saxon cross
- Middleton St. George: deserted village of West Hartburn
- Middleton St George: Tower Hill Motte
- Piercebridge: Roman station
- Piercebridge: Piercebridge Bridge
- Sadberge: shrunken medieval village
- Sockburn: All Saints Church
- Summerhouse: Summerhouse earthworks
- Walworth: deserted village

More information on Scheduled Monuments can be found at:
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regs/planning/conservation-historical-environment/scheduled-monuments/>

Conservation Areas (18)

All Conservation Areas in Darlington Borough as well as more information on them can be found on our website: <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regs/planning/conservation-historical-environment/conservation-areas/>

- Bishopton
- Coatham Mundeville
- Cockerton Green
- Denton
- Haughton-le-Skerne
- Heighington
- High Coniscliffe
- Hurworth
- Middleton One Row
- Parkgate
- Piercebridge
- S & DR: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks)
- S & DR: Northgate
- Sadberge
- Summerhouse
- Town Centre
- Victoria Embankment
- West End

Registered Parks and Gardens (3)

All Registered Parks and Gardens in Darlington Borough can be found on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>). It is advisable to use the map-search function.

- South Park
- West Cemetery
- Landscape at Cummins Engine Factory

Significance of Heritage Assets in Darlington

In determining planning applications that may affect a heritage asset – i.e. a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions – the Council requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should be done as part of a Heritage Statement or Design and Access Statement. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant Historic Environment Record (HER) (held with Durham County Council) should be consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).

The significance of a heritage asset is the sum of its heritage values (interests). [Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF \(2024\)](#) defines significance (for heritage policy) as "the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting". The most commonly used heritage values are set out in [English Heritage's Historic England's Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance \(2008\)](#) ~~for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment~~ available here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/>

Evidential value: the physical remains of past human activity.

Evidential value comprises the surviving original/old fabric (materials), features and/or layout of heritage assets above and below ground, including any historical 'wear and tear' and alterations. It is the primary source of evidence and can often tell us about the former use (i.e. historical value) of certain heritage asset types (e.g. the original floor plan of a building which shows the division between main and service areas). Evidential value is therefore of high importance. Any damage to or loss of it tends to be non-reversible and diminishes our ability to understand and interpret the heritage asset.

Historical Value (associative and illustrative) - the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected to a heritage asset; this tends to be illustrative or associative.

Sources of information include designation records, entries on the HER, historical records and various publications (e.g. The Victoria History of the Counties of England. A History of the County of Durham, Volume IV: Darlington and books/articles by George Flynn or Chris Lloyd).

Typical examples of historical value in Darlington Borough are:

- Heritage assets which have associations with important people such as the Quakers (e.g. Barclay's Bank, Darlington Library)
- Heritage assets which have associations with important events such as the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (e.g. Skerne Bridge)
- Heritage assets which have associations with other former industry, such as leather/tanning, textile and steel (e.g. Skinnergate)
- Heritage assets which have associations with other aspects of Darlington's historical development (e.g. former burgage plots, yards and wynds, the Iron Age hill fort at Shackleton Beacon)

Aesthetic Value (designed and fortuitous) - the sensory and intellectual stimulation people draw from a heritage asset; it can be the result of its design or its development over time.

Typical examples of aesthetic value in Darlington Borough are:

- Landmark structures (e.g. the Clock Tower)
- Heritage assets of high-quality or, sometimes, unusual design, also in terms how they harmonise with their setting and other surrounding assets (e.g. Church of St Cuthbert within the churchyard)
- Heritage assets which have high-quality detailing (e.g. the former Technical College)
- Groups of heritage assets which are aesthetically pleasing or characterful, often not the result of an overall design but organic development over time (e.g. Piercebridge village)

Communal Value - the meanings of a heritage asset for the people who relate to it (e.g. residents and other stakeholders)

Typical examples of communal value in Darlington Borough are:

- Heritage assets which are the focus of a community or interest group (e.g. pubs, religious buildings)
- Heritage assets with links to collective identity or memory (e.g. the Clock Tower, war memorials)
- Heritage assets which people have personal memories of (e.g. from their childhood)

Non-designated Heritage Assets

National planning practice guidance refers to non-designated heritage assets as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by the Council as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

A criteria-based approach for identifying them, which has been taken by a number of Local Authorities, has been shown to be robust at both application and appeal stage.

Once identified these non-designated heritage assets will be recorded on the Council’s in-house UNiform system and be added to the Historic Environment Record (HER).

Darlington’s locally significant buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes will be identified using the following criteria either through the development management process (including pre-applications), through plan making (including neighbourhood plans), the production of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, and other Council activities.

Table C.1 Criteria for assessing non-designated heritage assets

Criteria	Description
Age	This may be an important criterion. The age range can take into account distinctive local characteristics or building traditions.
Rarity	Judged against local characteristics.
Architectural or artistic interest	The intrinsic design and aesthetic value relating to local or national styles, materials, construction and craft techniques, or other distinctive characteristics.
Group Value	Groupings of heritage assets with a clear visual design or historic relationship.
Archaeological Interest ⁽¹⁾	Physical evidence about past human activity in the locality, which may be in the form of buried remains, but may also be revealed in the structure of buildings or in a designed

¹ Non-designated Heritage Assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to Scheduled Monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets, as stated in Footnote 75 of the NPPF (December 2024).

	landscape, for instance.
Historic Interest	A significant historical association of local or national note, including links to important local figures. Blue Plaque and similar schemes may be relevant. Social and communal interests have special value, relating to places perceived as a source of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence, and contributing to the 'collective memory' of a place.
Landmark Status	A heritage asset with strong communal or historical associations, or because it has especially striking aesthetic value within the local scene.

If the potential asset meets two or more of the criteria set out in the table above, then it should be considered a Non-Designated Heritage Asset.

Areas of High Archaeological Potential

Durham County Council's Archaeological Service maintain the Historic Environment Record (HER) on behalf of Darlington Borough Council. The HER is the principal source of information about the historic environment of County Durham and Darlington.

Using the information contained in the HER, the County Council has assisted the Borough Council in producing a map of areas that include, or have the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest. The identification of these 'Areas of High Archaeological Potential' is part of the Borough Council's positive approach to the historic environment as required by national policy⁽²⁾.

In mapping Areas of High Archaeological Potential the following have been included, where present in the Borough:

- Scheduled Monuments and a 50 meter buffer zone around them. The reason for the buffer zone is that many scheduling's were done decades ago with only the core element protected. Also, in some cases, subsequent research and discoveries have shown sites are often more extensive than previously appreciated;
- Conservation areas along with the 'historic cores' of settlements (as defined by the County Durham and Darlington Historic Landscape Characterisation Project) which may not be a Conservation Area or extend beyond the Conservation Area boundary;
- Registered Historic Parks and Gardens;
- Non-designated deserted or shrunken medieval
- villages; Mining and industrial sites/complexes;
- Archaeological sites and their environs;
- Cluster analysis involving entries that are within 100 metres of another record. The basis for this is that clusters of discoveries in close proximity may well indicate the existence of hitherto unknown sites. However, certain types of site do not usefully reflect this, and were filtered out of the cluster analysis – these included:
 - Records which fell into the areas already added to the trigger map by the above processes.
 - Records likely to reflect buildings rather than archaeology (e.g. Broad Type of

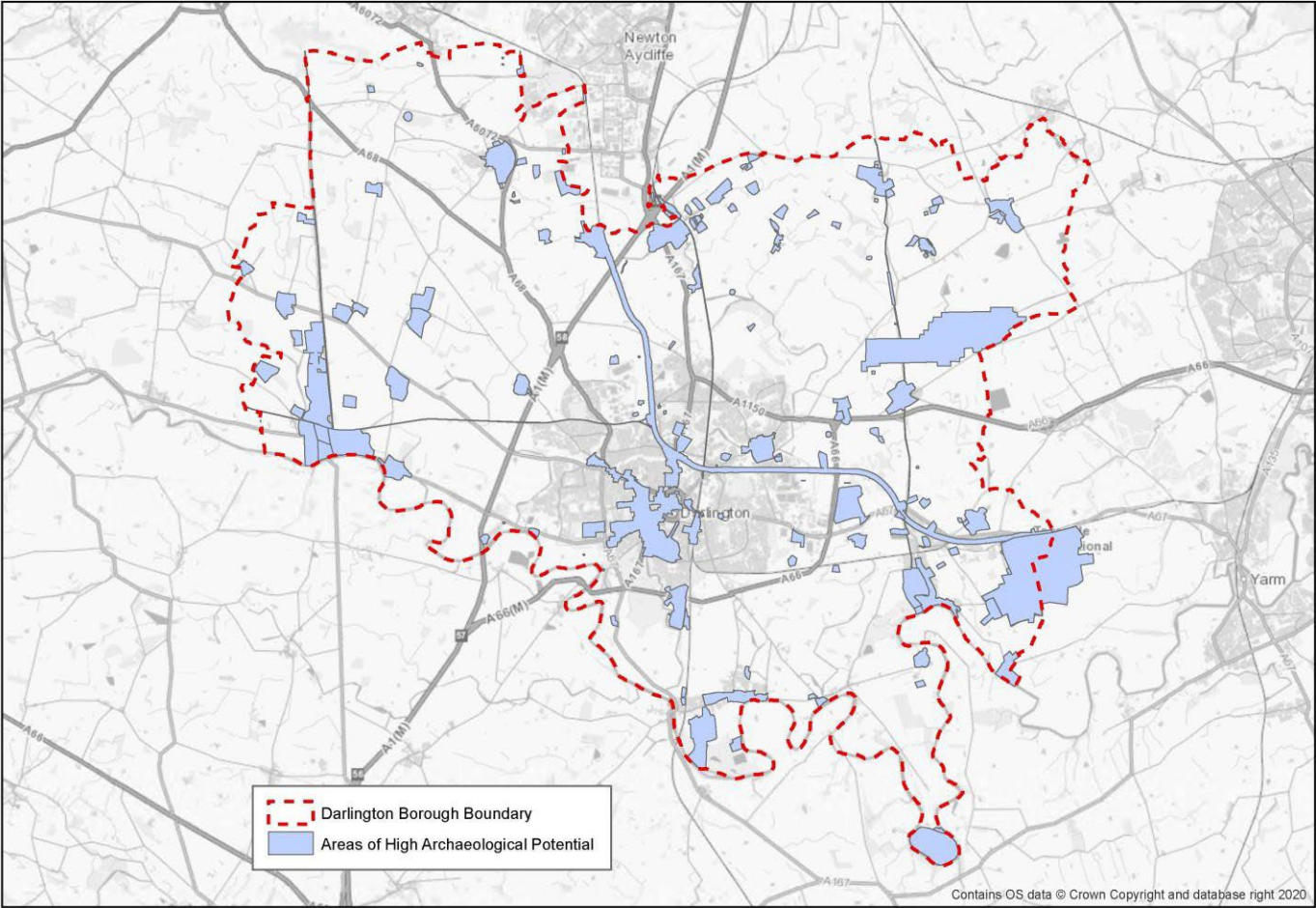
100 ² Paragraph 203 of the NPPF (December 2024).

- Historic Building; or Monument Types such as Barn, Bastle, Cart Shed, Dovecotes; Farmhouse, House, icehouse, Public House, School, Sheep Fold etc.).
- Records which were thought to represent single features (e.g. Boundary Stones, Milestones, Chest Tombs, War Memorials, Commemorative Monuments, Crosses, Effigies, Gate Piers, Grave Slabs).
- Monuments types which often represent storage locations of items rather than find locations (e.g. Altars, Sculpture, Hog backs – all of which are often depicted at the Church they are stored at rather than from where they were recovered).
- Non-archaeological records (e.g. Broad Types of Historic Overviews, Maritime or Aircraft Crash Sites, or Monument Types of Local History or relating to any of these broad types e.g. Wreck, Ship etc.).

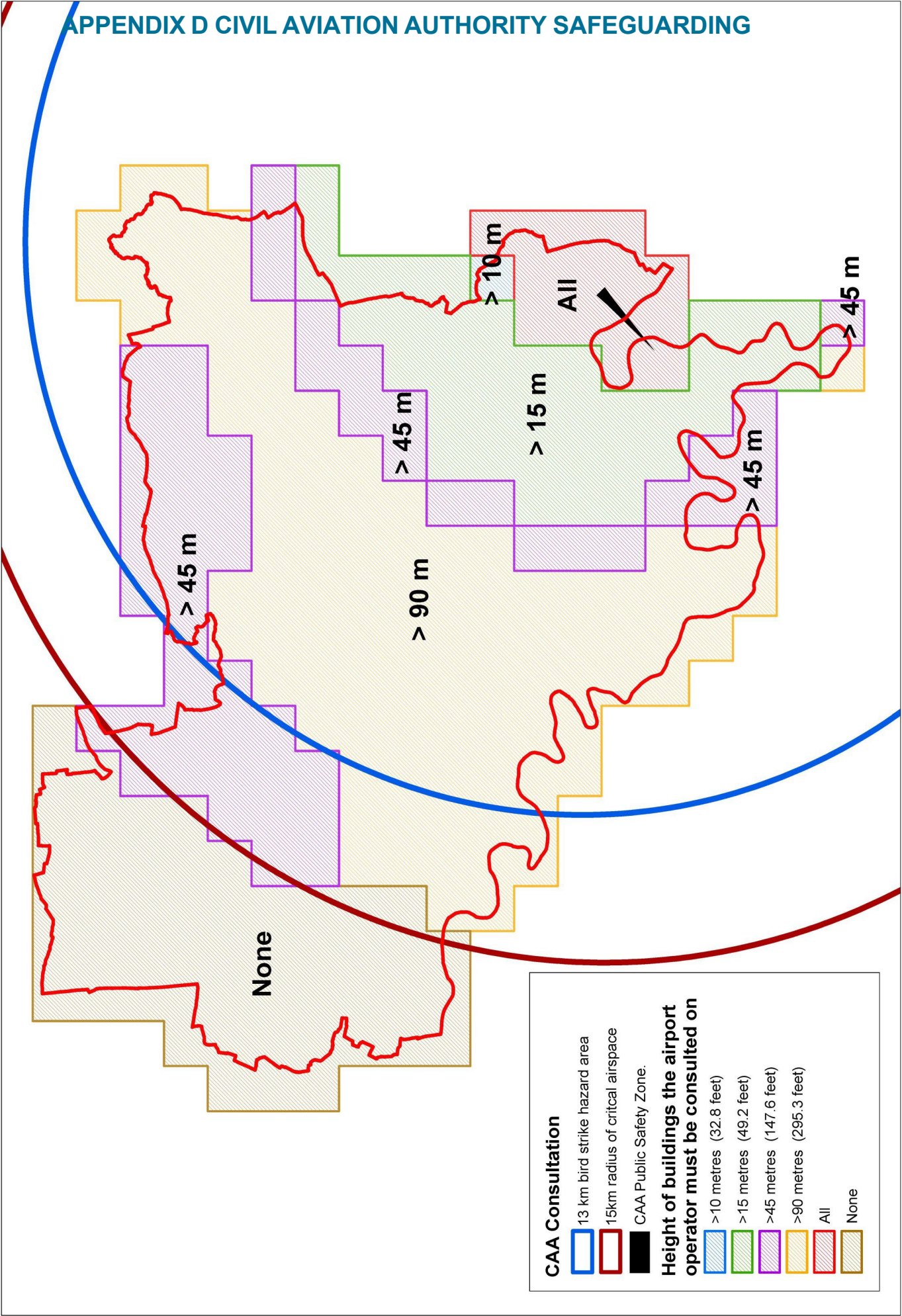
In some cases – for example Piercebridge – research both here and at other Roman forts shows that the complex of archaeological phenomena outside the defended area is far more extensive than once appreciated (including civil settlement, cemeteries, religious sites, etc.) so the area of archaeological interest extends beyond the formally designated area.

The areas of high archaeological potential are illustrated in Figure C.1 below. It should be noted that these are not static and need to be updated periodically as new or updated data is added to the Historic Environment Record. So, the interactive policies map should be consulted for the latest information

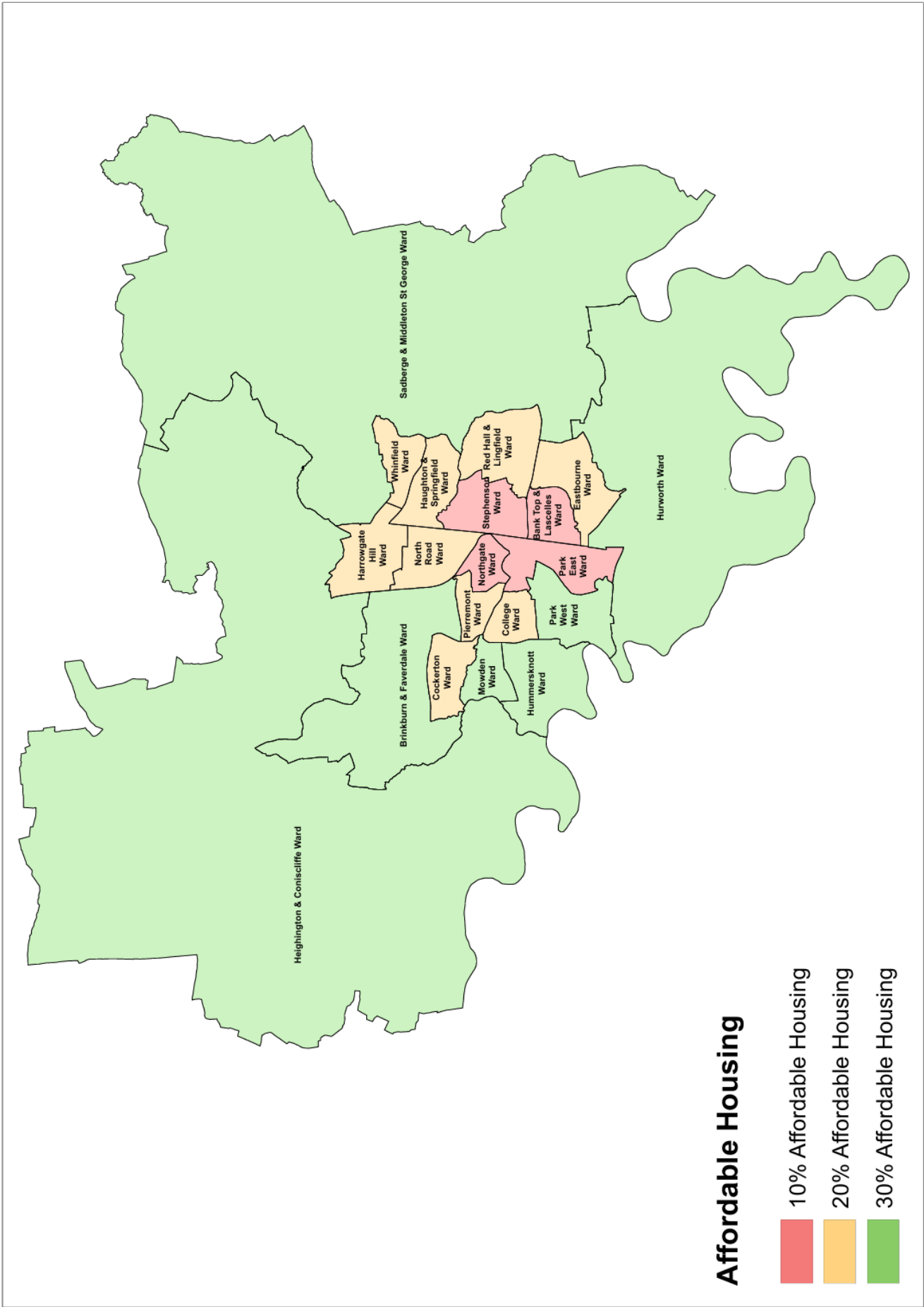
Figure C.1 Areas of High Archaeological Potential



APPENDIX D CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY SAFEGUARDING



APPENDIX E - AFFORDABLE HOUSING REQUIREMENT



APPENDIX F: Nationally Described Space Standards

The standard requires that:

- a) the dwelling provides at least the gross internal floor area and built-in storage area set out in Table 1 below
- b) a dwelling with two or more bedspaces has at least one double (or twin) bedroom
- c) in order to provide one bedspace, a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5m² and is at least 2.15m wide
- d) in order to provide two bedspaces, a double (or twin bedroom) has a floor area of at least 11.5m²
- e) one double (or twin bedroom) is at least 2.75m wide and every other double (or twin) bedroom is at least 2.55m wide
- f) any area with a headroom of less than 1.5m is not counted within the Gross Internal Area unless used solely for storage (if the area under the stairs is to be used for storage, assume a general floor area of 1m² within the Gross Internal Area)
- g) any other area that is used solely for storage and has a headroom of 900- 1500mm (such as under eaves) is counted at 50% of its floor area, and any area lower than 900mm is not counted at all
- h) a built-in wardrobe counts towards the Gross Internal Area and bedroom floor area requirements, but should not reduce the effective width of the room below the minimum widths set out above. The built-in area in excess of 0.72m² in a double bedroom and 0.36m² in a single bedroom counts towards the built-in storage requirement
- i) the minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area

Table 1 - Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m²)

Number of bedrooms(b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	