



Red Hall Neighbourhood  
Renewal Strategy  
2015-17

# Red Hall: Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy 2015-17

## Table of contents

Tables .....	2
Acknowledgements.....	2
Summary .....	3
1. Introduction .....	4
2. Red Hall Profile.....	6
3. Policy Framework .....	9
4. The Housing Investment Plan and Draft Masterplan .....	10
5. Governance .....	12
6. Transport & Connectivity.....	15
7. Services .....	16
8. Environment.....	18
9. Economy.....	20
10. Housing & the Built Environment .....	21
11. Social & Culture .....	23
12. Provision, Activities & Resources.....	26

## Tables

Table One: Sustainable Communities' Elements

Table Two: Census and Health Profile

Table Three: Summary of Residents' Views

Table Four: Red Hall Draft Masterplan and Sustainable Communities

## Acknowledgements

Tim Brown, the author of this report, would like to thank the officers of Darlington Borough Council and Groundwork NE & Cumbria for their help in providing information and, at short notice, making themselves available for interviews.

## Summary

- This neighbourhood renewal strategy is one of three plans that will improve the quality of life on Red Hall and help build a sustainable community. It, therefore, needs to be read in conjunction with the Housing Investment Plan and the draft Red Hall Masterplan. There is a separate Action Plan that accompanies this strategy
- The major aim of the strategy is to help to build a more resilient and self-reliant community. There is, thus, a focus on governance, services, the economy and social & culture elements. Housing and the built environment is already effectively covered in the Housing Investment Plan and the draft Red Hall Masterplan
- Although some residents and stakeholders feel positive about the area (eg, 'it's better than you think'), there are a number of significant issues relative to Darlington as a whole. These include low car-ownership, worklessness and deprivation
- There is an effective policy framework that prioritises investment in the regeneration of Red Hall as part of the Eastern Growth Zone
- Involving residents and other local stakeholders in the management and delivery of the housing and built environment projects is an important step in building community engagement
- Local groups and organisations should be supported so that their management is improved and that they are able to offer a wider range of facilities and services to residents
- Improving local services is hugely dependant on major new residential developments adjacent to Red Hall that will increase the catchment area
- An underused but high quality facility is Red Hall Primary School, which has been rated as 'good' by OFSTED. It should be supported in its efforts to extend its portfolio of activities
- Tackling the lack of training and improving employability are major issues. The Red Hall Worklessness Project is attempting to address these issues but requires additional support so that it more fully engages with residents
- There are opportunities through the Council's revised Customer Engagement Strategy to enhance community involvement. These include encouraging residents to act as neighbourhood auditors, supporting bids by Red Hall organisations for community fund grants and promoting neighbourhood issue campaigns
- Linked to community engagement, it is recommended that a 'U decide' project is developed whereby local groups put together proposals to improve an aspect of life on Red Hall. The proposals are then presented to residents who decide on the winner. Funding is provided to implement the successful scheme
- For the foreseeable future, Darlington Borough Council will have major challenges in directly funding capital projects and services. New sources of funding and support are required to ensure that plans and projects are delivered. These include the use of planning agreements linked to major developments in the Eastern Growth Zone, charitable and grant-funding bodies, the voluntary sector and the business community through corporate social responsibility programmes.

# 1. Introduction

## *Aims and Objectives*

The aims for the regeneration of Red Hall are to:

- Ensure that it is an attractive place to live
- Make certain that the housing stock is fit for purpose and contributes to the general well-being of the residents
- Ensure that Red Hall is appropriately integrated into the longer term development of the Eastern Growth Zone
- Develop a more self-reliant community that has the capacity to proactively take initiatives to improve Red Hall.

As well as this strategy, there is the current Housing Investment Plan and a draft Red Hall Masterplan. These three policy statements form a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach for improving Red Hall.

The aim of this neighbourhood renewal strategy is to set out a framework and action plan so that Red Hall becomes a 'sustainable community'. This is usually, defined as a neighbourhood where, firstly, people want to live and, secondly, it meets the diverse needs of existing and future residents.

The Egan Review<sup>1</sup> lists seven individual elements that contribute to a sustainable community. There is also a unifying common theme. These form the more detailed objectives for this report. They also provide a framework for this strategy. The common theme is 'all provision and activities should be high quality, well-designed and maintained, safe, accessible, adaptable and cost-effectively provided' (referred to in this document as 'provision, activities & resources'). The seven individual elements are set out in the table below:

*Table One: Sustainable Communities' Elements*

<b>Sustainable Community Elements</b>	<b>Examples of Sub-Elements</b>
<i>Governance:</i> Effective and inclusive participation, representation & leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Civic values, responsibility and pride</li><li>• Effective and informed leadership.</li></ul>
<i>Transport &amp; Connectivity:</i> Good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public transport</li><li>• Walking and cycling opportunities</li><li>• ICT<sup>2</sup>.</li></ul>
<i>Services:</i> A full range of appropriate, accessible public, private, community and voluntary services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Well-performing schools</li><li>• High quality health and social care</li><li>• Neighbourhood facilities, eg, shops.</li></ul>
<i>Environment:</i> Providing places for people to live in an environmentally-friendly manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Energy efficiency</li><li>• Protection of natural resources.</li></ul>

Sustainable Community Elements	Examples of Sub-Elements
<i>Economy:</i> A flourishing and diverse local economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs and training opportunities</li> <li>• Strong business community in wider economy.</li> </ul>
<i>Housing &amp; the Built Environment:</i> A quality built and natural environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of place</li> <li>• Well-maintained.</li> </ul>
<i>Social &amp; Culture:</i> Vibrant, harmonious and inclusive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community identity and belonging</li> <li>• Tolerance, respect and engagement</li> <li>• Friendly and co-operative behaviour.</li> </ul>

### Approach

This strategy builds on current and recent reports and publications on Red Hall including:

- Housing Quality Network: 'Redhall Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy' – Draft Report and Stakeholder Briefing (Summer 2015)
- Darlington Borough Council 'Red Hall Village Masterplan' – Draft (July 2015)
- Darlington Borough Council 'Red Hall Communications Strategy' (June 2015)
- Darlington Borough Council 'Red Hall Regeneration Programme' (July 2015)
- Darlington Borough Council 'Investing in Red Hall' Newsletter (June 2015).

As well as analysing these reports, data sources have been used, eg, Census 2011 and Public Health England's Health Profile 2015 for Darlington. In addition, the broader policy context was investigated through an analysis of a number of local policy plans (eg, the local housing strategy) and briefing papers (eg, 'Darlington Eastern Growth Zone – Delivering the Vision' and 'Darlington – A Growing Economy').

Finally, five detailed interviews took place in mid-July 2015 with officers of the Borough Council and Groundwork NE & Cumbria, together with five site visits to Red Hall and the Eastern Growth Zone.

### Format

The next two sections set the framework for the Red Hall Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. A profile of the area is followed by the policy context. There is then a brief summary of the current housing investment plan and the draft masterplan. The remaining sections focus on the seven elements of a sustainable community together with a focus on the overall common theme of 'provision, activities & resources' (see above). Each of these sections contains a description and analysis of the issues together with recommendations and actions. These sections are designed so that the reader can chose specific sections if they do not want to read the whole report

There is a separate SMART<sup>3</sup> action plan. This draws together the recommendations and actions from sections five to twelve.



## 2. Red Hall Profile

### *Introduction*

This profile comprises three parts – a description of the physical characteristics, census & other related data and the views of residents. Conclusions in terms of issues are provided at the end of each of these three sub-sections.

### *Built Form and Tenure*

Red Hall is an isolated neighbourhood two miles from the town centre. It is currently surrounded by industrial estates, farm land and open space. There are major development proposals that will affect the adjacent land (see sections three and four).

The estate was built between 1967 and 1977. It was designed on 'Radburn principles' – a neighbourhood unit in a landscaped setting based around a primary school with the separation of pedestrian from vehicular traffic.



There are, in total, 642 properties and in 2011, nearly 1,600 people lived on Red Hall. There are two main groups and types of property:

- Radburn layout houses primarily in the centre and west of the estate (341 units) with front doors opening onto open space and footpaths. The rear gardens with high wooden fencing overlook estate roads and cul-de-sacs
- The 'courts' on the east of the estate comprising 140 units in a series of inward-looking cul-de-sacs.

Approximately a third of the properties have been subject to right-to-buy. In 2011, 8% of households were in private rented property.

The age, layout and tenure of Red Hall raise opportunities and challenges for the housing and built environment element of achieving a sustainable community. Darlington Borough Council, through its current housing investment plan and the draft masterplan, is already tackling issues such as the unpopularity of some types of property and the modernisation of stock which, in some cases, is nearly 50 years old.

### **Census 2011 and Health Profile**

These provide an understanding of some of the issues facing Red Hall and its residents compared with Darlington as a whole. The analysis has been structured around the sustainable community elements (see section one).

In relation to health, data is not readily available for Red Hall. However, discussions with staff at Healthy Darlington together with other council officers indicate that there are likely to be issues over adult health & lifestyle (eg, smoking during pregnancy and obesity) and disease & poor health (eg, recorded diabetes and hospital stays for self-harm and alcohol-related harm).

*Table Two: Census and Health Profile*

<b>Sustainable Community Elements</b>	<b>Census and Health Profile Data</b>
Governance	<i>No relevant data</i>
Transport & Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low car ownership with 52% of households having no access to a car and van compared with 28% of households in Darlington.</li> </ul>
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health services – 8% of the population identified themselves as in bad or very bad health compared with 6% in Darlington</li> <li>• Education &amp; training services: 41% of people over 16 years of age had no qualifications compared with 32% for Darlington.</li> </ul>
Environment	<i>No relevant data</i>
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low economic activity rate – 57% compared with a Darlington average of 73%</li> <li>• Low levels of full time employment – 27% of economically active people are in full time employment on Red Hall compared with 45% for Darlington</li> <li>• People who are economically inactive are more strongly represented than in Darlington as a whole in the categories of 'looking after the family or home' and 'long-term sick or disabled'</li> <li>• In April 2015, Red Hall had the third highest number of people in receipt of job seekers allowance in Darlington (11% compared with 4% for the town as a whole)</li> </ul>
Housing & the Built	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 54% of the households are under-occupying</li> </ul>

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Environment      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6% of households are overcrowded.</li> </ul>  |
| Social & Culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a relatively high child density with 30% of the population under 16 years of age compared with 21% for Darlington</li> <li>• There is a lower proportion of older people with 16% aged 65 years or over compared with 21% for Darlington</li> <li>• The proportion of people classifying themselves as from black and minority ethnic backgrounds is little different from Darlington as a whole.</li> </ul> |

Overall, in relation to deprivation, 76% of households experienced at least one type of deprivation compared to 32% of all households in Darlington. In relation to multiple deprivation, 11% of households on Red Hall experienced three dimensions of deprivation compared with 5% of Darlington households.

The Census and health data confirm that Red Hall is a neighbourhood with a number of challenges:

- Lack of employment, training and access to labour market issues
- Relatively poor health
- Potential physical difficulties in accessing services that are not 'local'
- Lack of adequate and appropriate facilities for children and young people
- Households dealing with deprivation and poverty
- Under-occupation (in relation to recent changes in Housing Benefit payments – 'spare room/bedroom tax').

### **Residents' Views**

This sub-section is based on the summary findings of two consultations held in 2013 that are reported in the Housing Quality Network papers (see section one) together with the findings from informal discussions with residents earlier this year. The main points are listed below using the framework of sustainable community elements:

*Table Three: Summary of Residents' Views*

Sustainable Community Elements	Summary of Residents' Views
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective action needed to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour through better management, policing and a multi-agency approach</li> </ul>
Transport & Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve traffic management on Red Hall to increase safety and security</li> <li>• Improve footpaths and facilities for pedestrians</li> <li>• Better communication between service providers and residents</li> </ul>
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for additional facilities, eg, food shops, health etc.</li> <li>• High quality facilities for younger children</li> <li>• Improved sports facilities</li> </ul>



Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve the natural environment surrounding Red Hall</li> </ul>
Economy	<i>Not directly covered</i>
Housing & the Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernise the stock and its appearance</li> <li>• Better management of open space areas</li> <li>• Support for new developments adjacent to Red Hall</li> </ul>
Social & Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address irresponsible behaviour by some residents and visitors to the area</li> <li>• Tackle apathy</li> <li>• Increase resident involvement.</li> </ul>

It should be noted that these views informed the housing investment plan as well as the draft masterplan (see section four).

Overall, a re-occurring message from some residents (and from service users operating on Red Hall) is that 'it is better than you think'. This suggests that there are opportunities to work with residents to create an even stronger sustainable community. But there is a challenge to tackle apathy and a lack of resident involvement because 'things are ok'.

### 3. Policy Framework

#### *Introduction*

This section focuses on the overall borough-wide context for Red Hall. It considers the growth zones and local policy plans (eg, the local housing strategy).

Overall, there is a well-established and robust policy framework that prioritises investment in Red Hall and adjacent areas. The Housing Investment Plan, the Red Hall Masterplan and this neighbourhood renewal strategy focus on the delivery and implementation of these policies.

#### *Growth Zones*

Red Hall is located within the Darlington Eastern Growth Zone. The latter is one of four growth zones in the Borough. The others are the Central Growth Zone (covering the town centre & its fringes and the central park), the North Western Growth Zone and Durham Tees Valley Airport (DTVA) Growth Zone. Investment and development is being prioritised in these four zones over the next decade with the aim of providing 6,000 new jobs, 6,700 new homes and 656 new businesses.

The Darlington Eastern Growth Zone consists of nine major projects and programmes. It aims to 'create a new suburb' that will 'provide a great quality of life for new and existing residents and fertile conditions for economic growth'. The masterplan is one of these projects. As well as Red Hall, the Eastern Growth Zone includes a number relevant adjacent projects:

- The Burdon Hill development to the north east of Red Hall will consist of new housing and a bus route link to Red Hall and the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor
- Residential development at Red Hall Stables to the north-west of Red Hall

- The development/redevelopment of Lingfield Point for residential and employment uses to the south of Red Hall. This will include better access between these two areas.

In total, it is estimated that there will be an additional 2,400 – 2,800 homes built near to Red Hall. Development is likely to commence in 2017.

In addition, the Eastern Growth Zone briefing paper highlights that use will be made of planning agreements with developers so as to secure contributions to deliver improved public services and infrastructure.

### ***Local Policy Plans***

The local policy plans confirm the importance and prioritisation of investing in Red Hall and the Eastern Growth Zone.

The Darlington Housing Strategy 2012-2017 has as objective 4 ‘invest in the regeneration of key locations’. A priority action as part of this objective is ‘to prepare and agree plans to regenerate Red Hall Estate’ (action 20).

The Economic Strategy for Darlington 2012-2016 sets the framework for the programme of actions in the Eastern Growth Zone. Firstly, it highlights the importance of developing and promoting the housing offer within the borough to support economic growth. Secondly, it emphasises the importance of the right infrastructure in terms of transport and land/premises. Thirdly there is a focus on tackling employment and training challenges by (i) reducing the number of job seeker allowance (JSA) claimants and (ii) reducing levels of worklessness. The Eastern Growth Zone proposals for Lingfield Point, Burdon Hill and the Red Hall Masterplan are examples of these types of actions.

In relation to planning policies, Darlington Borough Council’s Core Strategy highlights that Lingfield Point is a strategic employment location for development over the next decade (policy CS5). Similarly, the Eastern Urban Fringe and Lingfield Point are important strategic locations for new housing from 2016-2026 (policy CS10). Finally, there is an emphasis in the Core Strategy on regenerating existing housing areas (policy CS12). Although Red Hall is not specifically identified, the Core Diagram includes neighbourhoods in East Darlington.

## **4. The Housing Investment Plan and Draft Masterplan**

### ***Introduction***

This section provides a summary of the housing investment plan and the draft masterplan. These together with this neighbourhood renewal strategy form the policy framework and action plan to transform Red Hall.

Overall, there is an impressive set of actions that will result in significant improvements over the next five years. In relation to the development of a sustainable community, these two initiatives primarily focus on transport & connectivity, services and housing & the built environment. Thus, this neighbourhood renewal strategy needs to focus principally on governance, the economy, the environment and social & culture. This will avoid duplication with the housing investment plan and the masterplan.

## ***Housing Investment Plan***

There are eight projects:

- External wall insulation for all properties in 'the courts' (April – October 2015)
- New windows and doors for all council-owned properties where this work has not previously been carried out (April – October 2015)
- Improvements to footpaths and fences (November 2015 – March 2016)
- Street lighting improvements (2015-2017)
- New housing comprising 20 council homes on two sites - Deepdale and Badminton (June – December 2015)
- Demolition of 56 properties in 'the courts' on four sites (March – May 2015)
- 20 new council housing on two of the demolished 'courts' sites (2016-2017)
- Pilot 'front to back' conversions of two 'courts' (November 2015 – March 2016).

These projects are already resulting in a significant improvement to the quality of the stock and the built environment as well as improving the housing offer.



## ***Red Hall Draft Masterplan***

There are, in total, 14 proposed projects and these are summarised below in terms of sustainable community elements. Delivery is strongly centred on the post 2017 period with

resources, in part, emanating from planning agreements covering nearby residential and economic development projects (see Eastern Growth Zone briefing paper).

*Table Four: Red Hall Draft Masterplan and Sustainable Communities*

Sustainable Community Elements		Red Hall Draft Masterplan
Governance		<i>Not covered.</i>
Transport & Connectivity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved footpaths, lighting and cycleway (2017 onwards)</li> <li>• Improved signage and rebranding to tackle physical isolation (2016 onwards)</li> <li>• Improved parking facilities for the school, community centre and local centre (2016 onwards)</li> <li>• Highways improvements (2018 onwards)</li> </ul>
Services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New play facilities and a park in the demolished courts (2016-2017)</li> <li>• School extension (2018 onwards)</li> <li>• Playing field improvements (2015 onwards)</li> <li>• New changing rooms linked to the existing community centre and playing field improvements (2016 onwards).</li> <li>• Local centre (2016 onwards)</li> </ul>
Environment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village green and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) (2016-2017)</li> </ul>
Economy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not covered.</li> </ul>
Housing & the Built Environment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burdon Hill residential development (2017 onwards)</li> <li>• Red Hall Stables housing development (2017 onwards)</li> <li>• Front to back conversions – second pilot (2017 onwards)</li> <li>• Further remodelling of ‘the courts’ (2017 onwards).</li> </ul>
Social & Culture		<i>Not covered.</i>

## 5. Governance

### *Introduction*

The Egan Review summarises governance as ‘effective and inclusive participation, representation & leadership’. It also identifies a number of elements – two of which are especially relevant for this strategy and they are:

- Strong, inclusive community and voluntary sectors
- A sense of civic values, responsibilities and pride.

One of the three aims is to ‘develop a more self-reliant community that has the capacity to proactively take initiatives to improve Red Hall’. This usefully overlaps with social and culture (see section eleven).

## **Context**

The Council, in its draft Red Hall Masterplan and Eastern Growth Zone briefing paper, emphasises that community capacity building and empowering residents is essential for improving the neighbourhood and, therefore, building a sustainable community.

The Red Hall Communications Strategy, which was commissioned by the Red Hall Regeneration Project Group, highlights that one of its roles is to encourage more residents to volunteer. There are two aspects. Firstly there is a need to encourage residents to participate in community activities (eg, Red Hall Community Centre) and, secondly, to engage with the Housing Services Department of the local authority as part of its Customer Engagement Strategy.

The latter has been reviewed and updated during 2015. Its customer commitment statement distinguishes between five steps. These are informing, collecting information and intelligence about customers' requirements, involving, devolving decisions and building capacity & supporting community action. Thus a key objective for Red Hall is to move from information provision and collection to involvement, devolution and community action.

## **Current Governance**

There is relatively little coverage of governance in the housing investment plan and the draft masterplan in terms of detailed customer and community engagement. The emphasis is on information provision and collection (see section four).

There are four Red Hall council officer groups – Red Hall Regeneration Holding Group, Red Hall Regeneration & Masterplan, Neighbourhood Renewal Project Team and Red Hall Redevelopment Co-ordination<sup>4</sup>. In addition, Groundwork NE & Cumbria are contracted by the Council to working with the community. For example, they helped produce the 'Investing in Red Hall' newsletter which was published in June 2015.

Consultations on the future of Red Hall in 2013 resulted in little feedback from residents on governance issues apart from discussion of a multi-agency approach for tackling anti-social behaviour and irresponsible behaviour by residents and visitors.

There are a number of active clubs and groups on Red Hall. They include Red Hall Community Centre that is run by the Red Hall Community Association and which runs a range of activities. However, there are concerns over whether all of the residents are aware of and willing to participate in activities and the running of the centre. In addition, there is the Red Hall Tigers football team and there are plans to improve the quality of the soccer pitch and provide new changing room facilities adjacent to the Community Centre. There is also the Red Hall Dance Company which was set up in 2013. This is a group/club that is active in the area and participates in events borough-wide.

## **Recommendations and Actions**

In order to improve the governance of Red Hall in relation to community engagement and participation, there are four interrelated actions that should be taken forward:



- Build on the existing strengths of clubs and groups operating on Red Hall, eg, the community centre & association, the football club and the dance company.

Each of these should be supported so as to extend activities and membership so that there is greater involvement from a wider cross-section of residents. At the same time, this would create stronger representative Red Hall organisations.

This support needs to take the form of resources to enhance their management. In particular, it is essential that they have business plans so that they can, if required, seek to access funding from charities, public sector agencies and the private sector. This frequently takes the form of competitive bidding opportunities that involve organisations having to submit innovative proposals supported by business plans and financial accounts. It should be noted that Red Hall Community Association was successful in 2014 in obtaining funding for a worklessness project from the County Durham Community Foundation (see section nine).

These resources could be accessed from, firstly, voluntary and third sector umbrella groups that support community groups, secondly the business community through its corporate social responsibility function and which might include secondment of staff and, thirdly, the local college and university through, for example, student placements and projects.

- Take forward aspects of the Customer Engagement Strategy so that residents on Red Hall become more involved rather than only being receivers of information.

There are two especially relevant areas of activity in the Customer Engagement Strategy. These are customer voice and community participation. In relation to the former, a useful starting point is to recruit neighbourhood auditors. This could link into the existing projects in the housing investment plan in the form of area inspections. This could be promoted at the residents and stakeholders event on 17 September 2015.

In relation to the latter, there is the community fund that enables groups to bid for grants of up to £1,000 for projects that will improve the quality of life for neighbourhoods. Existing Red Hall groups, especially with business plans (see above), would be in a powerful position to access this fund. In addition, the Customer Engagement Strategy highlights a further opportunity – ‘support for community campaigns (eg, litter picks)’. Again, there are opportunities for Red Hall groups to identify important issues and to work with the Council on a neighbourhood campaign. One possible example could be around tackling irresponsible behaviour of residents and visitors in terms of dog fouling, litter and noise (see section eleven).

- A further development of the community engagement approach would be to develop a ‘U decide’ project.

This idea is based on the principles of participatory budgeting. It would involve existing and new local groups working up proposals to improve a specific aspect of the quality of life on Red Hall. Each group would present their proposals at an event and online. Residents would then vote for their preferred scheme. The winner would receive a pre-determined sum to implement it.

- Move towards a multi-agency taskforce for Red Hall for the delivery of the masterplan.

This would build on existing council groups (see above) but also involve representatives from Red Hall groups, businesses (which are supporting these groups), developers implementing projects and relevant public sector organisation (eg, 'Healthy Darlington' and the police).

## **6. Transport & Connectivity**

### ***Introduction***

There are two distinct elements of transport and connectivity – physical movement and social media (eg, twitter) & ICT. The Housing Investment Plan and the draft Red Hall Masterplan focus on the former. The emphasis in this section is, therefore, on the latter.

### ***Context***

Darlington Borough Council's Customer Engagement Strategy and the Red Hall Communications Strategy both highlight that social media are increasingly used, particularly by younger people, as a means of communication and providing information.

In addition, social media and ICT are important for two other reasons. Firstly, their use is an important skill in improving employability and addressing worklessness. Secondly, social media is increasingly used as a mechanism for debate and dialogue. The latter, thus, links to the involvement element of the Customer Engagement Strategy (see section five). For example, customer and community voice might be better achieved through online facilities, rather than meetings, using the housing connect system highlighted in the Strategy.

Nevertheless, it needs to be borne in mind that online access is not universal. The latest national data from the Office for National Statistics<sup>5</sup> indicates that 11% of adults have never used the internet. Furthermore, there are specific groups that are relatively low internet users, eg, 32% of adults with disabilities have not used the internet within the last three months and 61% of people over 75 years of age have never used the internet. Nevertheless 99% of people aged 16-24 years have recently used the internet, and data from 2014 indicates that over 90% of this group use social networking technology.

### ***Current Position***

Although there is no readily available information on ICT & social media use on Red Hall, the area profile indicates that there is a relatively high proportion of young people. This suggests that ICT & social media are potentially vital in connecting these people to services and facilities as well as engaging them in discussions on the future of the area.

### ***Recommendations and Actions***

There are four recommendations:

- Red Hall organisations and groups (including the primary school) should be encouraged to have high quality up-to-date online presences involving ICT and social media.

This will help to widen awareness of local activities and services especially among young people.

One way of achieving this would be for businesses to second a member of staff with the relevant skills to organisations to help them improve their online presence.

- Darlington Borough Council and other public sector service providers should ensure and publicise that there are opportunities to engage in discussions and debates online.

As well as providing information online and receiving feedback in this form, community engagement through the internet ought to help tackle 'hard to reach' groups such as young people.

- Consideration should be given to providing additional training on ICT and social media to improve employability prospects for residents on Red Hall (and see section nine).

This might be organised at Red Hall Community Centre through the worklessness project and/or Red Hall Primary School. It will need to be carefully designed so that it captures the attention of residents through 'learning by stealth', ie, a focus on an issue relevant to potential participants (eg, the history of Red Hall such as the Stockton & Darlington Railway – see section eleven) rather than explicit technical training.

- Availability and accessibility of high quality broadband is essential for residents and groups / organisations.

It is unclear whether ICT infrastructure is adequate to roll out online discussion forums and stronger online activities & services by local groups and organisations. Darlington Borough Council should, therefore, evaluate to what extent that this is adequate and, then, take appropriate action to fill gaps.

## **7. Services**

### ***Introduction***

The Egan Review's headline definition of this element of a sustainable community is 'a full range of appropriate and accessible public, private, community and voluntary services'. In particular, it includes a focus on retail, food, commercial and utility services.

### ***Context***

The draft Red Hall Masterplan includes an emphasis on services, eg, a primary school extension (linked to the housing developments at, for example, Burdon Hill) and a new local centre (incorporating improved shopping facilities and business units).

It is important to appreciate that Red Hall is a relatively small neighbourhood. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a lack of facilities, eg, no health or social care provision. Improving accessibility to services elsewhere in Darlington is vital in overcoming the isolated nature of the area. This issue is covered in section six of this document. Nevertheless the increase in population over the next 5 or more years in this part of the Eastern Growth Zone will improve the viability of facilities (such as local shops) on Red Hall.

It should also be borne in mind that there are opportunities for borough-wide organisations to support neighbourhood organisations in providing services. For example, section two showed that Red Hall is a relatively deprived area. Low household incomes create financial exclusion as well as contributing to social exclusion. Thus, borough-wide organisations, such as Darlington Credit Union, have a role to play in improving the quality of life of residents.

Thus, this part of the strategy covers the future development of the school & education provision and the new local centre. Please note that there is also coverage of the local centre as the possible location of a community enterprise hub in section nine.

### ***Current Provision***

The key interrelated points are:

- Red Hall Primary School offers education and related services to children between the ages of 2 and 11. It was rated as 'good' by OFSTED in March 2014. In order to become 'outstanding', it principally, needs to improve its standards in reading at key stage one
- The school also provides a number of additional activities and is keen to expand this portfolio. Current provision includes a breakfast club, family learning courses and boys & girl's football clubs
- Secondary and further education provision takes place elsewhere in the Borough. Potentially, there is an issue over its quality as the Red Hall profile (see section two) indicates that there are issues of lack of qualifications and worklessness in the neighbourhood, despite the high quality of primary school education
- Darlington Borough Council's Early Intervention and Prevention team work with individual families and run a youth club at Red Hall Community Centre
- There is one food shop on Red Hall. There are mixed opinions of it among residents. On the one hand, it is regarded as a useful facility but, on the other hand, prices are considered to be high.

### ***Recommendations & Actions***

There are four interconnected recommendations:

- The proposed feasibility study for the location and type of provision at the proposed local centre should be undertaken as soon as possible.

This will reduce uncertainty for residents and other stakeholders as well as clarifying whether it could be developed prior to or at any early stage of the Burdon Hill residential scheme.

- A further feasibility study on the development of additional capacity of Red Hall Primary School.

This should be carried out in order to clarify the timetable and type of provision.

- Red Hall Primary School should be supported in its efforts to expand its portfolio of activities

It is recommended that consideration be given to a series of events (including guest speakers) to raise the aspirations of current and former children and parents in terms of education, careers and training. This would begin to address long-run issues of worklessness and poor employability.

Darlington Borough Council's Early Intervention and Prevention team have a role in improving facilities for young people and could be part of the school's portfolio of activities.

These actions will require co-ordination with Red Hall Community Centre & Community Association and the Early Intervention and Prevention team so as to avoid duplication and ensure a comprehensive and complementary set of activities for residents including young people.

- Encourage borough-wide organisations to support local groups in providing services such as money advice, running an organisation.

Organisations, such as Darlington Credit Union, could offer to run services using existing facilities, eg, the community centre or the school, and/or work in partnership with Red Hall groups such as the Community Association.

## **8. Environment**

### ***Introduction***

The overall definition is 'providing places for people to live in an environmentally-friendly way. More specifically, it focuses on efficient use of resources now and in the future, living in a way that minimises negative environmental impact, protecting & enhancing the natural environment and having regard to the needs of future generations.

Although there is some coverage in the housing investment plan and the masterplan, there has been no overview of this issue. This therefore is the focus of this section. It links, in particular, with transport & connectivity (see section six) and housing & the built environment (see section ten).

### ***Context***

There is a strong emphasis in local policy plans on environmental sustainability. Both the Housing Strategy and the Core Strategy (see section three) pay considerable attention to environmental principles and practice.

This is reflected, to some extent, in the Housing Investment Plan, the draft Red Hall Masterplan and the Eastern Growth Zone briefing paper (see sections three & four). For example, the former includes energy efficiency projects, such as external wall insulation and new windows and doors. Not only does this address fuel poverty, it also contributes to environmental sustainability of the housing stock.



Proposals in the masterplan and the Eastern Growth Zone briefing paper (especially on green infrastructure) include:

- A village green and a sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS) that is scheduled for 2017-2018
- Environmental improvements to the River Skerne and its tributaries to the north of Red Hall
- Protection and enhancement of the Red Hall Local Nature Reserve to the east of 'the courts'.

### ***Current Position***

As has already been pointed out, Red Hall was designed on 'Radburn principles'. It is also located on the urban fringe. These provide both opportunities and challenges. In principle, the neighbourhood is ideally located and designed to maximise practical environmental measures. For example, there are many small patches of open space that are difficult to maintain and have no current functional role. There may be opportunities, for example, to create allotments or enable residents to incorporate them into their gardens. However, residents and other stakeholders have not prioritised or taken forward this agenda. Moreover, there is a potential danger that the development projects in the Eastern Growth Zone adjacent to Red Hall may conflict with environmental sustainability principles and practices, eg, loss of open space.

### ***Recommendations and Actions***

There are three recommendations:

- An environmental plan should be drawn up for Red Hall and adjacent areas.

This should bring together existing actions and proposals into a comprehensive and co-ordinated statement as well as identifying new opportunities and challenges.

Resident and local groups' involvement should be encouraged especially Red Hall Primary School and its pupils.

- As part of the plan, the use and long-term management of open space areas on Red Hall should be considered.

The open space areas are an important asset. They need to be made more effective use of in the future. Consideration could be given to community management, creation of allotments etc, but this should depend on the wishes of the residents.

- The development projects in the Eastern Growth Zone should be planned and monitored to maximise environmental benefits.

In particular, residential developments at Red Hall Stables and Burdon Hill should not only protect but enhance the open space areas surrounding Red Hall, eg, the local nature reserve and the River Skerne & its tributaries.

Planning agreements should be used to provide resources for possible projects such as sports pitches, play spaces and footpath & cycle way routes.

## 9. Economy

### *Introduction*

'A flourishing and diverse local economy' is a key element of ensuring a sustainable community. More specifically, there is a focus in the Egan Review on providing (i) a wide range of jobs and training opportunities, (ii) business creation & support and (iii) a strong business sector with links to local communities.

The Red Hall profile indicates that a lack of qualifications and relatively low levels of employment are important challenges that need to be addressed.

### *Context*

The Economic Strategy for Darlington together with the Eastern Growth Zone briefing paper and the draft Red Hall Masterplan identify a number of policies and programmes to tackle these issues.

The Darlington Partnership, which is the borough-wide partnership between public, private & voluntary sector agencies, focuses on improving the quality of life in Darlington. It has a number of employment-orientated projects including Darlington Foundation for Jobs that is centred on tackling unemployment among young people.

The Eastern Growth Zone briefing paper explicitly highlights that one of its objectives is to 'reduce worklessness on Red Hall'.

Projects that have been identified include:

- Potential provision of business units and/or a community enterprise hub in the proposed local centre
- The redevelopment of Lingfield Point to provide employment opportunities with improved physical access between it and Red Hall
- The development of links between businesses (throughout the borough) and the community.

### *Current Provision*

The major local initiative is the Red Hall Worklessness Project. This provides employability training and hosts a weekly job club. It is run through Red Hall Community Association with funding, in part, from the County Durham Community Foundation. It was launched in 2014 but is due to end in early 2016. It has been suggested that one of the issues for the project is ensuring participation by residents.

In addition, the Council, through its commissioning and procurement of development projects, builds in conditions that contractors provide training/apprenticeship opportunities for local people.

Finally, there is an increasing number of examples of businesses supporting the local community and its activities. For example, BARR Construction is negotiating with the local authority on the possibility of providing in-kind assistance to Red Hall Tigers by improving the soccer pitch and its environs. Similarly, Niven Architects is providing in-kind assistance

for the design of the proposed changing rooms adjacent to Red Hall Community Association.

### ***Recommendations & Actions***

These are fivefold and are:

- Ensure a thorough evaluation of the Red Hall Worklessness Projects to identify challenges and opportunities as a basis for securing future funding.

This is the only Red Hall specific project for tackling employability and training issues. It, therefore, is a significant initiative that should be supported by stakeholders. Links should be explored with Darlington Partnership and its Darlington Foundation for Jobs project.

- Continue to exploit opportunities for local jobs and training/apprenticeships through Darlington Borough Council's commissioning and procurement policies.

Both the Housing Investment Plan and the draft Red Hall Masterplan include a number of major projects that should incorporate this policy.

- Planning agreements and training opportunities should be explored.

The Eastern Growth Zone projects that will commence in 2017 will involve planning agreements between developers, Darlington Borough Council and other organisations. There are opportunities to explore the possibility of including employment/training benefits for local people.

- Opportunities to incorporate business units and community enterprises should be included in a viability study of the proposed local centre.

As has already been recommended in section seven, a viability study should be carried out as soon as possible. The provision of business units etc would be significant as it would be the first example of direct provision in Red Hall.

- Business support for the Red Hall community should be further encouraged and promoted.

This could be focussed, as previously recommended, on employee secondments to local groups. It could also centre on providing short-term placements within companies for Red Hall residents.

## **10. Housing & the Built Environment**

### ***Introduction***

Policies and programmes to improve Red Hall's housing and built environment are underway through the Housing Investment Plan. Further projects are being developed through the master planning process. This section of the strategy, therefore, focuses on additional outstanding and emerging issues.

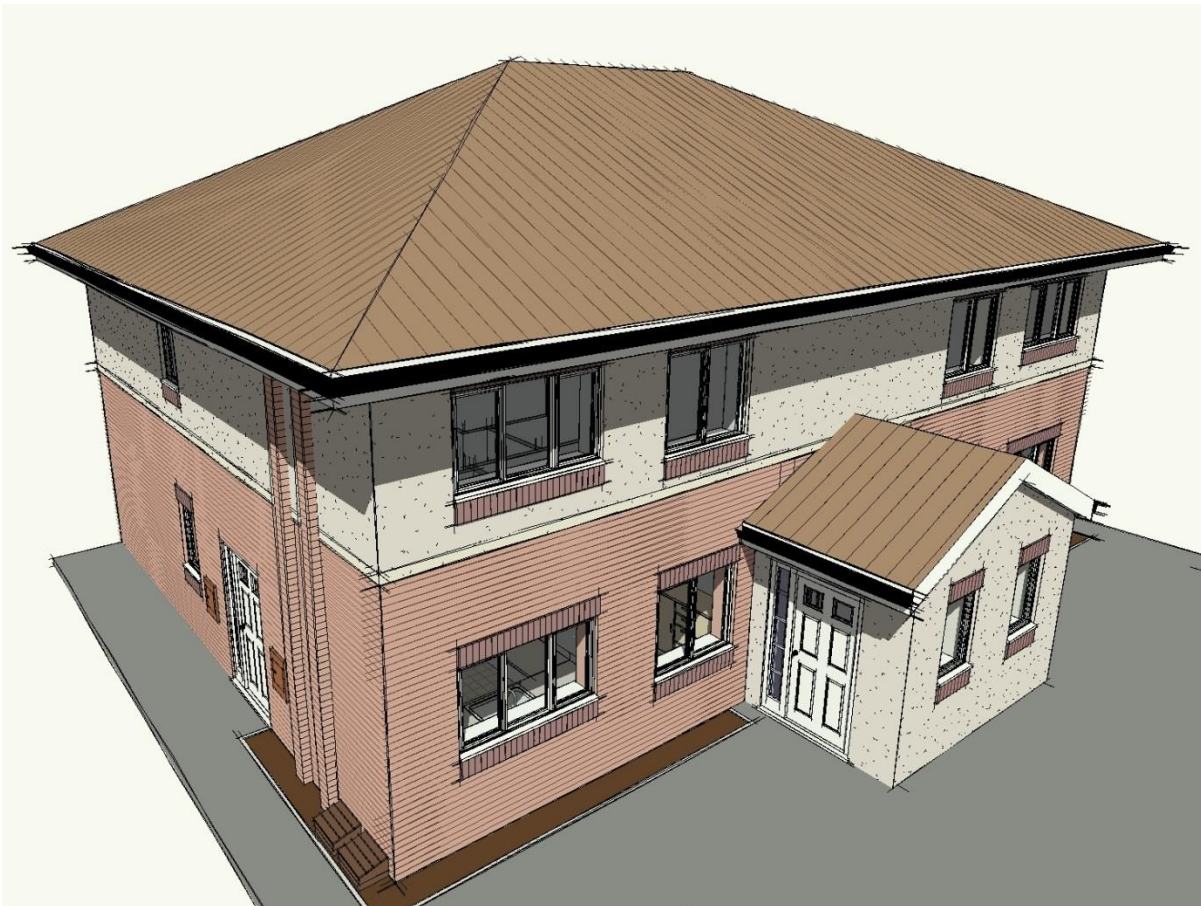
## **Context**

It is essential to appreciate that national housing and welfare policy changes, as well as future local government finance settlements, are likely to impact on Red Hall and Darlington as a whole. The Borough Council is carrying out an appraisal of these changes for all of its activities and services. Potential issues are likely to include:

- The impact of Housing Benefit changes on under-occupation
- The future role of council housing given the government's ever increasing emphasis on promoting low cost owner occupation
- The ability of the local authority to deliver its current range of services such as the maintenance of open space areas and a comprehensive tenancy management approach.

## **Current Situation**

The existing and proposed projects will improve the quality of life for existing and future residents. It is anticipated that they will begin to address issues such as relatively low demand for property in parts of 'the courts'.



Nevertheless, the 'Radburn-style' layout of Red Hall, which was built in the 1960s & 1970s, presents significant challenges in a period of austerity for the local authority and other stakeholders. They include:

- A high proportion of open space that creates relatively high maintenance costs
- Non-traditional house types and estate layouts that can be less popular compared to other neighbourhoods
- The need for a major programme of planned investment as the existing infrastructure is approaching 50 years of age.

### ***Recommendations and Actions***

These are:

- As part of its appraisal of the impact of emerging Government policies, it is recommended that Darlington Borough Council evaluate the potential implications for Red Hall and the current & proposed regeneration projects

This will ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' in addressing likely future issues. For example, the existing energy efficiency measures will not cover all of the stock in the Radburn-type' properties in the west of Red Hall. This might need to be reviewed and reprioritised to ensure that these homes remain popular and in-demand in the long-term.

- Allocations and lettings should be thoroughly monitored to provide early warning signs of changing demand within the area

This will enable pro-active rather than reactive measures to be introduced to respond to demand changes.

- A local lettings policy should be developed

This needs to reflect the aim of achieving a sustainable community where residents wish to live. Consideration could be given to lettings streams, for instance, that prioritise households with skills & expertise and those with a willingness to contribute to volunteering to assist local groups and organisations.

- A 'welcome to Red Hall' tenancy pack should be developed

This should cover services (eg, the primary school), local groups/organisations and improvement programmes as well as the standard tenancy matters. It should be available online and in paper form.

## **11. Social & Culture**

### ***Introduction***

The Egan Review defines social & cultural sustainability as a 'vibrant, harmonious and inclusive community'. It includes:

- A sense of community identity and belonging



- All people are socially included and have similar life opportunities
- Tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, backgrounds & beliefs
- Low levels of crime & anti-social behaviour with visible, effective and community-friendly policing.

This is at the heart of this strategy because one of the overall aims is to build a self-reliant community.

Other elements of sustainability contribute to the social and cultural element, eg, governance (see section five) and services (see section seven).

### **Context**

The focus of building a strong resilient and self-reliant Red Hall community is a re-occurring theme in many policy documents. For example, the Eastern Growth Zone briefing paper points out that the scope of the masterplan is to build community capacity including the 'development of social cohesion, responsible management of the area, support networks and economic well-being'.

### **Current Position**

There are both strengths and weaknesses. The former include:

- A highly-rated and popular primary school that wishes to expand its portfolio of activities and a number of active local groups, eg, the local soccer club and the dance company
- The activities of Red Hall Community Association and the Community Centre
- The on-going Housing Investment Plan that provides confidence to the residents about the commitment to the area as well as making it an attractive place to live
- The resident and stakeholder event on 17 September 2015, to promote the area and its services & groups
- A common view of some residents and stakeholders that Red Hall is 'better than you think'.

The latter include:

- Patchy community engagement and resident involvement with local services and groups
- A low level of community cohesion exemplified by the social and physical separation of the Radburn-type stock in the centre and west of Red Hall from 'the courts'
- Residents' concerns over anti-social behaviour and irresponsible actions of some residents and visitors, eg, the dropping of litter, dog fouling, late night noise etc.

## ***Recommendations and Actions***

First of all, many of the proposals in, for instance, section five on governance and in section seven on services will contribute to building a stronger social and cultural community. In particular, it is essential that attempts are made by local organisations and service providers to broaden their appeal and publicise their activities to 'hard-to-reach' groups such as young people.

Secondly, there are opportunities to even more strongly contribute to community cohesion:

- Celebrating the Stockton & Darlington Railway.

The original former railway line is the southern boundary of Red Hall. The 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary takes place in 2025. Darlington Borough Council and its partners are already developing ideas (including bidding for UK City of Culture for 2025). This is, therefore, an opportunity for residents and local groups (including Red Hall School) to plan for this event.

An immediate starting point is the 190<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September 2015. This could be a prominent feature of the resident and stakeholder event on 17 September.

- Agreeing and confirming that 'Red Hall' is the name for the area and that it will be used by all stakeholders.

The reports covering the area together with the interviews & visits in July 2015 indicated that a wide range of slightly different names are used, eg, 'Redhall', 'Red Hall Village', 'Redhall Estate' and 'Red Hall'. A single agreed name will contribute to a better external perception as well as a clear message to current and future residents.

One of the projects in the draft masterplan for 2016 is 'improved signage and rebranding'. An important element is to reach an agreement between residents and stakeholders on the name for the area. This should be part of the resident and stakeholder event on 17 September.

- Branding and marketing 'Red Hall'.

Promoting Red Hall is important for local residents in creating a sense of pride and belonging. It is also significant for improving its image externally.

A number of initiatives have already been mentioned, eg, signage and a 'welcome to Red Hall' pack for new tenants.



Opportunities to publicise the activities of organisations and local service providers should be maximised and include media releases and the use of ICT & social media.

## **12. Provision, Activities & Resources**

### ***Introduction***

A common theme across each of the seven elements of sustainable communities is that 'provision and/or activity should be high quality, well-designed & maintained, safe, accessible, adaptable, environmentally-friendly and cost-effectively provided'. The phrase 'provision, activities and resources' has been used in this strategy as a shorthand for this overarching theme.

In order to achieve this common theme, there are three overarching points:

- It is essential that individual recommendations are not treated as silos. For example, creating a resilient and self-reliant community involves each of the seven elements of a sustainable community
- This neighbourhood renewal strategy should be read in conjunction with the Housing Investment Plan and the draft Red Hall Masterplan
- The multi-agency taskforce for delivering projects must be widened to involve residents and other stakeholders as well as Darlington Borough Council. A broader membership will enable the identification of new issues that are important to the community.

The aim of this section is, therefore, to focus on outstanding issues especially resources. It is not a conclusion or a summary, as these can be found in the first section of this document.

### ***Provision***

There are many construction-based projects underway or planned for Red Hall and adjacent areas. This has the advantage of convincing residents that the local authority and its partners are committed to improve the physical fabric. The potential disadvantage is that building work and any associated disruption will be a fact of life for the community for the foreseeable future.



The Red Hall Newsletter and the Red Hall Communications Strategy are evidence that the Borough Council is committed to ensuring that residents are kept informed of progress. It is essential that this approach is maintained. It is, therefore, recommended that:

- The Borough Council and its partners ensure that the communications strategy is fully implemented so that the community continues to be informed on progress and especially of any changes to the timing and nature of the construction-based provision.

### ***Activities***



A reoccurring theme throughout this document is the importance of increasing the range of activities delivered at Red Hall Community Centre and Red Hall Primary School. This will help to address gaps in existing provision and, more importantly, contribute to greater resident involvement and participation.

There is a temptation for external stakeholders, including the Council, to specify the types of activities that could be developed. This, however, poses dangers. It, firstly, creates a culture of a reliance on outside agencies to identify needs and types of provision. Secondly, the services and activities may not be what local people want, so leading to a lack of take-up. Thirdly, it hinders the ability of existing groups and organisations to develop activities and so become stronger and more representative of the area.

It is, therefore, recommended that:

- Darlington Borough Council and other stakeholders act as enablers and facilitators for local groups and organisations in the development of new activities.

The enabling and facilitating role involves, amongst other things, signposting local groups and organisations to new funding sources, brokering support from the business community and the local college & university and identifying opportunities to work with borough-wide agencies.

### **Resources**

In the current financial climate for local government, there are major challenges for the Council in directly funding capital projects and services. It is highly unlikely that in the foreseeable future resources will be available via the local authority for the delivery of many of the masterplan projects. Therefore, alternative and additional sources need to be identified. Without a clear indication of resources, projects will be delayed or even abandoned.

Resources can take many forms – finance, skills & expertise, land and property etc. They can come from a range of organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. At the same time, it is vital to mobilise the resources within the Red Hall area. These include existing organisations (eg, Red Hall Community Association and the Community Centre) and the residents themselves (eg, volunteering).

It is, therefore, recommended that:

- Additional and alternative resources (especially funding) are identified by the Borough Council and other stakeholders to help implement projects on Red Hall.

The following list is indicative of the types of resources that could be utilised:

- Planning agreements: These are negotiated by the Council and developers as part of the planning system following the granting of major planning permissions to benefit local communities. They can take the form of financial payments and/or physical projects (eg, new roads).

A significant number of projects are to be funded through planning agreements, eg, a new park and play facilities on the site of the demolished courts, the extension of Red Hall Primary School and the creation of a village green & sustainable urban drainage systems.



It, however, needs to be borne in mind that the government has increasingly emphasised that local authorities should not impose requirements that affect the viability of the original development. It is, thus, imperative that Darlington Borough Council monitors changes in national policy as well as the viability of major schemes in the Eastern Growth Zone.

- Charities and Grant-funding Bodies: Local organisations are able to access small sources of funding through the Council's community fund. But there will be an increasing competition for these resources and it does not involve major sums. Organisations, therefore, need to be in a position to bid for resources from charities and grant-funding bodies and build on the success of the Red Hall Worklessness Project in obtaining such funds.

There are a number of local and regional charities that may be suitable. As well as the County Durham Community Foundation, they include the Morrison Trust and the Virgin Money Foundation.

A pre-requisite for successful bidding is that local organisations need to evidence effective management and governance, have a track record of successful activities and show that they have neighbourhood & wider stakeholder support. Most importantly, there must be an up-to-date business plan and financial records. Finally, skills are required to complete detailed application forms.

Many local organisations find these requirements daunting and overwhelming. It is, therefore, imperative that there are resources available to tackle this gap. Voluntary sector organisations often offer this type of support. Other possibilities include colleges and universities as well as the private sector.

- Businesses: These may be willing to offer resources to local groups and projects. This is for two interrelated reasons – corporate social responsibility and supporting local communities.

There are already examples in Red Hall. For example, BARR Construction is negotiating with the Council on providing in-kind assistance to Red Hall Tigers in improving the soccer pitch and its environs. It, thus can take many forms ranging from physical projects through to secondment of staff and sponsorship of events. It could also include short-term placements for local people as part of a programme to tackle worklessness and improve employability. As the Eastern Growth Zone will be a major location for new investment by businesses over the next decade, there are clearly opportunities to further exploit business-community links.

---

<sup>1</sup> Egan, J. (2004) Skills for Sustainable Communities – The Egan Review, London, RIBA.

<sup>2</sup> ICT: Information communications technology.

<sup>3</sup> SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Timetabled

<sup>4</sup> Further details can be found in the Housing Quality Network 'Redhall Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy' – Draft Report (June 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics (2015) Internet Users, London, ONS.