

# PLANNING THE FUTURE OF DERWENTSIDE

CORE STRATEGY ISSUES & OPTIONS

FEBRUARY 2007



DERWENTSIDE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

**DERWENTSIDE DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**CORE STRATEGY ISSUES & OPTIONS**  
**FEBRUARY 2007**

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## Introduction and Format

### Introduction

This document seeks your opinion on key issues for planning in Derwentside. Planning affects many aspects of our lives – from where we live, to where we can work, to where and how we enjoy ourselves. So it is important we get it right.

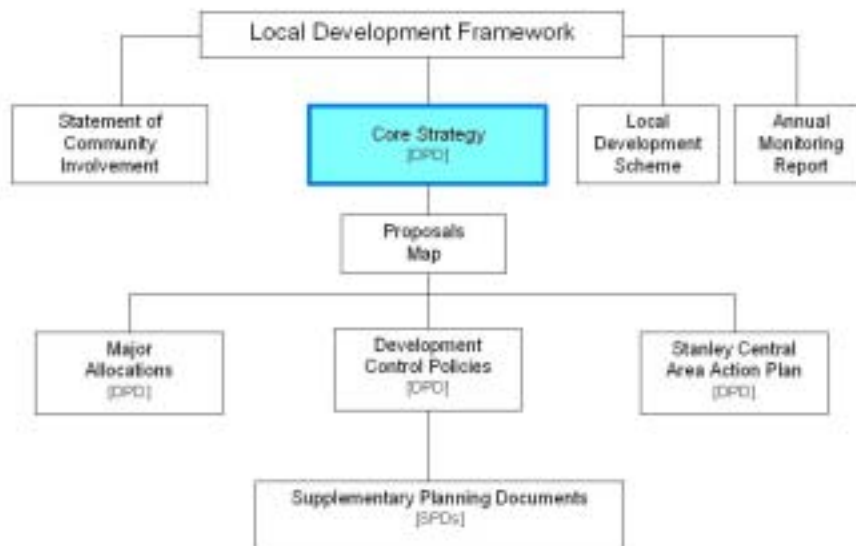
### The Local Development Framework

The Government has introduced a new and reformed planning system that aims to respond more quickly to changing circumstances. The new system also seeks to achieve more effective involvement with the community throughout the process.

Within Derwentside, the new system will mean that the Derwentside Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the existing Derwentside Local Plan.

All LDFs will be made up of a number of different documents, and each document will go through a number of different stages before they are finally adopted.

This is the first stage of the most important document – the **Core Strategy**. The Core Strategy will set out the key elements of the planning framework for the area. It will set out what sort of place Derwentside is and what sort of place it should aim to become. The Core Strategy will be a key component in delivering many of the objectives of the Community Strategy.



Other documents follow to form part of the LDF, which have a more narrow focus and can deal with specific sites. These will include Development Control Policies, Major Allocations and the Stanley Area Action Plan Development Plan Documents.

Derwentside Council invites the community to participate in this first stage of developing *Issues and Options* for the Core Strategy. The outcome and results of this consultation, supported by evidence gathering, will help inform the preparation of our Core Strategy *Preferred Options*. Further consultation will lead to the document being submitted to the Government for approval followed by an *Examination in Public*, presided over by a government inspector, before final *Adoption*.

### **Format of this document**

We will start by setting out a possible Vision of what Derwentside will be like in 2021 and identify objectives that would help to realise that Vision. We will then look at the future locational strategy for the District and talk about specific topic areas such as housing, employment and shopping.

In each chapter we will give some background on what the Government says and identify any relevant guidance at a regional level. We will then give a summary of the relevant parts of the Community Strategy and the Strategic Vision for County Durham as well as the County Durham Local Area Agreement. We will also look at what the evidence tells us and give a few relevant facts and figures. Finally we will summarise what you have already told us in the consultation undertaken so far.

### **What you can do to help**

At the end of each chapter are a number of questions with alternative answers. Using the information we have provided and your own opinion on the future development of the District, we would like you to pick your preferred answer to each question.

Your answers, together with a sustainability appraisal of each answer, will help us select the best answer in each case, which will then be taken forward and developed into policies and proposals. You will then be consulted again to ensure that we are on the right track.

### **What to do now**

Please complete the response form inside the Core Strategy Issues and Options document and return it to:

Development Plans Team, Civic Centre, Medomsley Road, Consett, Co Durham,  
**FREEPOST NEA3943**, DH8 5JA

Alternatively the Core Strategy Issues and Options Document is available on the Council's website: [www.derwentside.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.derwentside.gov.uk/ldf)

You can fill in a form online or email us your comments at:  
[ldfconsultation@derwentside.gov.uk](mailto:ldfconsultation@derwentside.gov.uk)

Responses should be received by **Friday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007**.

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the Core Strategy or the Derwentside LDF in more detail, please contact the Development Plans Team: Tel: 01207 218276  
Email: [developmentplans@derwentside.gov.uk](mailto:developmentplans@derwentside.gov.uk)

## Vision and Objectives

### Introduction

The Core Strategy is required to have a Vision that sets out what sort of place the District should become. A set of Objectives and policies need to be developed to help create the Vision. As part of involving the community in developing the Vision and Objectives it is important that you respond to the suggested Vision and Objectives set out below. Policies can then be developed at a later date taking into account your response.

### The Vision

To ensure that the Core Strategy is to influence change and achieve sustainable communities across the District, it must be visionary and look forward over a long period of time. There must also be strong links between the Vision and Objectives of the Core Strategy and those of the Community Strategy. The Local Strategic Partnership develops the Derwentside Community Strategy and a revised version has recently been approved. It is suggested that the Vision from the new Community Strategy is incorporated into the Vision in the Core Strategy and a number of the Community Strategy's objectives will also be used.

### What you have already said

Use of the Vision from the Community Strategy was seen as important by many to show the clear links between the two documents. You also proposed many of the words used in the suggested vision with the most popular being prosperous, thriving, high quality and diverse. Almost all respondents suggested the inclusion of sustainability.

The draft Vision is given below for your consideration and comment.

*'The community believes in itself and knows that working together can build a District people want to live in and be proud of.'*

*As a result, Derwentside in 2021 is a prosperous and forward looking area that has the balance of jobs, housing, infrastructure, high quality environment and community strength that makes people want to live, work, visit and invest in it.*

*Investment and regeneration in Consett and Stanley are thriving, attractive and accessible town centres that meet the diverse needs of residents. Growth of the District's settlements is related to their scale, character and role, and recognises the need to protect and enhance the valuable natural resources, countryside and built environment of Derwentside.*

*Derwentside continues to embrace the principles of sustainable development by improving quality of life without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, including minimising the District's contribution to Climate Change.'*

### Question and Options

**VO1. Does the suggested vision reflect the needs and aspirations of the residents of Derwentside?**

- a** The vision as suggested fully reflects the needs and aspirations of the residents of Derwentside.
- b** The vision would reflect the needs and aspirations of the residents of Derwentside if changed slightly.
- c** The vision does not reflect the needs and aspirations of the residents of Derwentside and should be changed completely.

**The Objectives**

In order to deliver the Core Strategy's Vision by 2021 a set of objectives are needed to establish the framework for the formulation of more detailed policies. The objectives should take account of national and regional planning guidance and be strongly influenced by the Community Strategy.

- OB1. Secure sustainable development and minimise Derwentside's contribution to Climate Change.**
- OB2. Develop a diverse, thriving economy that offers opportunity and encouragement to all.**
- OB3. Protect and enhance the built and natural environment, promoting Derwentside's distinctive character.**
- OB4. Provide housing that meets the needs of all of the community.**
- OB5. Ensure the vitality and viability of the District's town and village centres**
- OB6. Build communities that are safe, healthy and socially inclusive.**
- OB7. Ensure sufficient and accessible leisure, recreation and cultural services are provided for the community**
- OB8. Ensure new development and public spaces are of high quality and enhance the character of the area.**
- OB9. Through listening and responding, support people to develop and maintain an effective voice.**

**What you have already said**

At least three of the objectives now in the list were included as a result of suggestions by members of the community. Four others have been included largely unchanged from those suggested previously when they received widespread support.

We would like your help in setting the Core Strategy's objectives. The list above is a draft list, and we would welcome your comments.

**VO2. Do you think the draft objectives are appropriate objectives for the Core Strategy?**

- a** The draft objectives will deliver the Core Strategy Vision effectively.
- b** The draft objectives need to be changed through the addition or deletion of objectives.
- c** The draft objectives are completely unsuitable.



## **Spatial Strategy**

### **Introduction**

One of the key roles of the planning system is to ensure that future growth in the District occurs in the most sustainable locations. Therefore the Core Strategy must establish the broad locations for future development in the District. The identification of individual sites will be left to the Major Allocations Development Plan Document beginning late in 2007.

### **What the Government says**

Planning Policy Guidance Note 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPG1) states that local authorities should, in respect of the location of new development; promote urban and rural regeneration to improve the well being of communities; bring forward sufficient land of a suitable quality in appropriate locations to meet expected need...taking into account issues such as accessibility and sustainable transport needs; and focus developments that attract a large number of people, especially retail, leisure and office development, in existing centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of development.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts (PPG2) gives some of the functions of Green Belts as, checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

### **What the Region says**

The Submission Draft of the North East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) supports the concentration of new development in the Tyne and Wear City Region (of which Derwentside is a part) in the conurbations and main towns (including Consett and Stanley), but with emphasis on the core areas of the conurbation. Development in the main towns within the regeneration areas (including Consett and Stanley) must be appropriate in scale. Policy 3 states that Local Development Frameworks (LDF) should adopt a sequential approach to the location of new development, giving priority to previously developed land in existing built up areas. Policy 10 states that LDFs should ensure that the Green Belt continues to safeguard the countryside from encroachment.

The RSS Panel Report supports the principles of the locational strategy in Submission Draft RSS. It also recommends retaining Policy 3 but adds that development should be well related to homes, jobs and services by all modes of transport, particularly public transport, walking and cycling.

### **What the Community Strategy says**

No specific mention is made regarding the location of new development but the Community Strategy does embrace the principles of sustainable development and protection of the countryside.

### **What the evidence tells us**

The District's population has increased from 86000 in 1991 to 86300 in 2005. However the Office for National Statistics is predicting that Derwentside's population will increase significantly to 92000 by 2021.

Of the 3669 houses and flats that were built from 1995 to 2006, 65% were built in the main towns of Consett and Stanley (as currently defined). Of the 1513 houses and flats under construction as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006, 71% were in the main towns of Consett and Stanley and of the 1485 with planning permission on sites yet to start, 54% were in the main towns. The District Local Plan, adopted in 1997, identified existing industrial land across the District. 48% was located within the two main towns of Consett and Stanley, 46% was within other settlements in the District and 6% was located outside of urban areas.

Following the closure of industry in the preceding 20 years, Derwentside lost its previous levels of self-containment. Of the 36009 Derwentside residents in employment in 2001, 52% lived and worked in the District. This compares to 1991 when the figure was 60%. In 2001, 17200 residents commuted out of the District, principally to Durham (24%), Gateshead (21%) and Newcastle (19%). This compares to the 5784 persons who commuted into the District to work mainly from Gateshead (18%), Chester-le-Street (17%) and Durham (16%).

The existing Tyne and Wear Green Belt surrounds the north of the District from Beamish in the east round to Shotley Bridge in the west. The Durham County Structure Plan identifies an extension of the existing Green Belt to the north of Consett and Stanley, incorporating the Derwent and Team valleys, in order to check the potential outward expansion of the conurbation, assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and help in creating more sustainable patterns of development and growth.

When we undertake monitoring Consett is considered to be the larger urban area including places such as Delves Lane, Leadgate, Castleside and Shotley Bridge. Stanley includes places such as South Stanley, South Moor, Quaking Houses and Shield Row. However some believe that places such as Craghead, Tanfield Lea or even Annfield Plain also make up the larger Stanley area. To enable us to be consistent with our future monitoring this issue needs to be resolved.

The Stanley Area Development Framework (ADF) is looking at spatial solutions to specific issues in the settlements of Craghead, South Moor, New Kyo and Quaking Houses. Although the ADF will form part of the evidence base for the Stanley Area Action Plan, its work should be acknowledged in the Core Strategy. Similarly the Green Corridor Masterplan, which is to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, will set out a spatial framework for buildings, spaces, movement and land use and match these proposals to a delivery strategy.

### **What you have already said**

Some respondents stated that options for the location of future development should not be limited to the main towns but should include reference to the other settlements in the District. One respondent believed there was no justification for the suggested Green Belt boundaries and proposed an alternative that covered a restricted area between Gateshead and Stanley and Rowlands Gill and Burnopfield.

### **Questions and Options**

**SS1. What should be the future strategy for the development of Derwentside?**

- a Constrain further development although this may result in a declining population.
- b Seek to accommodate a stable population at its current level.
- c Encourage further growth in order to retain existing, and attract new, residents.

**SS2. Where should future development be located?**

- a Leave the location of future development to the market and assume that developers' interests will coincide with those of Derwentside's communities.
- b Locate new development primarily within the main towns of Consett and Stanley; development in the District's villages and rural areas should meet local needs only and be in scale with the settlement's size and capacity to accommodate new development.
- c Concentrate development on the most deprived neighbourhoods in the District regardless of location.
- d Allow dispersed growth and development throughout the District. This would ensure that everyone benefits from new development although this would be thinly spread across the District.

**SS3. What should be the District's principal role within the Region?**

- a Aim to be mostly self-sufficient with enough jobs and homes to cater for the District's existing population.
- b Provide jobs locally where possible but also acknowledge that commuting to Tyne & Wear and Durham will take place and plan accordingly.
- c Accept primary role as a commuter area to serve the main employment centres of Tyne & Wear and Durham.

**SS4. What should be the extent of the North Durham Green Belt within Derwentside? (see map 1)**

- a Include the Derwent valley from Burnopfield to Consett from the River Derwent to the Derwent Walk and the area from Burnopfield to Stanley from the District boundary to Crookgate bank and Kip Hill.
- b As **option a** and including the remainder of the Derwent Valley to Leadgate and the Hobson.
- c As **option b** and including the area to the north of Tantobie and Tanfield Lea.
- d None of the above, other suggested boundary.

**SS5. Which areas should be included in the Stanley main town for the purposes of the Local Development Framework? (see map 2)**

- a Include Stanley Town Centre, South Stanley, East Stanley, Shield Row, Kip Hill, South Moor and Quaking Houses.
- b Include all in **option a** plus The Middles and Craghead.
- c Include all in **option b** plus Annfield Plain, New Kyo, Catchgate, Greencroft, Harelaw and Tanfield Lea.

## **Climate Change**

### **Introduction**

The threat of climate change is a real concern in today's world. The recently published Stern Review identifies the likely global effects of rising temperatures, which include widespread malnutrition, reduced water supplies, rising sea levels resulting from the melting ice sheets threatening 100s of millions (particularly in SE Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific islands and large coastal cities such as New York, London, Tokyo) and the widespread extinction of plants and animals. Extreme weather patterns will become commonplace and will have direct impacts on Derwentside.

The financial cost will be similarly dramatic, with up to 20% of global output lost as a result of: increased poverty in developing countries; large migrations from flooded areas; violent conflict resulting from water shortages; economic impacts of severe weather such as hurricanes; and the impacts on human health.

There is still time to limit the scale of Climate Change by reducing levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Action can also be taken to adapt to the impacts resulting from changes that have already occurred.

### **What the Government says**

The Government's energy policy, including its policy on renewable energy, is set out in the Energy White Paper. This aims to put the UK on a path to cut its carbon dioxide emissions by some 60% by 2050, with real progress by 2020. The Government has already set a target to generate 10% of UK electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010. The White Paper sets out the Government's aspiration to double that figure to 20% by 2020.

A key principle of Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1) is that local planning authorities should ensure that development plans contribute to global sustainability by addressing the causes and potential impacts of climate change, through policies which reduce energy use, reduce emissions (for example, by encouraging patterns of development which reduce the need to travel by private car, or reduce the impact of moving freight), promote the development of renewable energy resources, and take climate change impacts into account in the location and design of development.

Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy (PPS22) aims to increase the development of renewable energy resources, as it is vital to facilitating the delivery of the Government's commitments on both climate change and renewable energy.

Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk (PPS25) acknowledges that climate change will lead to increased and new risks of flooding within the lifetime of developments that are being planned now. Local authorities should therefore ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas at highest risk.

The Government recently published a draft Planning Policy Statement on Planning and Climate Change in which it states its belief that Climate Change is the greatest long-term challenge facing the world today.

Two of the main objectives are to secure the highest viable standards of resource and energy efficiency and reduction in carbon emissions from new development, and to deliver patterns of urban growth that reduce the need to travel, especially by car. Development should also be located and designed having regard to likely future changes in the local climate and the impacts this may have.

As well as seeking more energy efficient buildings it also encourages the use of micro-renewables in new residential, commercial or industrial development. Local authorities should also look favourably on proposals for renewable energy. New development should not undermine biodiversity, provide for sustainable waste management and use sustainable urban drainage systems.

The Government has also published a number of other consultation documents, which promote zero carbon development. Building a Greener Future explores the relationship between the planning system, Code for Sustainable Homes and Building Regulations to achieve its timetable for all new houses to be zero carbon by 2016. Water Efficiency in New Buildings consults on ways of requiring water efficient fixtures and fittings in new buildings.

The Code for Sustainable Homes is intended as a single national standard to guide industry in the design and construction of sustainable homes. The Code is currently voluntary but the Government has indicated that it will be made mandatory in the future. The Code has 6 levels. The entry level, level 1, is still above the standards in the building regulations and level 6, which is a genuine zero carbon dwelling.

### **What the Region says**

Although the Submission Draft North East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) does not include a specific section related to Climate Change it does include policies to encourage energy efficiency in existing and new buildings, which should be located to minimise energy consumption and constructed to high energy-efficiency standards (such as BREEAM) and conform to the Code for Sustainable Buildings. New developments are also required to have embedded within them a minimum of 10% energy supply from renewable sources. Policy 41 encourages local authorities to support renewable energy proposals and to identify renewable resource areas.

Policy 37 of Submission Draft RSS states that a sequential risk-based approach to flooding should be used when considering development proposals.

The Panel Report has recommended that a new section on Climate Change should be in RSS to provide a clear understanding of the regional implications of Climate Change.

The Regional Economic Strategy also encourages resource efficiency and a strong focus on the development and deployment of low carbon technology and renewable energy.

### **What the Community Strategy says**

Objectives in the Community Strategy Review include promoting and encouraging best practice principles for sustainable construction and design, minimising the use of non-renewable resources and promoting reductions in energy use. It also seeks to progress the creation and promotion of a comprehensive sustainable transport network offering a real alternative to car use and promote the existing footpath and cycle network and associated health benefits.

Developments inside floodplains should be undertaken using sustainability principles and not contradicting Environment Agency advice on flood risk.

Challenge 12 of the Strategic Vision for County Durham is to 'enhance the environment and reduce the use of our natural resources, whilst adapting to climate change, reducing waste and developing new environmental technologies'.

### **What the evidence tells us**

In 2003, Derwentside's total emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> were 465346 tonnes. The main contributors were domestic sources, which contributed over 45% and transport with 25%. Industrial and commercial sources only contributed 27% between them and landfill accounted for 3%.

The causes of Climate Change can be tackled in a number of ways. New development should be in locations easily accessible by means other than the car. In some circumstances mixed use developments, where housing and employment are developed together, may be appropriate.

New housing can be designed to be more energy efficient through the use of stricter building regulations and planning policies, potentially using the Code for Sustainable Buildings. Older housing can also be made more energy efficient through relatively simple improvement such as cavity wall insulation or draught proofing. Micro-renewables such as small wind turbines or solar panels can be used on existing or new buildings. Larger scale renewable energy schemes may also be appropriate in suitable locations.

Although the primary responsibility for waste planning rests with Durham County Council, the District Council is responsible for refuse collection and recycling, and has established kerbside recycling collection and garden waste collection schemes. In April 2006 we were recycling 18% of our waste compared to a Government target of 50% by 2012. This is expected to increase significantly with the recent introduction of the Twin Bin scheme.

There are several areas where planning can make a contribution to minimising waste, such as including wheelie bin storage areas in new housing or encouraging the use of renewable building materials to minimise waste from construction.

Larger scale renewable and low-carbon energy schemes can make a significant contribution to the provision of energy. Renewable energy can be produced using wave power, tidal energy, biomass, combined heat and power or wind turbines.

Some of these types of scheme are not appropriate in Derwentside but the District does currently have an installed capacity of 10 Megawatts, from three wind farms, and a further 40 Megawatts of capacity with planning permission on 3 much larger wind farms. In total this could produce enough energy to power almost 28000 homes. No other type of renewable energy scheme is currently planned but this may change as costs reduce and they become more financially attractive.

As well as addressing the causes of Climate Change it is important that the potential impacts are taken into account when planning new development. The most obvious example is flooding. Although Derwentside is generally unaffected by flooding at present, changes in global temperatures and seasonal shifts could eventually affect growing areas of the District. Buildings should also use sustainable drainage systems and be water efficient.

### **What you have already said**

Most respondents supported the location of new development near to public transport and creating links with existing footpath and cycling links and using measures to reduce car usage, rather than ownership. Micro-renewables were mentioned as a way of making houses more energy efficient.

### **Questions and Options**

#### **CC1. How can we best ensure that all new development is energy efficient and reduce its impact on climate change?**

- a** Require that new development derives at least 10% of its energy from micro-renewable sources, such as solar panels, wind turbines or combined heat and power schemes.
- b** As **option a**, but require 20%.

#### **CC2. How can we best ensure that new housing has less impact on Climate Change?**

- a** Rely on housebuilders to include energy efficiency and measures to reduce the use of resources, such as water, in new housing over and above the existing building regulations.
- b** Require housebuilders to reach at least Level 1 in the Code for Sustainable Homes and hope that some may achieve a higher level.
- c** Require housebuilders to reach at least Level 2 in the Code for Sustainable Homes and hope that some may achieve a higher level.

#### **CC3. How can we best reduce the need to travel?**

- a** Ensure new developments are in locations close to existing facilities such as public transport, schools, shops, and employment.
- b** As **option a**, but also promote mixed-use developments including locating new employment opportunities and houses together.
- c** As **option b**, but also encourage more working from home and live-work units.

#### **CC4. How should we ensure that new development is located near to public transport provision?**

- a** Locate new development in locations where good public transport links may not currently exist but assume a public transport provider will create a new route in close proximity.
- b** Only locate new development where good public transport links either already exist, or where they will be provided by a developer or public transport provider.

**CC5. Although the opportunity for further wind farms may be limited what should be our attitude to future renewable and low-carbon energy schemes?**

- a** Allocate specific sites for renewable energy and low-carbon energy schemes.
- b** Look favourably on proposals for all renewable energy and low-carbon energy schemes outside of areas designated for their nationally important nature conservation value.

**CC6. How can we reduce the harm that can be caused by flooding, in all its forms?**

- a** Require that developments in areas of flood risk demonstrate how flooding, including downstream flooding, will be avoided.
- b** Only allow development in areas of flood risk if all other alternatives have been discounted.
- c** Prevent all developments in areas of flood risk.



## **Housing**

### **Introduction**

One of the principle roles of the planning system is to ensure that new homes are provided in the right place at the right time. This must be achieved whilst also having regard to national and regional planning policy. Many of the issues the District is experiencing are also issues nationally, such as the need for affordable housing, homelessness and the housing needs of an ageing population.

Recent Government guidance is asking local authorities to be more aware of the needs of the housing market and to ensure that the supply of housing is not restricted. This must be balanced with the requirement for Derwentside to be consistent with the housing requirement figures in the Regional Spatial Strategy and also with the needs of the District's residents.

### **What the Government says**

The key policy goal of Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) is to 'ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live'. PPS3 seeks to improve affordability across the housing market, including by increasing the supply of housing

PPS3 seeks to achieve mixed communities by requiring local authorities to have a detailed understanding of the type of housing that is required to meet the needs of its community and the proportion of households that require affordable housing. This evidence should be provided by a Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

PPS3 requires local authorities to set an overall target for the amount of affordable housing to be provided, which will meet the needs of both current and future occupiers. Within that target there should be separate targets for the provision of social rented and intermediate affordable housing.

Local authorities should develop positive policies to identify and bring into residential use empty housing and buildings in line with local housing and empty homes strategies.

In order to ensure that sufficient, suitable land for housing is available, PPS3 stipulates that a 15-year supply of housing should be identified. Regard must be taken of the level of provision proposed in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The first 5 years supply should be on identified sites that are available, suitable and achievable. Sites for the remaining 10 years should also be identified where possible. If that is not possible then broad locations for future growth should be identified. A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment should ensure that the sites identified are deliverable.

The Government's national target to provide at least 60% of additional housing on previously developed land. Local authorities should have local targets for the amount of land to be provided on previously developed land and strategies for bringing previously developed land into housing use.

### **What the Region says**

The Submission Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East (RSS) prioritises the development of previously developed land and sets a target of 65% of new housing to be built on previously developed land by 2016.

Policy 29 of Submission Draft RSS seeks to address low demand and abandonment by restructuring the housing stock through the demolition of outdated properties, improvement in other instances and replacement at lower densities where this would 'improve the living environment and quality of life, and achieve a better mix of dwelling type, size and tenure'.

Policy 30 identifies the net additional housing requirement of each local authority. Derwentside is allocated an average of 250 dwellings per annum from 2004-21 giving a total of 4250 net new dwellings to be provided across the plan period.

Policy 32 requires local authorities to make provision for a range of dwelling types, size and tenure to meet the assessed needs of all sectors of the community and to address the problems of local affordability in both urban and rural areas. Provision for Gypsies and Travellers is mentioned specifically.

The RSS Panel Report recommends a reduced housing allocation for Derwentside of 3215 net new dwellings from 2004-21.

The Regional Housing Strategy has four main objectives: to rejuvenate the Region's housing stock; to ensure the type and mix of new housing provides choice; to secure the improvement and maintenance of existing housing; and to promote good management and targeted housing investment to address specific community and social needs.

### **What the Community Strategy says**

Derwentside's Community Strategy Review seeks 'To ensure that housing provision and support infrastructure meets the need and preferences of the communities in Derwentside'. It also requires the development of flexible Local Development Documents to reflect changes in the housing market. Other relevant objectives are: to develop an 'Affordability Policy' with RSL partners; to reduce the number of long term vacant dwellings; and to reduce the number of private sector homes which are unfit for human habitation.

Challenge 9 of the County Durham Vision is to 'take a radical approach to housing and neighbourhood improvement by replacing and improving housing, providing sites for new homes and developing local improvement initiatives to promote sustainable communities'.

The County Durham Local Area Agreement suggests taking a rounded approach to housing and neighbourhood improvement by replacing and improving housing, providing sites for new homes and developing local initiatives to promote sustainable communities.

### **What the evidence tells us**

The District's population is expected to increase by 7% from 86000 to 92000 up to 2021 and average household size is likely to decrease as more people choose to live alone.

Using the net annual allocation of 250 dwellings per year from 2004-21 in Submission Draft RSS, Derwentside had almost 14 years supply as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2006. This supply comprises those dwellings completed since 2004, those under construction and those with planning permission. Therefore there is no immediate need for new housing sites to meet our housing requirement. If the allocations recommended by the RSS Panel are used then there is over 18 years of supply.

The percentage of houses built on sites that were previously developed over the last five years was 60%, 77%, 69%, 54% and 72%, giving an average of 66%. This is above both the national and regional targets.

The last 5 years has seen the emergence of an affordable housing problem in the District. House prices in the District increased by 113% in the period 2000 to 2005; over the same period average weekly earnings rose by only 9%. As a result, demand for social rented housing has increased dramatically and the number of people accepted as homeless increased by 81% from 2002 to 2005. The 2006 Housing Needs Survey identifies a need for 729 affordable units per annum. Of this, 604 units can be provided using the turnover in social rented dwellings. This leaves a deficiency of 125 units per annum to be provided on new housing sites. To achieve this figure, the Survey recommends a policy requiring 50% of new dwellings on sites of over 15 dwellings to be affordable.

The District's population is ageing, with the proportion of the District's population over 65 increasing from 18% to 23% by 2021 (ONS 2004 based population projections). The average size of households is also likely to decrease as more people choose to live alone.

Low demand has been an issue in the Council's own stock in the past but a programme of demolition and the increased demand for social rented properties means that the vacancy rate is now negligible. The problem now is in the private sector, with the Council's draft Empty Homes Strategy showing that as of October 2005 there were 691 long-term empty properties (empty for over six months) the majority of which were owned privately. The concentration of these empty properties is in the former coal-mining settlements particularly South Moor, New Kyo and Craghead. Empty properties can hinder regeneration efforts and add to the requirement to build new housing.

The 2006 Housing Needs Study found that 48.3% of all housing in Derwentside is terraced, compared to 32.1% regionally and 25.9 % nationally. Conversely only 14.8% of the housing stock in Derwentside is detached, compared to 14.5% regionally and 22.6% nationally.

The percentage of housing classed as unfit in the District of Derwentside is much higher than both the regional and national levels at 8.5 % compared to 4.9% and 4.8% respectively.

The Government is committed to ensuring that members of the gypsy and traveller communities should have the same access to decent and appropriate accommodation as every other person and that there are sufficient sites available to meet their identified needs. A countywide study is currently underway, which will identify any needs of the gypsy and traveller community, and we will include any necessary policies accordingly.

### **What you have already said**

Over 80% of respondents to the Citizen's Panel questionnaire believed there was a need for more affordable housing in the District. However, nearly 50% of people think it should be the responsibility of the Council to provide it. As the Council has now transferred its housing stock, this is no longer an option.

Some support was forthcoming for controlling the levels of housebuilding to ensure conformity with RSS. Setting high targets for the amount of housing on previously developed land was also a popular suggestion.

### **Questions and Options**

#### **HO1. Given the existing supply of housing, how should we deal with new housing proposals?**

- a** Only allow new housing in existing built-up areas.
- b** As **option a** but only on land that has been previously developed.
- c** Only allow new housing that has regeneration benefits or high levels of affordable housing.
- d** Do not allow any more new housing estates for the next 10-15 years (not including those developments that already have permission or the redevelopment of existing housing estates).

#### **HO2. How much new housing should be built on land that was previously developed?**

- a** The national target of 60%.
- b** The regional target of 65%.
- c** A local target of 70%.
- d** A local target of 80%.

#### **HO3. The 2006 Housing Needs Survey identified a shortage of affordable housing. Bearing in mind the existing supply of housing, what is the best way of securing affordable housing from new development?**

- a** . Require 50% of new dwellings to be affordable on all sites of 15 dwellings or more (as recommended by the 2006 Housing Needs Survey).
- b** In order to have less impact on the financial viability of some sites require 35% of new dwellings to be affordable on all sites of 15 dwellings or more.
- c** Identify some sites that would be 100% affordable housing and secure financial contributions from developers to help deliver them.

#### **HO4. In the future, what type of housing will be required in Derwentside?**

- a** Priority given to smaller dwellings to cater for the larger number of smaller households that are predicted.
- b** Priority given to providing larger detached houses (3 or more bedrooms) because of the existing short supply of such housing.
- c** Priority given to more specialised housing to cater for our ageing population.
- d** A mixture of house types depending on the identified needs of an area.

**HO5. How can planning help reduce the number of empty dwellings and improve the quality of housing in the District?**

- a** Identify areas of low housing demand to enable the Council to target its resources to bring empty properties back into use and improve the quality of the housing.
- b** Encourage the redevelopment of existing housing areas where there are large numbers of empty properties.

**HO6. If the Council is required to identify locations for gypsy traveller sites, where should these be located?**

- a** In or near the main centres of Consett and Stanley.
- b** In or near one of the District's local service centres.
- c** Where there is demand.

## **Employment and Tourism**

### **Introduction**

The policies in the Core Strategy will aim to sustain and enhance the District's economic performance, within the strategy and policy framework provided by new RSS for the region as a whole. It will do this by creating an environment that is conducive to business and by ensuring that there is a sufficient provision of suitable, well-located employment land and floorspace.

### **What the Government says**

Planning Policy Guidance Note 4: Industrial, commercial development and small firms (PPG4) encourages continued economic growth that is environmentally sound as this also makes good economic sense for business and industry. The locational demands of businesses must be balanced against other development plan objectives.

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS7), states that the provision of essential facilities for tourist visitors is vital for the development of the tourism industry in rural areas. Local planning authorities should therefore plan for and support the provision of general tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations and allow appropriate facilities needed to enhance visitors' enjoyment.

### **What the Region says**

Policy 12 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East (RSS) states that new economic development should be focused on previously developed land within the Region's conurbations and main towns. Policy 15 states that plans and strategies should seek to provide a flexible response to the changing demands of businesses for ICT, including homeworking solutions.

Policy 18 indicates that provision should be made for 105 hectares of general employment land in Derwentside (including existing allocated employment land). It also encourages local authorities to protect employment land and premises from redevelopment for alternative uses, where they are required as part of the employment land and premises portfolio, and to look at potential for de-allocation of unsuitable sites.

Tourism is to be encouraged throughout the region, ensuring that the developments enhance, protect and maintain the quality of the 'natural', built and heritage environments.

The RSS Panel Report has accepted the allocations in RSS but suggests that the employment land assessment should look at a 25 year level of supply and take-up. It also includes a presumption in favour of regenerating and upgrading existing employment land and premises in advance of allocating new sites on greenfield land.

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) aims to achieve sustainable, inclusive economic growth for the North East. To do this the RES aims to move the North East from an employee to an employer culture and to provide support to raise productivity. It also aims to ensure that the workforce is healthier, creative and has

the necessary high level and generic skills to enable the region to compete. RES also recognises that it is necessary to have the strategic sites and premises to support investment.

### **What the Community Strategy says**

The review of the Community Strategy seeks to reduce the number of residents who are unemployed and the number of people claiming Incapacity Benefit. It is also aiming for a population with the skills to meet current and future business needs.

Supporting the growth and competitiveness of existing business and an increased number of value-adding business start-ups is also essential to the future prosperity of the District. The Community Strategy also promotes increased provision of modern business floor space through property enhancement and exploring new development options.

The Strategic Vision for County Durham seeks to ensure that unemployment in County Durham is the same as or lower than the national average and that the number of new businesses increases. In addition Challenge 1 is to create a strong tourism sector while protecting our distinctive, beautiful environment so that the County is at the forefront of tourism development.

The County Durham Local Area Agreement identifies that a significant proportion of the available stock of business property is poor quality, or is inappropriate to the needs of business sectors with strong growth potential. There are shortages of certain types of business, including high quality offices and small business units and large modern factories.

### **What the evidence tells us**

Unemployment measured by the percentage of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants has fallen from 3.0% in 2001 to 2.3% in 2005 and equates to the national rate. Skill shortages remain, and some companies are recruiting from outside the area. The level of worklessness is a major challenge. In 2004, it was 12.28% of the working population compared to a national rate of 7.29%.

The District contains a total of 34 general industrial estates, prestige industrial parks and business parks. The majority of these are located within or close to existing centres of population and are well related to the existing road/transport network.

Data on the take-up of employment land has only been available for the last two years. The supply of available land has dropped significantly from 65.10 hectares to 44.82 hectares. Almost 13 hectares of the land taken up has gone to non-employment uses (new sports centre proposal in Consett). Since the monitoring date of 31<sup>st</sup> of March, a further 6 hectares has been given planning permission for housing, leaving only 38.45 currently available either in the short or long term. Therefore to meet the RSS allocation, a further 65 hectares of new employment land would be required for the next 25 years.

To understand whether the existing supply is of sufficient quantity or of the right type and quality, a comprehensive employment land assessment is required. The assessment will also look at the potential to regenerate existing sites, as

recommended by the RSS Panel, to avoid the unnecessary allocation of greenfield land. This will be undertaken as soon as the necessary resources have been identified.

There is potential to further develop cultural facilities and visitor attractions within the District and to increase and improve the standard of the visitor accommodation on offer. Such development will generally be small scale, though the District's location between the Tyne and Wear conurbation and the Pennines means it should be well placed to capitalise on its location.

### **What you have already said**

A survey of tourism operators in the District confirmed the importance of the District's tourism industry. Respondents identified a shortage of trained staff and thought Derwentside needed new facilities and attractions to retain tourists within the local area.

The development of a diverse, thriving economy is seen, by most people, as critical to the future of the District. There must also be sufficient employment opportunities in the District to prevent unnecessary commuting.

### **Questions and Options**

#### **ET1. Is the existing supply of employment land enough for the needs of the next 25 years?**

- a** There is already too much, some may be better used for other purposes.
- b** The existing amount of land is about right for the future needs of the District.
- c** A little more is needed (eg 10 hectares).
- d** Some more is needed (eg 30 hectares).
- e** Much more is needed (eg 65 hectares as suggested by RSS).

#### **ET2. If there is to be any new employment land, how should it be provided?**

- a** Redevelopment of existing, less attractive employment sites.
- b** On other previously developed land in existing built up areas.
- c** On greenfield land within existing built up areas.
- d** On previously developed land located near good transport links.
- e** On greenfield land located near good transport links.

#### **ET3. How should we treat proposals for employment uses outside of identified industrial estates?**

- a** Do not allow any outside of identified industrial estates.
- b** Only allow if near good transport links and there are regeneration benefits.
- c** Allow anywhere within existing built-up areas as long as it would not have any detrimental effects on neighbouring uses.

#### **ET4. What would be the best way to increase tourism in the District?**

- a** Improve the appearance of the District as a whole but particularly town and village centres.
- b** Better promotion of existing facilities and attractions.



- c** Development of new facilities and attractions.

## **Town Centres and Shopping**

### **Introduction**

The Council must seek to maintain the vitality and viability of all of its retail centres. This may require the protection of existing provision or ensuring that new development improves the overall health of the centre in which it is located. Retail, leisure and other town centre uses must be in locations that are accessible to all and not rely on access by car. District and local centres must also be sufficiently attractive to local residents to enable them to play their part in the District's provision of services.

### **What the Government says**

The emphasis of Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres (PPS6) is focusing development and future growth in existing town centres to ensure their vitality and viability. To do this PPS6 uses the sequential test, which directs town centre uses to existing town centres, but also makes sure that the scale of development is appropriate and relates to the town centre without having an unacceptable impact. The main town centre uses are retail, leisure, offices, arts, culture, tourism and entertainment facilities.

Encouraging these facilities in town centres will help deliver sustainable development by promoting economic growth, improving accessibility and offering genuine choice for consumers through high density and mixed-use development that recognises the importance of high quality design. Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1) repeats these themes for achieving sustainable development.

### **What the Region says**

The Submission Draft of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) recognises that retail and leisure development are key components of economic prosperity and regeneration. To support an urban renaissance it is seen as crucial that centres are the focus for retail and leisure development and that out-of-centre locations are avoided.

Consett and Stanley are recognised as two of the major centres in north and west Durham, providing the principal centres for employment, retailing and other services. The scale of new development within town or other centres should be based on the sequential approach and locational strategy to reflect their role in the region. Where a need for retail-led regeneration has been identified for centres in regeneration areas, retail and leisure development may be allowed above the scale that would be required for the centre to maintain its role, provided that it would support the sustainable regeneration of these centres without compromising the vitality and viability of other town centres.

Additional out-of-centre retail and leisure facilities would put at risk the continued vitality and viability of existing town centres, which represent the most sustainable locations for these functions. Edge-of-centre sites should only be developed where there are no sequentially preferable alternatives, and should be well integrated with the existing town centre to complement it

rather than compete with it and ensure easy accessibility by foot, cycle and public transport.

### **What the Community Strategy says**

The Derwentside Community Strategy Review recognises the need to create more attractive town and village centres by creating more attractive places, providing local shops, leisure facilities and services and investing in the appearance of the street scene.

Challenge 3 of the County Durham Strategic Vision seeks to 'expand shopping, culture and leisure provision at key locations in the County, whilst securing the future of smaller towns as thriving centres for local shopping and service delivery'.

### **What the evidence tells us**

Shopping and other town centre uses such as leisure and offices are predominantly located in the two major centres of Consett and Stanley although there are also district centres such as Annfield Plain and Lanchester and local centres such as Shotley Bridge and South Moor. Consett and Stanley have 232 and 140 retail units respectively and are also the location for the District's main leisure destinations.

The vacancy rate of commercial properties varies across the District and ranges from 18.4% in Leadgate to 3.9% in Consett (Annual Monitoring Report 2004/05). Some vacancies will be as a result of changes in occupier but those vacancies that are more long-term need to be addressed.

The Council has recently commissioned a Retail Needs Assessment for the District. This should help determine whether any additional floorspace for town centre uses such as retail, leisure or offices is required up to 2021 and, if so, what type and size is needed. It should also establish a hierarchy of the District's town, district and local centres and assist the Council in determining planning applications involving new or the loss of existing floorspace.

### **What you have already said**

The importance of providing suitable leisure and cultural activities was recognised. Many respondents believed that there were opportunities to improve shopping in the District. Although there was support for improved shopping in the two main towns, more choice in local centres was also popular. One respondent pointed to the quality of shops being the main problem rather than quantity.

## **Questions and Options**

### **TS1. How could we improve the town centre of Consett?**

- a** Improve the environment and layout of the shopping area.
- b** Encourage more choice of food shops.
- c** Encourage more choice of non-food shops.
- d** Encourage more choice of both food and non-food shops.

**TS2. How could we improve the town centre of Stanley?**

- a** Improve the environment and layout of the shopping area.
- b** Encourage more choice of food shops.
- c** Encourage more choice of non-food shops.
- d** Encourage more choice of both food and non-food shops.

**TS3. How should we ensure the viability of the District's local shopping centres?**

- a** Allow centres to contract in a planned way if a larger centre is no longer viable.
- b** Resist loss of all retail units.
- c** Encourage new growth in local centres regardless of the impact on other centres.

## **Sustainable Communities**

### **Introduction**

Access to facilities, such as shops, doctor's surgeries or schools is essential to maintaining sustainable communities. This applies equally to rural areas and deprived urban communities. The provision of good and accessible open spaces can also be vital to achieving a healthy population.

The protection of the District's heritage encourages communities to have pride in their own areas and can provide opportunities for leisure and recreation. It also allows the effective conservation and re-use of historic buildings, which is at the heart of regeneration and sustainability.

Good design should not be restricted to the historic environment but should be a fundamental part of the planning process. Good design can also lead to a safe local environment. Feeling safe is important to the well-being and quality of life of all communities throughout the District.

### **What the Government says**

In Planning Policy Statement 1: Creating Sustainable Communities (PPS1) the Government has committed to developing strong, vibrant and sustainable communities and to promoting community cohesion, well-being of communities, improving facilities, promoting high quality and safe development and creating new opportunities for the people living in those communities. PPS1 also expects development plans to promote development that creates socially inclusive communities and deliver safe, healthy and attractive places to live.

The first objective in Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) expects the planning system to deliver high quality housing that is well-designed and built to a high standard.

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS7) also requires that planning authorities adopt a positive approach to planning proposals designed to improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities, e.g. village shops and post offices, rural petrol stations, village and church halls and rural public houses, which play an important role in sustaining village communities.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) describes the role of the planning system in assessing opportunities and needs for sport and recreation provision and safeguarding open space which has recreational value.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15), sets out Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment.

### **What the Region says**

Policy 8 of the Submission Draft of the North East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) seeks to protect and improve the provision of rural service infrastructure. Policy 24

of Submission Draft RSS seeks to deliver sustainable communities by considering the impact of the design and layout of developments on cultural assets, accessibility of community facilities, social cohesion and opportunities for crime prevention and community safety.

Policy 9 seeks to enhance the quality and local distinctiveness of the built environment by promoting high-quality design and development that is sympathetic to its surroundings. Policy 34 expects local authorities to conserve and enhance the historic environment by identifying significant heritage assets using 'at risk' registers of buildings, local listing of important buildings and the preparation of conservation area appraisals and management plans.

### **What the Community Strategy says**

A strategic objective of the draft community strategy is 'By working together we will build safe communities and reduce concern'. Cohesive communities provide a foundation to build a safe, attractive and healthy Derwentside. Changing attitudes and the promotion of inclusion and diversity are key to achieving this. Services and communities should be accessible to all, regardless of race, age, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion or sexuality. The Community Strategy also aims to promote and encourage best practice principles for sustainable construction and design and to conserve and enhance the District's local built heritage.

Challenge 10 of the Strategic Vision for County Durham seeks to provide easy to access services that promote safe, healthy, caring, diverse and socially balanced communities with equality and access to services at their heart. Challenge 7 seeks to tackle the underlying causes of poor health, including a poor environment, unhealthy lifestyles and poor access to services.

One of the main priorities of the County Durham Local Area Agreement is to reduce crime and to re-assure the public, reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. It also identifies the need to reverse the decline in the fabric of some of the County's towns and villages as a priority including the need to improve the quality of public space, particularly urban green spaces, and the need for investment to tackle the legacy of dereliction.

### **What the evidence tells us**

Derwentside has 17 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (2 of which are on English Heritage's 'at risk' register at Langley Hall and Monastic Grange at Priory Farm), 491 Archaeological Sites, 8 Parks and Gardens of special historic interest and 311 Listed Buildings. The District also contains 16 Conservation Areas, which we intend to study in detail through the preparation of appraisals over the next three years.

In order to provide evidence on the demand for open spaces and the amount and quality of open space existing in the District, the Council has commissioned an Open Space Assessment. The Assessment will identify deficits and surpluses in the provision of open space across the District and provide the basis for appropriate planning policies.

Only 44% of residents think that, for their local area, over the past three years, the level of crime has got better or stayed the same. However, 83% of people in

Derwentside are very satisfied or quite satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

No planning applications in recent years have referred directly to Building for Life Standards however the Government recently introduced the requirement for all planning applications to be accompanied by Design and Access Statements to improve standards of design. This is a move in the right direction but actual policies in the Local Development Framework may be a more effective way forward.

### **What you have already said**

There was widespread support for the encouragement of better design of new buildings and the public realm in general and also for design that was more in keeping with the local area. The Building for Life Standards produced by CABE and the Home Builders Federation was specifically mentioned, as were Village Design Statements. It was also suggested that using design to minimise opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour should be a high priority.

Provision of suitable open space for all age groups was identified as an important issue for healthy communities. Maintaining local facilities within communities and encouraging community transport to access services located further away was also supported. Protection of the unique character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas was also highlighted as being very important.

### **Questions and Options**

#### **SC1. How can we best achieve better design in Derwentside?**

- a** Rely on the developer's interpretation of what constitutes good design.
- b** Encourage the design of new development to have regard to the design of local buildings and landscape.
- c** Require developers to comply with advice on good design such as the Building for Life standard developed by CABE and the Home Builders Federation.

#### **SC2. What is the best way of ensuring our villages and neighbourhoods have access to essential services and facilities?**

- a** Seek to prevent existing facilities in villages and neighbourhoods changing to residential use.
- b** Improve transport links to services and facilities in the main towns.

#### **SC3. Planning has a role to play in ensuring safer communities. How can we do this?**

- a** Encourage new developments to include measures to minimise the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour.
- b** Require the design of all new developments to include measures to minimise the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour.

#### **SC4. The District has many locally important buildings that are unsuitable for full national listing. How can we ensure these locally important buildings are protected?**

- a** Assess importance of buildings when they are affected by development proposals and look to ensure they are not harmed by the proposed scheme.
- b** Produce a list of locally important or historic buildings and develop appropriate policies to protect them.

**SC5. In order to improve the provision of quality open spaces in the District, what should be our priority?**

- a** Target new provision to poorly provided wards and parishes in the District.
- b** Prioritise the improvement of existing, larger areas of open space.
- c** Provide a larger number of smaller, more easily accessible areas of open space.



## **The Natural Environment**

### **Introduction**

The District contains areas of distinctive and attractive countryside, including part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There are other areas of landscape value that also support a variety of key wildlife habitats that contribute to the biodiversity (the variety of life in all its forms) of the area. Many of these areas face pressures such as changes in farming practices, the need to diversify the rural economy or the threat of development and need protection.

### **What the Government says**

A number of national policy documents and Acts provide instruction and guidance to how the natural environment is managed in the District. For example the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 gives protection to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), stronger wildlife protection and increased public access to registered common land. Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation gives advice on statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system.

Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS9) sets out the Government's vision for conserving and enhancing biological diversity in England, together with a programme of work to achieve it. It includes the broad aim that planning, construction, development and regeneration should have minimal impacts on biodiversity and enhance it wherever possible.

In order to comply with the EU Habitats Directive, development plans must include an 'appropriate assessment' that will assess the plan's impact on European designated sites such as Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.

### **What the Region says**

Policy 33 of Submission Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East (RSS) seeks to protect nationally designated areas such as the AONB. It also states that plans should have regard to landscape character assessments to justify local landscape designations.

Policy 35 states that plans should ensure that the region's ecological and geological resources are protected and enhanced. Ways of doing this include linking up existing habitats and green spaces (green infrastructure), improving the condition of SSSIs and implementing Biodiversity Action Plans.

### **What the Community Strategy says**

The Community Strategy seeks to make Derwentside an attractive place to live in and aims to protect and enhance landscape biodiversity and habitat creation.

Challenge 12 of the Strategic Vision for County Durham seeks to sustain and enhance the quality of the County's biodiversity and landscape.

### **What the evidence tells us**

The County Durham Landscape Character Assessment (2003) divides the District into two Landscape Character Areas, the North Pennines and the West Durham

Coalfield, based on their distinctive characteristics. These are then broken down into landscape types, such as High Moorland or Coalfield Valley. These designations are then used in the Landscape Strategy to provide the context for considering how new development might fit into the wider landscape. This approach is flexible and focuses on how development can be accommodated in the landscape but may result in less certainty and clarity about where policy applies.

There are currently 12 Areas of High Landscape Value (AHLV) in the District, which recognise the local importance of that landscape and provide a measure of protection. If AHLVs are to be retained they must be fully justified. Area designations give greater certainty over where the policy applies but give the impression of restriction, rather than positive accommodation and delivery of acceptable development.

The District contains one Special Area of Conservation and one Special Protection Area both at North Pennines Moors and therefore an appropriate assessment needs to be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the policies and proposals in the Local Development Framework.

Derwentside contains one National Nature Reserve and 5671 hectares of SSSI. Unfortunately only 5% of the land covered by SSSI in the District is in favourable condition compared to 18% in County Durham and 57% in England. The Government has a target of 95% being in favourable condition by 2010. The District also contains 9 Local Nature Reserves and a large number of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance.

A number of Supplementary Planning Documents are being produced that will provide more detailed guidance for specific topics and areas relating to the natural environment. Those currently in preparation are the North Pennines Building Design Guide, the North Pennines Planning Guide, the River Team Catchment Plan, the Lanchester Locality Plan and Environmental Protection. All will have their own public consultation exercises.

### **What you have already said**

The health benefits of an attractive natural environment should be stressed. If possible development should be designed with the needs of habitats and species in mind. If harm cannot be avoided, then the development should be prevented. 57% of respondents to the Citizens' Panel Local Development Framework questionnaire indicated that the Environment was the topic in which they were most interested.

### **Questions and Options**

#### **NE1. Should we rely on the detailed work in the Landscape Character Assessment to protect the landscape from inappropriate development or retain the Areas of High Landscape Value?**

- a** Use an approach based on the Landscape Character work undertaken by Durham County Council (sets out objectives for landscape conservation and enhancement based on an assessment of its character).

- b** Retain the existing designated Areas of High Landscape Value (a designation that requires new development to respect the landscape qualities of the area).

**NE2. How can we protect our environment as a source of natural biodiversity?**

- a** Encourage developers to have regard to the existence of habitats and protected species on development sites.
- b** Require developers to retain habitats or protected species within development sites. Where this is not possible suitable alternatives should be provided.
- c** Prevent development that would harm a habitat or protected species.

## Related Documents

[EU Habitats Directive](#) 1992  
[Planning Policy Guidance Note 1: Delivering Sustainable Development](#) (PPG1) 2005  
[Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts](#) (PPG2) 2002  
[Planning Policy Statement 3:Housing](#) (PPS3) 2006  
[Planning Policy Guidance Note 4:Industrial, commercial development and small firms](#) (PPG4) 1992  
[Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres](#) (PPS6) 2005  
[Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas](#) (PPS7) 2004  
[Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation](#) (PPS9) 2005  
[Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment](#) (PPG15) 1994  
[Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation](#) (PPG17) 2002  
[Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy](#) (PPS22) 2004  
[Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk](#) (PPS25) 2006  
[Energy White Paper](#)  
[Circular 6/98 Planning and Affordable Housing](#) 1998  
[Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation](#) 2006  
[Countryside and Rights of Way Act](#) 2000  
[The Stern Review](#) 2006  
[Building a Greener Future - Consultation Document](#) 2006  
[Code for Sustainable Buildings](#) 2006  
[Water Efficiency in New Buildings](#) 2006  
[Building for Life](#)  
[North East Regional Spatial Strategy Submission Draft](#) 2005  
[North East regional Spatial Strategy Examination in Public Panel Report](#) 2006  
[North East Regional Economic Strategy](#) 2006  
[North East Regional Housing Strategy](#) 2005  
[Strategic Vision For County Durham](#) 2004  
[County Durham Local Area Agreement](#)  
[County Durham Structure Plan](#) 1999  
[County Durham Landscape Character Assessment and Strategy](#)  
[Derwentside Community Strategy Review](#) 2006  
Derwentside Housing Strategy 2005  
[Derwentside Homelessness Strategy](#) 2003/06  
Derwentside Draft Empty Properties Strategy 2006  
Derwentside Draft Housing Needs Survey 2006  
[Derwentside LDF Annual Monitoring Report](#) 2004/05

## Glossary

**Annual Monitoring Report (AMR):** part of the Local Development Framework, the annual monitoring report will assess the implementation of the Local Development Scheme and the extent to which policies in Local Development Documents are being successfully carried out.

**Area Action Plan:** used to provide a planning framework for areas of change and areas of conservation. Area Action Plans will have the status of Development Plan Documents.

**Corporate Consultation Policy:** adopted Council policy that sets out the Council's corporate approach to community engagement and involvement in all services the Council provides.

**Community Strategy:** local authorities are required by the Local Government Act 2000 to prepare these, with the aim of improving the social, environmental, and economic well-being of their areas. Through the Community Strategy, authorities are expected to co-ordinate the actions of local public, private, voluntary, and community sectors. Responsibility for producing Community Strategies may be passed to Local Strategic Partnerships, which include local authority representatives.

**Core Strategy:** sets out the long-term spatial vision for the local planning authority area, the spatial objectives, and strategic policies to deliver that vision and those objectives. The Core Strategy will have the status of a Development Plan Document.

**Corporate Plan:** sets out the Council's vision, aims, values, priorities, and proposals to achieve the Community Strategy.

**Development Plan:** as set out in Section 38(6) of the Act, an authority's development plan consists of the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy and the Development Plan Documents contained within its Local Development Framework.

**Development Plan Documents (DPD):** planning documents that are subject to independent examination, and together with the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy, will form the development plan for a local authority area for the purposes of the Act. They can include a Core Strategy, Site Specific Allocations of land, and Area Action Plans (where needed). Other Development Plan Documents, including generic Development Control Policies, can be produced.

**Green infrastructure:** the planned and managed network of parks, wetlands, woodlands, waterways, wildlife habitat, nature reserves, greenways, parks and other green spaces that supports native species, maintains ecological processes, sustains air and water resources, and contributes to health and quality of life.

**Local Development Document (LDD):** the collective term in the Act for Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents, and the Statement of Community Involvement.

**Local Development Framework (LDF):** the name for the portfolio of Local Development Documents. It consists of Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents, a Statement of Community Involvement, the Local Development Scheme and Annual Monitoring Reports. Together these documents will provide the framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for a local authority area.

**Local Development Scheme (LDS):** sets out the programme for preparing Local Development Documents.

**Local Strategic Partnership (LSP):** non-statutory, multi agency bodies which bring together the public, private, community, and voluntary sectors. The Derwentside Partnership, the LSP for Derwentside, brings together decision-makers, communities and organisations to improve the quality of life of all citizens, but particularly those that face disadvantage.

**Proposals Map:** the adopted proposals map illustrates on a base map (reproduced from, or based upon a map base to a registered scale) all the policies contained in Development Plan Documents. It must be revised as each new Development Plan Document is adopted, and it should always reflect the up-to-date planning strategy for the area.

**Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS):** sets out the region's policies in relation to the development and use of land, and forms part of the development plan for local planning authorities.

**Site Specific Allocations:** allocations of sites for specific or mixed uses or development to be contained in Development Plan Documents. Policies will identify any specific requirements for individual proposals.

**Statement of Community Involvement (SCI):** sets out the standards which authorities will achieve when they involve local communities in the preparation of local development documents and development control decisions. The SCI is not a Development Plan Document but is subject to independent examination.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):** a generic term used to describe environmental assessment as applied to policies, plans and programmes. The European 'SEA Directive' (2001/42/EC) requires a formal 'environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes, including those in the field of planning and land use'.

**Supplementary Plan Documents (SPD):** provide supplementary information about the policies in Development Plan Documents. They do not form part of the Development Plan and are not subject to independent examination.

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA):** tool for appraising policies to ensure that they reflect sustainable development objectives (ie social, environmental, and economic factors). Councils must carry out SAs for all Local Development Documents.