



Sedgefield Borough Council

Local Development Framework:
Core Strategy DPD Alternative Options

July 2006

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Introduction

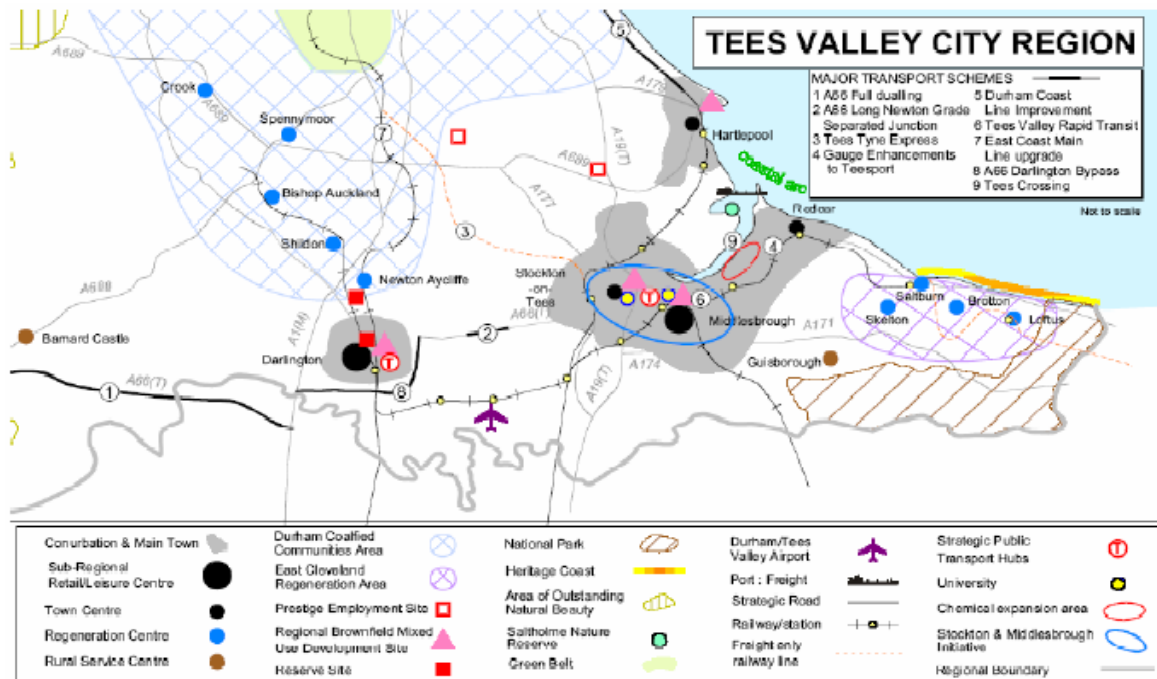
- 1.1 The Borough Council started to prepare its Core Strategy during 2005 with the publication of the Key Issues Paper and the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report in July. These documents were subject to a six-week public consultation period, which finished in September. Overall, the Borough Council received 547 comments from a variety of 72 individuals, community groups and businesses to the Key Issues Paper and 110 comments on the Scoping Report.
- 1.2 As part of the continuing pre-production work that the Borough Council is undertaking, we are providing an additional opportunity for consultees to influence the process as early as possible. The release of this Options Paper will further this process. The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should consult and engage with specific consultation bodies to identify the emerging planning issues that should be considered in Development Plan Documents. This consultation will provide the opportunity for the community to consider alternative options and identify which is their preferred option and help provide evidence for the LPA to ensure that Development Plan Documents are sound when they are submitted for examination.
- 1.3 Following the consultation exercise to be undertaken on this document, and the consideration of representations received, the Borough Council will produce its Core Strategy Preferred Options Development Plan Document in winter 2006. All alternative options will be appraised through the Sustainability Appraisal process.

How to respond to consultation exercise

- 1.4 The document is structured in a way that summarises the issues and the responses raised in the Key Issues Paper during summer 2005 and puts forward alternative options to address these issues. It is important that you make your comments during this consultation period to help the Borough Council frame its Preferred Options later this year. If you do not feel that our proposed alternative options mirror your thoughts, please feel free to suggest alternatives.

Spatial Context & Influences on Core Strategy

2.1 In February 2004, the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott invited the three northern Regional Development Agencies to show how the North could unlock the potential for faster economic growth and bridge the £29 billion output gap between the North and the rest of the UK with our partners. This process is known as the *Northern Way* and seeks to promote development within the eight City Regions in the north of England. Sedgefield Borough is located within the Tees Valley City Region. This concept has been taken forward within the Submission Draft Regional Spatial Strategy. The policy initiatives that will impact upon Sedgefield Borough are the regeneration policies for the Durham Coalfield Area, the development of Aycliffe Industrial Park and NetPark as employment hubs, and the opportunities offered by the A1 (M), East Coast Main Rail Line, and Darlington-Bishop Auckland Branch Line.



2.2 The Borough's Community Strategy 2004-2014 identifies a number of key issues that currently affect the Borough. These issues can be summarised to include health deprivation; a narrow employment base; low educational and skills attainment; a need to regenerate towns and villages; access to key services; and community development and awareness. The Community Strategy Action Plan will further develop the strategy. The Local Development Framework will need to identify how the spatial elements of this Action Plan are going to be addressed. At this stage, it is hoped that this document will be a technical appendix to the Core Strategy Preferred Options Development Plan Document.

Local Development Framework Vision

- 3.1 The Community Strategy is the Local Strategic Partnership's key document. This sets out a shared vision for where the Community want to see the Borough in 10 years time and provides a number of targets to help achieve this vision. There are significant linkages between the Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework, as the LDF provides a spatial expression of the Community Strategy.

The respondents to the Key Issues Paper largely supported the proposed vision for the Local Development Framework. However, it is felt necessary to explicitly refer to the requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 for local authorities to achieve sustainable development.

- 3.2 The vision of the LDF, which will be incorporated in the Core Strategy, has been developed through the formulation of the Community Strategy. Our aspiration is for Sedgefield to be a Borough in which people are happy to live, work and do business. This means being able to offer high quality job opportunities, good schools, a wide range of good quality and affordable housing, low crime rates, a pleasant and accessible environment and first class services. This will help the Borough Council achieve Section 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires Local Planning Authorities to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 3.3 Therefore, the vision of the LDF is to ensure that Sedgefield Borough is a place where:
- People can live healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities;
 - High quality businesses can prosper and local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that they offer;
 - The natural and built environment is valued, conserved and enhanced; and,
 - People can access the housing they want in attractive and safe neighbourhoods.
- 3.4 In summary, we want Sedgefield to be a Borough that is healthy, attractive and prosperous with strong communities.

Proposed Aims and Objectives of the LDF

- 3.5 Following consultation of the 'Key Issues Paper' during summer 2005, some of the representations to the questions posed, has resulted in a requirement for slight modifications to the aims and objectives. The revised ones can be seen below.

AIM 1: To enhance social inclusion and well being

Delivered through the objectives of:

- meeting the needs of all sectors of the population, especially the elderly;
- supporting where appropriate or endeavour to support the retention of existing community facilities, and where required, encouraging the provision of new facilities;
- promoting mixed-use developments;
- improving accessibility to goods and services;
- encouraging healthy lifestyles;
- encouraging wider community involvement in the planning process;
- improving greenspaces and access to them;
- providing for recognised housing needs in safe and attractive neighbourhoods.

AIM 2: To improve the quality of where people live

Delivered through the objectives of:

- regenerating areas suffering from deprivation and/or degradation;
- improving community safety and reducing the fear of crime;
- conserving, maintaining and enhancing the quality of landscapes and townscapes;
- securing high quality design and layout in all new developments;
- provide high quality, affordable housing for future generations.

AIM 3: To reduce the impact of development on climate change

Delivered through the objectives of:

- supporting a clean, safe and accessible public transport system;
- reducing the need to travel and reliance on the private car;
- promoting sustainable construction and design;
- promoting energy efficiency and the generation of energy from renewable sources;
- minimising the risk of flooding;
- promoting high quality design that takes account of future climate change;
- encouraging habitat creation and habitat retention as part of new development.

AIM 4: To protect and enhance natural resources

Delivered through the objectives of:

- adopting a sequential approach to land development;
- conserve, enhance and create biodiversity and geodiversity sites;
- prioritising the re-use of previously developed land and buildings in sustainable locations;
- taking account of the physical constraints on the development of land;
- reducing pollution and preventing the deterioration of land quality;
- encouraging the efficient use of natural resources.

AIM 5: To encourage and support a competitive and diverse economy

Delivered through the objectives of:

- providing opportunities for the development of a competitive and diverse economic base;
- ensuring the provision of high quality employment sites;
- encouraging the provision of tourism, leisure or artistic activities;
- encouraging the development of social and community enterprises;
- supporting vibrant town centres
- maintaining a flexible supply of business sites and premises that meet the modern needs of business.

Achieving Sustainable Development

- 4.1 At the Key Issues stage, the Borough Council suggested that sustainable communities need sufficient, quality housing to meet the needs of the community; a flourishing local economy supported by adequate infrastructure; a high quality, safe and healthy local environment; and the amenities and sense of space and place to support a diverse and vibrant local culture.

Some of the responses to the Key Issues Paper sought to expand our view of sustainable communities. There is a need to make new buildings more adaptable to allow them to be changed to other uses during the course of their lifetime; the contribution of the Borough's historic environment to creating a sense of place to local neighbourhoods with a diverse, vibrant and distinctive culture; and, there needs to be a suitable balance between employment and housing opportunities.

- 4.2 Sustainable development¹ and the need to maintain and develop sustainable communities are the core principles that will underpin the policies and proposals of the Local Development Framework. The requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, SEA directive and Sustainability Appraisal regulations place a statutory obligation on the Borough Council to ensure that sustainable development is achieved. The Core Strategy and other Local Development Documents will be developed around these principles, ensuring that new development accords with a sequential approach and based around key settlements with good local services.

Alternative options – No. 1

<u>Option</u>	<u>Achieving Sustainable Development</u>	
A	Do nothing and let the market decide what constitutes sustainable development	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Develop a comprehensive policy to identify key sustainability criteria, based around the following issues:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The availability of previously-developed land and buildings;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The accessibility of the new development to homes;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The accessibility of the new development to employment locations;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The accessibility of the development to services, such as community centres, dentists, GP Practices, Libraries, Post Offices, Public Houses, Nurseries, and Primary and Secondary Schools;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The capacity of existing infrastructure e.g. roads, hospitals, etc. to accommodate such development;	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹ Sustainable development recognises that economic development in the present should take place in such a way that does not compromise the quality of life of future generations. This protection can only be achieved by ensuring that human society lives within the limits of the environment, while making sure the economy satisfies the needs of our global society.

- Physical constraints, such as flooding, on the development of land;
- The impact upon the built and historic environment;
- The impact upon the natural environment;
- The impact upon cultural assets;
- The impact upon the health of local people;
- The economic viability of the development of the site;
- The accessibility of the development to green space, footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways;
- The accessibility of the development to a diverse range of alternative transport options;
- The use of sustainable design and construction methods;
- The contribution to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geo-diversity;
- Minimising energy use in construction and use;
- Conservation of water resources in construction and use;
- Mitigating risk of pollution during construction and use;
- The suitability of mixed-use developments;
- The site's contribution to strengthening local communities;
- The ability of buildings to be adapted for other uses during their lifetime;
- The impact of the new development on future residents quality of life.

C If you believe that we have missed any sustainability criteria, please list them below:

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Social Inclusion

Locational Housing Strategy

- 5.1 The Key Issues Paper identified that over the current Local Plan period 1991-2006, approximately 75% of new housing development has taken place in the four main towns of Ferryhill, Newton Aycliffe, Shildon and Spennymoor, compared with approximately 25% in the larger villages. Furthermore, the Key Issues Paper put forward that whilst everyone should have a decent home within which to live, it was suggested that the locational strategy for housing development should remain to be the four main towns.
- 5.2 Draft PPS3 outlines the Government's objective to promote mixed and sustainable communities, with high quality, affordable housing for future generations. Development should be attractive, safe, energy efficient and designed and built to a high quality. They should be located in areas with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure. Housing sites that come forward within the Borough will have to accord with these objectives.

Following an analysis of the responses received, it is clear that there is substantial support for the continued prioritisation of development within the four main towns. However, it is also recognised that there is also some Community support for development within the larger villages to help support their ability to maintain a sustainable community.

- 5.3 Whilst it is important that sustainable patterns of development do take place and aid Housing Market Restructuring initiatives in the Borough, there should not be an over-concentration of development within the four main towns as this could lead to a decline in the viability of services and facilities in smaller settlements. Draft PPS3 (Housing) emphasises that new housing development can be provided for in villages and other small rural communities where needed to contribute to their sustainability.
- 5.4 The alternative options that will be considered for the locational strategy for new housing development in the Borough is as follows:

A. Do nothing and let the market decide

- 5.6 The house-building industry would put forward planning applications for housing development, and the authority would need to decide the attributes of each site on its own merits. However, this option would conflict with the requirements of PPG3 and Draft PPS 3.

B. Maintain existing broad development patterns

- 5.7 Existing patterns of development that has occurred over the last 15 years would continue and prioritise development in the four main towns. Overall, this would mean that approximately 3,000 new dwellings would be constructed in the four main towns and approximately 1,000 new dwellings in the villages from Sedgefield's Regional Spatial Strategy apportionment. This option would

not however take account of future patterns of new economic development e.g. the expansion of NetPark.

C. Focus development within specific regeneration areas, whilst maintaining Village development patterns

5.8 The Borough Council is currently undertaking Masterplanning exercises for the Housing Market Restructuring areas of Dean Bank, Ferryhill; Ferryhill Station; and, West Chilton. These are key Council priority areas and their regeneration should not be diluted. Under this option, no other development should come forward in either Chilton or Ferryhill until the successful completion of these projects. To further ensure the success of these schemes, housing development in the four main towns may require phasing policies to ensure that they do not have an adverse effect on these key regeneration projects. Housing development in the villages should not have an adverse effect and could continue.

D. Focusing development in regeneration areas, reduce housing development in the main towns and increase development in the villages

5.9 To provide a more balanced approach to development in the Borough, a smaller proportion of development will come forward in the main towns to help ensure that sustainable patterns of development can take place as a result of NetPark. For example, the expansion of NetPark will increase housing demand in the eastern part of the Borough. Sedgefield and Bishop Middleham has significant environmental constraints that will limit the ability of the villages to expand and this could result in more housing coming forward in Fishburn and the Trimdons to house employees of the companies operating from NetPark.

5.10 If the development pattern was altered to take account of this, approximately 70% of development (or 2,800 dwellings) should come forward in the main towns and 30% within the villages (1,200 dwellings), focusing more development in those communities surrounding NetPark with no environmental constraints.

Alternative Options – No. 2

<u>Option</u>	<u>Locational Housing Strategy</u>	
A	Do nothing and let the market decide	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Maintain existing broad development patterns	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Focus development within specific regeneration areas, whilst maintaining village development patterns	<input type="checkbox"/>
D	Focusing development in regeneration areas, reduce housing development in the main towns and increase	<input type="checkbox"/>

development in the villages

Responding to Housing Markets

- 5.11 Whilst there was support for an increased supply of housing land in the Borough by the development industry, including the Home Builders Federation, the housing debate has moved forward with the release of Draft Planning Policy Statement 3 in December 2005.
- 5.12 Draft PPS3 advocates that regional planning bodies survey sub-regional housing market areas in drawing up RSSs for demand and land availability. In sub-regional areas where demand is high, the draft suggests that regional planning bodies should aim to increase housing supply by exploring and identifying growth areas, growth points, new freestanding settlements and major urban extensions. Where demand is low, regional planning bodies should identify the need for the renewal or replacement of the existing housing stock.

Alternative Options – No. 3

<u>Option</u>	<u>Responding to Housing Markets</u>	
A	Continue current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Increase housing supply only in areas where sub-regional studies identify demand is high. In areas where demand is low, take a pro-active approach to regenerate such areas by considering the renewal or replacement of the existing housing stock to stimulate demand	<input type="checkbox"/>

Affordable Housing

- 5.13 The Key Issues Paper identified that the Housing Needs Survey and Dwelling Balance Analysis 2003 stated that there is now an Affordable Housing issue in parts of the Borough. Given that house prices are continuing to rise quicker than incomes, this situation will become more acute and more widespread. The policies and proposals in the Local Development Framework will need to address this critical issue so as to assist in developing Sustainable Communities.

An analysis of the responses received reveals that there is cross-sector support for the Borough Council to address the need for affordable housing. However, it is also clear from the house building industry that a percentage of affordable housing should not be prescriptively applied to all sites but there needs to be an appraisal on an individual site-by-site basis and in accordance with Government policy.

- 5.14 Government policy for affordable housing is enshrined in Circular 6/98, PPG3 and draft PPS3. These documents identify that sub-regional housing market

assessments should help determine whether affordable housing is needed and guide the level, size, type and location of affordable housing provision, either through new provision or as replacement provision.

- 5.15 In determining the overall target for affordable housing provision, it is important that regard is paid to the relevant sub-regional housing market assessments, the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy, Regional Homelessness Strategy, Borough Homelessness Strategy, Local Housing Strategy and Community Strategy. The target should take account of the anticipated levels of finance available for affordable housing, including public subsidy, and the level of contribution that can realistically be sought on relevant sites.
- 5.16 The Government urges LPAs to set a minimum site-size threshold, expressed as numbers of homes or area, above which affordable housing will be sought. The indicative national minimum threshold is 15 dwellings.
- 5.17 Affordable housing should be provided on sites so that it contributes towards achieving the objective of creating more mixed communities and avoids creating concentrations of deprivation. It is important that any affordable housing provided meets the needs of both current and future occupiers.
- 5.18 The Planning for Housing Provision statement encourages local authorities to provide a balanced mixture of housing type and tenure within new developments. This approach requires local authorities to be more flexible, not only in assessing housing need but also in terms of its delivery. There are a range of alternative options as to how genuinely affordable housing can be provided, such as partnership arrangements with Registered Social Landlords or low-cost market housing, and this will have to be agreed between the Council and the developer. It is important that these homes are affordable in perpetuity.
- 5.19 The Housing Needs Survey in 2003 identified that there was an emerging affordable housing issue in the Borough and suggested that to address this, 20% of all dwellings coming forward should be affordable. The Housing Needs Survey has been updated in 2005 and this identified a requirement for new affordable dwellings to be provided in the Borough over the next five years. This survey identified that within the following housing areas, there is a need for the following housing types and tenure:

Housing Area	Identified Affordable Housing Type and Tenure Need
Ferryhill	Shortfall of 2-bed flats and 1-bed houses
Newton Aycliffe	Shortfall of 1, 2 and 3-bed flats, 2-bed bungalows, and 1 and 4-bed houses
Sedgefield/Trimdons	Shortfall of 2-bed flats, 2-bed bungalows, and 1 and 3-bed houses
Shildon	Shortfall of 2-bed bungalows
Spennymoor	Shortfall of 2-bed bungalows, and 1, 3 and 4-bed houses

- 5.20 As affordable housing becomes an ever more increasing issue in the Borough, there will be a need for a dedicated Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to help developers and the Council effectively address this in terms of calculating the requirement, the delivery of the dwellings, and who will reside in the dwellings.

Alternative Options – No. 4

<u>Option</u>	<u>Affordable Housing</u>	
A	Do nothing and let the market decide	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Apply a prescriptive requirement of 20% affordable units on all sites over 15 dwellings, as advocated by the Housing Needs Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Undertake an assessment of each individual site, based upon the latest available information from the Housing Needs Survey and supported by a Supplementary Planning Document	<input type="checkbox"/>

Housing for Special Needs Groups

- 5.21 The Key Issues Paper identified that the resident population of the Borough is ageing and a growing number of people have some form of a disability and suggested that the particular housing needs of these groups could be resolved by adapting the current housing stock or it could involve the designation of specific sites to address these issues.
- 5.22 This approach did not however receive much comment, apart from limited support to address the issue through the management of local authority housing stock. The sub-regional housing market assessment described by draft PPS3 will identify the particular accommodation needs and demands of specific groups, such as key workers, homeless households, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, first time buyers, students, disabled people, older people and Gypsies and Travellers. On completion of this assessment, the Council will have the evidence base needed to justify the requirement for accommodation for these particular groups.

Alternative Options – No. 5

<u>Option</u>	<u>Housing for Special Needs Groups</u>	
A	Continue with the current practices of no specific requirement for developers to provide housing for special needs as part of their schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Take a proactive policy approach to ensure that developers provide accommodation which caters for the Special Needs Groups within their development schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>

throughout the Borough

Improving Quality of Communities

- 6.1 The need to address the housing market failure within the communities of Dean Bank, Ferryhill Station and West Chilton, resulting from low demand and abandonment of properties, is widely acknowledged. Masterplanning projects to regenerate these communities have been developed. It is important that the renewal of these communities is acknowledged as a Council priority. The alternative options to ensure that this happens are discussed within the **Social Inclusion** section of this report.

Promotion of High Quality Design

- 6.2 The Key Issues Paper identified that high quality design in the development of new housing, industry and commerce is vital to the regeneration and revitalisation of the Borough's towns and villages. The quality of the built environment is an important factor in the overall quality of life for the Borough's residents, employers and employees and visitors to the Borough.
- 6.3 It is important that the Borough promotes high quality design for new development in terms of its architectural detail but also the functionality and impact of the development on the character, quality and sustainability of its surroundings. Much greater emphasis will be placed on design issues and how developments are related to the local context.

All responses to the Key Issues Paper supported the promotion of high quality design for housing, industrial and commercial uses. Furthermore, there was clear support for the increased use of sustainable construction methods, design codes and the adherence to highest BREEAM standards.

- 6.4 There is overwhelming support for the Borough Council to promote the use of sustainable construction methods and high quality design. Planning Policy Statement 1 provides national policy support to this approach.
- 6.5 CABI and the Home Builders Federation have produced a Building for Life Standard to guide Local Planning Authorities and the development industry to identify the key issues that should be addressed in a Design Statement that will accompany major planning applications. Whilst this is primarily aimed at housing development, the same principles can be applied to other forms of development. The Borough Council has adopted this Standard as best practice.
- 6.6 If the 'business as usual' practice continues, it is clear that the current standards of design will not meet best practice. This will not make a positive impact upon the quality of design in communities. In November 2005, CABI produced a report that assessed the quality of new housing development in the three Northern Regions of England. This report was a damning assessment of the quality of design of new housing development. Current design practices need to be improved. Furthermore, PPS1 states that poor quality design should be rejected.

Alternative Options – No. 6

<u>Option</u>	<u>Promotion of High Quality Design</u>	
A	Continue with current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that new development promotes high quality design. Access and Design Statements should accompany major planning applications.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Ensure that new development promotes high quality design. New housing development should conform to the Code of Practice for Sustainable Homes and meet the highest sustainable build quality. Access and Design Statements should accompany major planning applications.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Character of the Natural and Built Environment

6.7 The Key Issues Paper identified that the Local Development Framework will need to provide guidance on the protection of designated Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. Similarly, new development should respect and, where possible, enhance the Landscape Character of the Borough. It is important that the design of new developments compliments rather than conflicts with the character of the natural and built environment, it will help the setting and vibrancy of the Borough’s communities and helps provide an attractive Borough.

There was little comment in the responses to the Key Issues Paper on this issue. However, those that did respond recognised the need for specific guidance for both the natural and built environment based upon Landscape Character advice and Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.

6.8 The Borough does not currently have any specific areas of high landscape value. This effectively means that all landscapes in the Borough are treated equally and does not give guidance to the development industry about where development can either improve or adversely affect landscape character. This practice cannot continue. The understanding of Landscape Character has developed significantly since the adoption of the Local Plan. The County Council has produced a Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy. The guiding principles within these documents need to be taken into account when allocating land for development and determining planning applications.

6.9 The current Local Plan identifies 15 Conservation Areas within the Borough. These Conservation Areas were designated prior to the publication of best practice guidance from English Heritage. English Heritage recommends that Local Planning Authorities should undertake Conservation Area Appraisals to appraise whether the designation is necessary. Following the appraisal of Conservation Areas, there is a need to prepare Management Plans to protect

and enhance these areas. Again, it is clear that existing practices do not accord with national best practice, as some of the current Conservation Areas may not have the necessary attributes to warrant the designation.

- 6.10 The housing stock in the Borough is skewed towards high-density residential areas, with few properties having large gardens. This imbalance in the housing stock needs to be addressed through the Local Development Framework through the implementation of new housing allocations. However, there is a growing trend nationally for residential dwellings with large gardens to be subject of speculative planning applications for the intensification of the land through demolition and re-build, primarily because the Government’s definition of previously-developed land includes the curtilage of residential dwellings. The Government has recognised this emerging issue in draft Planning Policy Statement 3. Should this national trend emerge in this Borough, it would exacerbate the imbalance of the Borough’s housing stock and have a damaging effect on the streetscene.

Alternative Options – No. 7

<u>Option</u>	<u>Character of the Natural Environment</u>	
A	Continue with current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that new development respects landscape character through the promotion of high quality design. Design Statements should accompany major planning applications.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Alternative Options – No. 8

<u>Option</u>	<u>Character of Conservation Areas</u>	
A	Continue with current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that new development promotes high quality design and accords with the guidance contained in the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Alternative Options – No. 9

<u>Option</u>	<u>Character of the Built Environment</u>	
A	Continue with current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that new development promotes high quality design and respects the streetscene. Access and Design Statements should accompany major planning applications.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Climate Change

An accessible transport system

- 7.1 The Key Issues Paper identified that PPG 13 states that land use planning has a key role in delivering an integrated transport strategy. This can be achieved by influencing the location, scale, density, design and mix of uses to reduce the need to travel, reduce length of journeys and improve accessibility to employment, retail and leisure facilities by all modes of transport. This is important to promote social inclusion and ensure access for those who do not have regular use of a car. Furthermore, the Key Issues Paper acknowledged that Sedgefield Borough enjoys a high standard of transport accessibility with both the A1 (M) and East Coast Main Line (which are the main transport routes that link the east coast of England with Scotland), dissecting the Borough. The Borough is well served by the County Strategic Transport Network, such as A167, A688 and A689. There is an opportunity to make improvements to the Bishop Auckland – Darlington rail line.

The responses to the Key Issues Paper were mixed. There was a recognition that the Borough Council will have a limited effect on the provision of an effective public transport system, given that the County Council produce the Local Transport Plan, and the inadequate level of national funding available to address this issue. However, there was also a recognition that the Borough can help in the delivery of an effective transport system by promoting and directing development to existing settlements and locations that can be well served by walking, cycling and public transport. Furthermore, the Borough can encourage the implementation of Travel Plans for major developments that will generate significant additional journeys.

- 7.2 The Borough Council has a dual role in the promotion and implementation of an accessible transport system in the County. Firstly, the Borough Council needs to work closely with the County Highways Authority in the delivery of its Local Transport Plan policies and proposals. Secondly, the Borough Council can guide new development to locations that support the viability of public transport and helps promote walking and cycling. These measures will have a positive role to play in improving the health of the Borough's residents.
- 7.3 The current pattern of development, with the majority of development taking place in the four main towns, would suggest in broad terms that the Borough is guiding developers to the most accessible locations. However, the contraction of public transport services would suggest that this development pattern is having a negative effect in some rural areas. This would inevitably lead to increasing use of private transport in these areas to access employment, services and facilities.
- 7.4 The implementation of Local Transport Plan 2 (2006-2011) in Sedgefield Borough seeks to improve access to services through the development of local service centres.

Alternative Options – No. 10

<u>Option</u>	<u>An accessible transport system</u>	
A	Continue with current development patterns	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure new development patterns are more closely linked with transport provision to improve accessibility and reduce the need to travel	<input type="checkbox"/>

Improving energy efficiency in buildings

- 7.5 The Key Issues Paper acknowledged that, in order to reduce the effects of climate change, new development should minimise the need to consume resources and deploy energy efficiency measures. The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy supports this policy approach.

The responses to the Key Issues Paper largely supported the imposition of minimum energy efficiency measures in the construction of new buildings. Some responses suggested that these energy efficiency measures should also apply to the modernisation or re-use of buildings for alternative uses. Furthermore, there was support to this approach as fuel poverty affects approximately 2.5 million homes nationally.

- 7.6 The Borough Council has an Affordable Warmth Strategy. The aim within this Strategy is to eradicate fuel poverty within the Borough by 2016. To help achieve this aim, there are grant regimes that offer discounted cavity wall and loft insulation, through Durham Energy Savers and the government funded Warm Front scheme, which also offers central heating upgrades for those households on certain qualifying benefits.
- 7.7 There is clear support to require new development or redevelopment of existing buildings to achieve high-energy efficiency and minimise consumption to achieve BREEAM2 and Eco-Homes3 “very good” or “excellent” rating.
- 7.8 The Submission Draft RSS requires new developments to have embedded within them a minimum 10% energy supply from renewable sources. The Borough Council supports this position. The County Durham Authorities, in their submission to the RSS Examination have requested that for consistency, there should also be an aspiration to double the minimum requirement for embedded energy from renewable sources within new development to 20% by 2020.

2 The Building Research Establishment’s Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) is a measure of best practice in environmental design and management of offices, industrial units and retail units. BREEAM assesses the performance of buildings, management, energy use, health and well-being, pollution, transport, land use, ecology, materials, and water.

3 The EcoHomes Assessment is the version of BREEAM for new, converted or renovated homes, covering both houses and apartments. The issues are assessed are grouped into seven categories: energy; water; pollution; materials; transport; ecology and land use; and health and well-being.

- 7.9 To support this, the Borough will expect all development (either new build or conversion) with a floorspace of in excess of 1,000m², or ten or more residential units to incorporate embedded energy from renewable sources to provide at least 10% of the predicted energy requirements by 2010, and for this percentage to be doubled by 2020.

Alternative Options – No. 11

<u>Option</u>	<u>Improving Energy Efficiency in Buildings</u>	
A	Do nothing and let developers dictate how energy efficient their schemes will be	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that new development promotes energy efficiency, by adopting a positive policy approach to require that developments achieve “very good” or “excellent” BREEAM and Eco-Homes ratings; and seeks to provide 10% embedded energy from renewable resources by 2010, and 20% by 2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Ensure that new development promotes energy efficiency, seeks embedded energy from renewable resources, and uses sustainable methods of construction and use of materials	<input type="checkbox"/>

Renewable Energy Generation

- 7.10 The Government’s Energy White Paper has confirmed that 10% of electricity should be generated from renewable sources by 2010 and has an aspirational target to generate 20% of electricity by renewable sources by 2020. For instance, in terms of climate change, the use of renewable energy sources has clear and distinct advantages over the use of fossil fuels. The North East Region has produced a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy. This study has identified that it is attainable for the North East to achieve both Government targets for renewable energy provided that there is a positive response to its recommendations.
- 7.11 In order to accurately assess and identify the most appropriate locations for wind power development in the North East, the Regional Strategy has developed a GIS tool that identifies potential constraints to development, such as sensitivity of landscapes and accessibility to the National Grid. This GIS tool has enabled a regional spatial strategy for onshore wind to be developed and it has identified broad locations for strategic and medium sized wind resource areas, one of which is located in Sedgfield Borough in the Tees Plain. It is likely that this area would contribute up to approximately 50 Megawatts of installed capacity by 2010, out of a North East regional total of 454 Megawatts.

- 7.12 The Key Issues Paper suggested that the Borough Council develops a positive policy framework to direct renewable energy proposals to the most appropriate locations. The key sources of renewable energy in the Borough are likely to be wind power, biomass and solar technology.

The Key Issues responses supported the Borough's positive approach to renewable energy generation. Whilst recognising that large scale wind, solar and biomass schemes will generate significant quantities of energy generation, it is important that the Borough Council supports small scale schemes for individual properties.

- 7.13 The existing Borough Local Plan is becoming outdated, and is subsequently out of sync with recent national and regional guidance. As such, the issue of assessing renewable energy proposals is not covered by any specific local plan policy. This will need to be addressed in the forthcoming LDF.
- 7.14 The Borough Council needs to make a positive contribution to help the North East Region meet its contribution to the national renewable energy generation targets. Wind power will be an important element in meeting this target. However, it is important that proposed wind developments pay due regard to their landscape setting. The Regional Renewable Energy Strategy identifies the Tees Plain Landscape Character Area being an area where medium sized wind developments could be considered appropriate. However, the cumulative impact of wind development in this area needs to be effectively managed. Furthermore, it is important that potential developers actively engage with the Regional Airport Operators to ensure that the development of wind turbines does not undermine their radar systems, and the RSPB regarding the impacts upon the resident bird population and the sensitivity of bird migration routes.
- 7.15 There is also an emerging demand for smaller and domestic scale wind systems. Major manufacturing companies in the Borough are starting to investigate whether wind can help them source their energy needs by reducing their reliance upon supply from the national grid. The Hydro Polymers site at Newton Aycliffe has recently received permission to develop 2 turbines to provide 0.5Mw of installed capacity. Other similar developments are likely to take place over the period of this Core Strategy.
- 7.16 Moreover, companies are starting to develop micro wind turbines that can be fitted to domestic properties to help individual meet their energy needs and reduce their reliance on the national grid. This type of development will have an impact upon the local streetscape and will need to be managed effectively. With technological advances, it is possible for domestic properties to develop solar or photovoltaic cells on their roofs as a means of generating renewable energy. This type of development may have an impact upon the local streetscape and will need to be managed effectively. In terms of micro generation, there are a number of grants available through the Low Carbon Buildings Programme to organisations, communities, households and businesses.

- 7.17 The generation of renewable energy from biomass should be exploited in the Borough, where its impact would not have an adverse effect on either sites of biodiversity importance or ancient woodland. Wood fuel plants are being developed within the Tees Valley and it is likely that the eastern part of the Borough would form part of its catchment area.
- 7.18 It is important that the Borough promotes the use and development of a widespread portfolio of renewable energy resources, and does not focus upon one particular source. This will help the Borough to adapt to emerging technologies that may not be currently available.

Alternative Options – No. 12

<u>Option</u>	<u>Renewable Energy Generation</u>	
A	Let the market decide	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Continue current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Develop a positive policy approach to direct all forms of renewable energy generation to the most appropriate locations	<input type="checkbox"/>

Managing flood risk

- 7.19 The Key Issues Paper acknowledged that Local Planning Authorities should assist in reducing the incidence and impact of flooding and restrict development in flood risk areas. It is also important that surface water run-off from new development does not increase the incidence of flood risk elsewhere.

The Key Issues Paper responses supported the need to effectively manage the possibility of flood risk in the Borough. The Environment Agency suggested that the Core Strategy should direct development away from areas at risk from flooding and recommends the development of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to help allocate land for development. Whilst Northumbrian Water supports the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), they will not adopt any such systems. Further issues included the need to make space for water as a mechanism to address this issue.

- 7.20 The Borough Local Plan did not specifically address flood risk issues. However, over recent years flooding has occurred in some areas of the Borough, for example in the Woodham area of Newton Aycliffe. The lack of an effective flood risk management regime cannot be allowed to continue. The Borough Council has started to address this issue with the commission of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).
- 7.21 This SFRA has identified that there are some developed areas in the Borough that are located in high flood risk areas (1% chance per year that a flood event would occur) and recommends that further development in these areas

should be avoided. The SFRA cannot account for flash-flooding events that can occur anywhere. It will also be important that any development that takes place further upstream of these areas should not have an adverse impact on flood risk. In these instances, it could be necessary for SUDS to minimise the possibility of increased surface water run-off. However, it will be important for the Council to work with Northumbrian Water to develop an agreement concerning the adoption of such systems and their maintenance.

Alternative Options – No. 13

<u>Option</u>	<u>Managing Flood Risk</u>	
A	Continue current practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Develop a positive policy approach to minimise flood risk in the Borough through the implementation of a sequential test	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Develop a positive policy approach to minimise flood risk in the Borough through the implementation of a sequential test, and encourage the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems	<input type="checkbox"/>

Natural Resources

- 8.1 The Key Issues Paper recognised that national and regional policy requires that development should come forward in a sequential way, promoting development in the main towns before villages. However, by over-prioritising development in the main towns, it could have serious implications for the future provision of services and facilities in the villages. Both Draft Planning Policy Statement 3 and Planning Policy Statement 7 state that limited housing may be allowed in, or next to, rural settlements where needed to contribute to their sustainability.
- 8.2 The issues raised by the responses to the Key Issues Paper are discussed in greater detail in the **Social Inclusion** section of this report.

Provision of Open and Green Space

- 8.3 The Key Issues Paper identifies that there are some serious health issues affecting the Borough and that largely these will be addressed primarily by others. However, the LDF can contribute to the creation of healthier lifestyles for the Borough's residents. There is a need to identify suitable recreational routes within and close to centres of population to encourage walking and cycling, and ensure that areas are protected for formal and informal recreation.

The responses to the Key Issues Paper clearly advocated that there is a need for a "green infrastructure" of well-connected open spaces, woodlands, footpaths and cycleways in all communities to encourage healthier lifestyles by its residents. This should be provided in addition to formal recreation and leisure activities.

- 8.4 There are clear aspirations that the Borough's residents should have good access to high quality areas of open space within the Borough's communities, and that measures should be taken to improve the environment surrounding communities. Increasing the quantity of woodland and other informal open spaces, such as nature reserves, in close proximity to the towns and villages, and making improvements to the footpaths and cycleways network can help achieve this.
- 8.5 If the market is allowed to decide where the provision of open space, woodland, footpaths and cycleways should be improved, there would be sporadic improvements made without any overall co-ordination. This provision could also come forward in areas where it is not required and lead to an over-supply of such land.
- 8.6 To help address this issue in a co-ordinated manner, the Borough Council has commissioned consultants to undertake an Open Space Needs Assessment that will provide local standards for open space within each of the Towns and Villages in the Borough. It will also allow the Local Planning Authority to use Planning Obligations to improve the quality of open space in these communities or could help direct developers to provide some community woodland to help improve the quality of the environment surrounding

communities. The Woodland Trust has identified that certain areas of the Borough would benefit from the creation of new accessible woodland in close proximity to communities. The countryside surrounding communities is a major asset to the overall well-being and health of the Borough’s residents and the quality of this should be improved. Any increase in woodland should not have a serious adverse effect on landscape character.

Alternative Options – No. 14

<u>Option</u>	<u>Provision of Open and Green Space</u>	
A	Do nothing and let the market decide	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that development helps to maintain, improve, or create Community access to high quality areas of open space, woodlands, footpaths and cycleways.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

8.7 The Key Issues Paper indicated that natural environment of the Borough needs to be conserved, enhanced and valued by the community. The quality of the natural environment is sometimes undervalued but it is important to our sustainable future. It is not only important that resources are allocated for the management of the natural environment but that new development is encouraged to help diversify the biological and natural interest in the surrounding area.

The Key Issues responses suggested that in order to maintain and enhance biodiversity, it is important that the relevant species and habitat targets are adopted from the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan. There should also be strong protection to the Borough’s designated bio-diverse sites. It was also recommended that all new development should incorporate some habitat enhancement through planting of native species, SUDS, the creation of either a new habitat or wildlife corridor.

8.8 The current approach within the Local Plan seeks to protect existing designated sites from inappropriate development. The knowledge base of biodiversity and geodiversity has significantly changed since the Local Plan’s adoption. Whilst protection will be maintained for designated sites, such as SSSIs, the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan identifies those key priority species and habitats within the Borough that also need to be maintained and enhanced. These priority species and habitats will also require policy support through the Local Development Framework process.

Alternative Options – No. 15

<u>Option</u>	<u>Biodiversity and Geodiversity</u>	
A	Continue current practices in Local Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Ensure that development maintains and enhances the	<input type="checkbox"/>

biological and geological heritage of the Borough and opportunities for the creation of bio-diverse habitats are pursued

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Competitive and Diverse Economy

Key Employment Locations

- 9.1 The key Issues Paper identified that the key locations to support the delivery of the Borough's Community Strategy are NetPark, which will be the focus for attracting new high quality jobs in research and technology, Aycliffe Industrial Park (including Heighington Lane West) and Green Lane Industrial Estate, Spennymoor. All three locations have been identified for investment to create broadband 'nodes' according to a countywide strategy. These key sites will be backed up by a portfolio of other sites in attractive and accessible locations, that are suitable for local businesses and general industrial uses, and to support measures to increase business start ups and community enterprises in localised areas of the Borough. It is key to the economic future of the Borough that these three key industrial areas are retained for employment purposes and that any speculative proposals for residential development should be strongly resisted.
- 9.2 In order to support the economic strategy's drive to attract knowledge-based companies, it is proposed that the Local Development Framework should secure high quality design in new industry and business developments, whether it is building design, landscaping or the overall layout of space. Poor quality design can detract from the attractiveness of the sites to potential investors, and if unchecked, could soon outweigh any of the advantages that have been secured by public investment on the sites concerned.

The responses supported the approach put forward in the Key Issues Paper. It was also recognised that stronger links should be forged with Universities to help retain graduates in the Region.

- 9.3 Since the publication of the Issues Paper, the Submission Draft Regional Spatial Strategy has been produced. This document identifies NetPark as a regionally important employment location and allocates some 77 hectares (gross) of development land to be brought forward over the next 15 years.
- 9.4 Furthermore, the Borough has now undertaken a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. This SFRA has identified that a small part of Aycliffe Industrial Park is located within a High Flood Risk Area. It is therefore proposed to delete this area from employment use.
- 9.5 The Borough Council is currently reviewing its employment portfolio in line with Government Best Practice advice. This work will help identify whether the authority has sufficient land for employment uses. If it is proven that there is a surplus of employment land, this study could lead to some land being de-allocated from employment uses. Where such land has not had any previous development, it will be de-allocated completely.

Alternative Options – No. 16

<u>Option</u>	<u>Key Employment Locations</u>	
A	Continue to provide employment land in accordance with current Local Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Protect and promote employment development at Green Lane, Aycliffe Industrial Park and NetPark. Continue to provide employment development throughout Borough in line with review of employment land. De-allocate land where it is proven necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Consider the re-use of employment land for housing or mixed use developments, where there is clear evidence that the land is no longer needed for employment use	<input type="checkbox"/>

Retailing and Town Centres

- 9.6 National guidance seeks to promote vital and viable town centres, and focus development within existing centres in order to strengthen and where appropriate, regenerate them. This approach helps to reduce the need to travel, assists with the economic and social regeneration of the towns and villages, and ensures that retail provision is easily accessible to all members of the community, regardless of whether they have access to a private car.
- 9.7 The Key Issues Paper identified that whilst Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor Town Centres are the most significant centres within the Borough, offering the widest diversity of facilities alongside traditional convenient and comparison retail offer, within the regional hierarchy of town centres, they are district centres. The Borough's other town centres of Shildon and Ferryhill offer a narrower range of day-to-day, top-up and occasional shopping options compared with Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe.
- 9.8 As a result of these factors, the Borough continues to experience significant expenditure leakages to other centres in the County and Region, such as Bishop Auckland, Durham City and Newcastle that offer a wider range of comparison and specialist shops and other facilities. If sustainability objectives are to be met, the LDF will need to set a policy framework that helps improve the diversity and quality of the retail, leisure and other uses in the Town Centres.
- 9.9 The Key Issues Paper also identified a need to review town centre boundaries and the need to address the impact of the growth in hot-food takeaways, not only in terms of the vitality and viability of centres but also the health of residents.

The Key Issues Paper responses identified that existing town centres within the Borough are in a fragile state and there is a need to diversify the uses within them. This could be achieved through the promotion of offices and speciality retail offer. There was support to review existing town centre boundaries and also to identify a new town centre boundary for Sedgefield Village. There was also support to address the growth of hot-food takeaways.

- 9.10 The adopted Local Plan sought to maintain town centres that are attractive, safe and convenient and encourage investment that helps to promote and protect the vitality and viability of the town centres, maintain local centres, improve the environment of the centres, provide good accessibility and encourage the development of vacant sites.

- 9.11 This strategy needs to be developed for the next Plan period to ensure that retail and other compatible development (such as office or community business use) is promoted within them to retain their vitality and viability. This could necessitate that the town centres are developed as speciality shopping areas to ensure that they maintain appeal to customers.

- 9.12 National guidance highlights that concentrations of single uses, such as restaurants and take-away food outlets can in some instances have a cumulative effect which causes local problems, such as undermining the role of the town centre, anti-social behaviour, crime, and an adverse effect on amenities of nearby residents.

- 9.13 As part of the Borough’s LDF production it is anticipated that a threshold of A5 (takeaways) uses will be applied for town centres within the Borough. It is important that the Borough’s town centres have a healthy balance within them. This balance must be preserved in order to protect the vitality and viability of the town centres, and this can only be achieved by ensuring that the prime use class within town centres is A1 (shops), and by limiting the number of A5 (takeaways) units within town centres to an acceptable level.

- 9.14 Another issue associated with hot-food takeaways relates to the commonality it is for these premises to include the use of roller shutters on the front of the premises. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that the hours of operation are predominantly in the evening. A unit that has roller shutters down during the day does not depict vital and viable town centres, and is no more beneficial to the environment of the street scene than a vacant unit. The Council therefore seeks to exclude these ‘dead frontages’ from existing within town centres throughout the Borough, and it may therefore be appropriate in the future to produce a SPD specifying the types of shutters that will be allowed.

Alternative Options – No. 17

<u>Option</u>	<u>Retailing and Town Centres</u>	
A	Continue current Local Plan policies	<input type="checkbox"/>

- B Promote the diversification of town centres to support office development and other compatible uses
- C Promote diversification whilst imposing limits on hot-food takeaways

Alternative Options – No. 18

- | <u>Option</u> | <u>Town Centres Boundaries</u> | |
|---------------|---|--------------------------|
| A | Continue with current Local Plan boundaries | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B | Update and revise existing town centre boundaries | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C | Update and revise existing town centre boundaries and consider need for new boundary for Sedgefield Village | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Tourism and Arts

9.15 The Key Issues Paper identified that the tourism industry contributes about 10% of the employment opportunities in the North East Region and this figure is rising. Similarly, the tourism sector is developing in the Borough through nationally known facilities such as Locomotion, Shildon and Sedgefield Racecourse. It was identified that the LDF will need to reflect the growing importance of this sector to the Regional and Borough economy and seek to promote these cultural and tourist assets. A key element of developing this sector would also involve the need to promote the arts, especially public art, to provide a sense of place to towns and villages.

The responses supported the need to reflect the growing importance of the tourism and arts sectors as a mechanism to improve the Borough’s image and act as a catalyst for inward investment. There was encouragement to include public art within both new residential and commercial development.

9.16 Since the publication of the Key Issues Paper, the Borough Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Review Group Report into Tourism within the Borough has been completed and agreed by Cabinet. This report has made a series of recommendations, some of which the LDF can help to deliver. The delivery of these recommendations will be dependent upon the development of an Area Tourism Partnership Action Plan. Until this is developed, it will be important for the LDF to provide positive policy guidance.

9.17 Furthermore, the Government has published a good practice guide for planning for tourism. Both documents recognise the links between tourism and economic regeneration, and that tourism has wider regional significances. It is clear that the potential benefits are maximised, there is a need to improve

accessibility to tourist facilities and that the facilities are integrated within their surroundings.

- 9.18 The issues surrounding the provision of public art will be discussed in greater detail in a forthcoming Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document.

Alternative Options – No 19

<u>Option</u>	<u>Tourism</u>	
A	Continue with current tourism policies within the Local Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	Provide a positive framework for the development of tourism to support economic regeneration in the Borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	Provide a positive framework for the development of tourism to support economic regeneration in the Borough, whilst ensuring that there is no adverse environmental harm associated with the new development	<input type="checkbox"/>

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