



Local Development Framework:  
Major Allocations Search Sequence and Detailed  
Assessment Approach

September 2006

Sedgefield Borough Council is currently undertaking the evidence gathering stage in the production of its Major Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), which is to be included within the Borough's Local Development Framework. It is programmed that a consultation Issues and Alternative Options Paper will be published May/June 2007. The Major Allocations DPD will set out the location for major housing and employment development for the plan period in accordance with national and regional planning policy.

The Council is therefore seeking your views on this proposed search sequence and detailed assessment, against which all housing sites put forward for consideration will be assessed together with a range of material currently being gathered as part of the Council's evidence base.

Please make your comments in writing by the **date** to:

Chris Myers  
Forward Planning Team  
Sedgefield Borough Council Offices  
Green Lane  
Spennymoor  
County Durham  
DL16 6JQ

[cmyers@sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:cmyers@sedgefield.gov.uk)

## **Background**

This draft Search Sequence and Detailed Assessment aims to set out the key sustainability tests against which potential housing sites will be assessed. It is fundamental that the Council has a credible and robust evidence base to ensure the most sustainable locations for housing development are identified. This is crucial in meeting the Council's Corporate aim of creating a healthy, attractive and prosperous Borough with strong communities.

The purpose of this assessment is therefore to identify all major constraints and opportunities that may apply to each of the potential housing sites. This identification of constraints and opportunities will form only a small proportion of the necessary evidence base. If significant adverse impacts cannot be satisfactorily overcome or alleviated then the particular site will be deemed unsuitable for residential development.

It is not envisaged that potential housing sites will be ranked in any priority order, other than apportioning each one to the appropriate sequential category.

Policy 3 of the Submission Draft North East Regional Spatial Strategy states that Local Planning Authorities should adopt a sequential approach to the identification of land to give priority to previously developed land and buildings in the most sustainable locations. Locations should be selected in the following priority order:

- a) suitable PDL sites and buildings within urban areas, particularly around public transport nodes;
- b) other suitable locations within urban areas not identified as land to be protected for nature or heritage conservation or recreational purposes;
- c) suitable sites in locations adjoining urban areas, particularly those that involve the use of PDL sites and buildings;
- d) suitable sites in settlements outside urban areas, particularly those that involve the use of PDL sites and buildings.

All sites should be in locations that are, or will be, at lowest risk from flooding, and well related to homes, jobs and services by all modes of transport, particularly public transport, walking and cycling.

## **Proposed Sedgefield Borough Search Sequence**

In accordance with the sequential approach identified within the RSS, the categories of the Search Sequence for new housing development should be split between the four main towns, the larger villages, and the smaller villages in the Borough, and in the following initial priority list.

Main Towns - Ferryhill, Newton Aycliffe, Shildon and Spennymoor

- i. PDL sites and buildings (including housing market renewal areas) within the four main towns
- ii. Greenfield sites within the four main towns
- iii. PDL extensions that adjoin the four main towns

- iv. Greenfield extensions that adjoin the four main towns

Larger villages – Aycliffe, Kirk Merrington, Bishop Middleham, Byers Green, Chilton, Chilton Lane, Eldon, Fishburn, Sedgefield, Trimdon Colliery, Trimdon Grange, Trimdon Village, West Cornforth

- v. PDL sites and buildings (including housing market renewal areas) within the larger villages
- vi. Greenfield sites within the larger villages
- vii. PDL extensions that adjoin the larger villages
- viii. Greenfield extensions that adjoin the larger villages

Smaller villages – Bradbury, Mainsforth, Middridge, Mordon, North Close, Rushyford

- ix. PDL sites and buildings within the smaller villages
- x. Development in the countryside

## Proposed Sedgefield Borough Detailed Assessment

A more detailed selection process should follow the aims of the Core Strategy in order to determine whether the sites are available, suitable and viable.

### Aim 1. – To enhance social inclusion and well-being

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
Location of site in relation to town or district centre (as defined in Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres)	++	Within 400m of Town or District Centre	GIS
	+	400m - 800m	
	0	800m - 1.6km	
	X	1.6km - 3km	
	XX	3km or over	
Location of site in relation to local centre*, community based facilities, shopping parades, clusters (*as defined in Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres)	++	Within 400m of a local neighbourhood centre	GIS
	+	400m - 800m	
	0	800m - 1.6km	
	X	1.6km - 3km	
	XX	3km or over	
Location of site in relation to leisure facilities (e.g. sports centres)	++	Within 400m of leisure facility	GIS
	+	400m - 800m	
	0	800m - 1.6km	
	X	1.6km - 3km	
	XX	3km or over	

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
Location of site in relation to primary and secondary schools	++	Within 400m	GIS
	+	400m - 800m	
	0	800m - 1.6km	
	X	1.6km - 3km	
	XX	3km or over	
Capacity of nearby primary and secondary schools	+	High surplus school places – development may help to sustain the school	Consultation with Local Education Authority and department for Education and Skills
	0	There is sufficient capacity within neighbouring schools	
	X	Nearby schools are running at full capacity and any development will be required to contribute to any necessary provision	
Location of site in relation to health and social care services	++	Within 400m of health and social care services	GIS
	+	400m-800m	
	0	800m-1.6km	
	X	1.6m-3km	
	XX	3km or over	
Capacity of existing health and social care services to absorb further development	++	Sufficient capacity	Consultation with Primary Care Trust and Strategic Health Authority
	+	Some capacity	
	0	Unknown	
	X	Existing constraints	
	XX	Significant existing constraints	
Location of site in relation to local Greenspace and parks (including designated parks and gardens, natural greenspace, amenity open space, outdoor sports facilities, common/green, children's play and recreational areas, allotments and civic space)	++	Within 400m of Greenspace	GIS Open Space Needs Assessment
	+	400m-800m	
	0	800m-1.6km	
	X	1.6km-3km	
	XX	3km or over	
Impact on local Greenspace <sup>(1)</sup> (including designated parks and gardens, natural Greenspace, amenity open space, outdoor sports facilities, common/green, children's play and recreational areas, allotments and civic space)	++	Significant opportunity to improve existing or create Greenspace	GIS Open Space Needs Assessment
	+	Opportunity to improve or enhance	
	0	No impact	
	X	Some adverse impact even with mitigation	
	XX	Significant adverse impact (difficult to mitigate)	

1 – Criteria determining impact can include accessibility, including disabled access, design, security issues management and maintenance

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
Impact on Public Rights of Way	++	Site within 1km of an existing PROW therefore increasing access to countryside	Durham County Council
	0	No impact	
	XX	Need to divert an existing PROW (PROW within the site)	

## Aim 2. – Improve the quality of where people live

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
Impact on historic environment and setting (inc. listed buildings, conservation areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments...etc.)	++	Significant opportunity to improve or enhance	GIS, Sites and Monuments Records, Buildings at Risk Register, Conservation Area Appraisals Consultation with external bodies
	+	Opportunity to improve or enhance	
	0	No known constraints	
	X	Some adverse impact even with mitigation	
	XX	Significant adverse impact (difficult to mitigate)	
Impact on townscape	++	Development would have a positive impact on the townscape	Photographs Site Visits
	+	No impact on townscape	
	0	Insignificant adverse impact (can be mitigated)	
	X	Some adverse impact even with mitigation	
	XX	Significant adverse impact (difficult to mitigate)	
Avoid Green Wedge	++	Green Wedge creation/enhancement	GIS
	0	Not in the Green Wedge	
	XX	Green Wedge	
Capacity of existing infrastructure e.g. waste water disposal and treatment and predicted incidences of flooding from sewer	++	The site requires significant infrastructure works and this has already been made available	Consultation with Northumbrian Water, Transco and the National
	+	The site can easily be connected to existing physical infrastructure	
	0	Unknown	

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
	X	The site requires some new physical infrastructure before development can take place but provision of necessary infrastructure is already planned	Grid
	XX	The site requires significant new physical infrastructure and there are no current plans for such infrastructure to be provided	

Avoid conflict with un-neighbourly uses e.g. sewerage treatment works, overhead power lines, quarries, electricity substations	0	No conflict	GIS
	X	Minimal conflict can be mitigated	
	XX	Conflict can not be mitigated	

### **Aim 3. – Reduce the impact of development on climate change**

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score User Guide	Data Source
Accessibility of the site to the local public transport network	++	8 or more buses per hour within 400m walking distance of bus stop	GIS Durham County Council – Public Transport Team
	+	4 or more buses per hour within 400m walking distance of bus stop	
	0	Less than 4 buses per hour within 400m walking distance of bus stop	
	X	Areas with little or no evening/weekends service	
	XX	Areas outside 400m walking distance of bus stop	

Accessibility of the site to cycle network	++	Within 400m of dedicated cycle route	GIS Durham County Council
	+	400m - 800m	
	0	800m - 1.6km	
	X	1.6km - 3km	
	XX	3km or over	

Suitability of site for renewable energy generation	++	Opportunity for micro renewable energy generation e.g. local wind resource, aspect for solar/PV, small scale hydro	North East Renewable Energy Strategy, PPS22 and companion guide
	0	Unknown	
	XX	Significant opportunity for large scale renewable energy generation i.e. site should be safeguarded	

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score User Guide	Data Source
Opportunity for carbon off-setting	++	Significant opportunity	Site visits, Sustainable Communities Team
	0	Unknown	
	X	No opportunity	
Avoid land liable to flood	0	Areas at little or no risk	GIS SFRA Environment Agency
	X	Areas at low to medium risk	
	XX	Areas at high risk	
	XXX	Functional floodplain	
Opportunities for climate change adaptation	++	Significant opportunity	Site visits, Sustainable Communities Team
	+	Minimal Opportunity	
	0	Unknown	
	X	No opportunity	

#### **Aim 4. – Protect and enhance natural resources**

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
Brownfield (previously developed land) or Greenfield (see Annex C Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 for Brownfield definition) Note: PDL may have high biodiversity value and will be dealt with by an individual factor	++	Brownfield	NLUD, GIS – aerial photographs
	+	More than 50% Brownfield	
	X	More than 50% Greenfield	
	XX	Greenfield	
Avoid coalescence or sprawl	++	Site wholly within settlement	GIS
	+	Settlement extension site contained on three sides by existing development	
	0	Development site within existing settlement on two sides	
	X	Settlement site would extend settlement in an uncontained way	
	XX	Site in open countryside or unattached to settlement or an extension site which would significantly reduce distances between settlements	
Sensitivity of Landscape to Change (also see landscape capacity factor below)	++	Urban / Developed	Durham County Landscape Character Strategy
	0	Need to Enhance	
	X	Need to Conserve	
	XX	Need to Conserve and Restore	



Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
Landscape Capacity (including vistas in and out of the site, site prominence, vegetation, topography, water)	++	Opportunity to enhance landscape	GIS - aerial photographs Landscape Officer site visit
	+	No impact on landscape	
	0	Insignificant adverse impact (can be mitigated)	
	X	Some adverse impact even with mitigation	
	XX	Significant adverse impact (difficult to mitigate)	
Location of site in relation to areas of designated biodiversity value (SAC/SPA, SSSIs/NNR, LNRs, SNCIs)	++	3km or over	GIS
	+	1.6km - 3km	
	0	800m - 1.6km	
	X	400m - 800m	
	XX	Within 400m	
Impact on biodiversity	++	Very poor conditions for biodiversity and geo-diversity. Enhancement would significantly improve habitats (see determining criteria 2)	GIS – aerial photographs Magic website Durham Geodiversity Audit Consultation with Natural England, Durham Wildlife Trust, Badger and Bat Group
	+	Relatively poor conditions for biodiversity and geodiversity (see determining criteria 3)	
	0	Neutral	
	X	Negative impact on biodiversity and geo-diversity (see determining criteria 4)	
	XX	Severe negative impact on biodiversity and geo-diversity (see determining criteria 5)	

2 - Site has no statutory designations (SSSI, SAC, SPA, NNR);

-Site is not an LNR or SNCI (SNCIs include Durham County Geological Sites as well as County Wildlife Sites)

-No records of great crested newt within 500m of site

-No record of reptiles (slow worm, adder, grass snake) within 500m of site

-No record of badger sett within 30m of site

-Site has no know seasonal or permanent wetlands or streams or ditches within 20m

-Site has few mature trees or hedgerows

-Site is in arable cultivation / site is currently brownfield / site is improved grassland

-Site has no buildings older than 1939 within 200m of woodland or water (indicator of bats)

-Site does not contain an ancient semi – natural woodland

-Site is not a GCR site or RIG site

- No evidence that site contains habitat or would affect the favourable conservation status of species listed under Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

3 - Site has no statutory designations (SSSI, SAC, SAC, SPA, NNR);

-Site is not an LNR or SNCI

-Site does not contain ancient woodland

-Site has no more than one of the following:

- Record of Great Crested Newt within 500m but not on site
- Known badger sett within 30m of site but not on site
- Record of reptiles on or within 500m of site
- Site contains seasonal or permanent wetland
- Stream or ditch with record of water vole runs within 20 m of site
- Site contains some mature trees or hedgerows
- Site has a few buildings older than 1939 within 200m of woodlands or water

4 - Site has one or more of the following:

- Record of Great Crested Newts on site
- Known badger sett on site
- Record of reptiles
- Site contains seasonal or permanent wetland
- Stream or ditch with record of water vole within 130m of site runs through site
- Significant amount of mature trees or hedgerows
- Several buildings older than 1939
- RIG site or is a Durham County Geological site
- Evidence that Section 74 of CROW Act habitat would be damaged or that favourable conservation status of a species listed under Section 74 would be affected

5 - -Site has statutory designations (SSSI, SAC, SPA, NNR);

- Site is a Local Nature Reserve or SNCI
- Directly affects a habitat or species listed under Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- Directly affects a statutorily designated geological site (Geological Conservation Review Site (GCR))

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
Impact on water body (including river, stream, pond, aquifer)	++	Significant opportunity to improve water body	GIS Consultation with Environment Agency
	+	Limited opportunity to enhance water body	
	0	No impact	
	X	Adverse impact on water body	
	XX	Significant adverse impact on water body	
Opportunity for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)	++	Significant opportunity for SuDS	Site visits and consultation with the Environment Agency
	+	Limited opportunity for SuDS	
	0	Unknown	
	X	No opportunity for SuDS and development will slightly increase runoff	
	XX	No opportunity for SuDS and development will significantly increase runoff	
Impact on ancient woodland	0	No impact	GIS
	XX	Adverse impact on ancient woodland	
Impact on trees and woodland	++	Significant opportunity to enhance trees/woodland	GIS – aerial photographs
	+	Limited opportunity to enhance trees/woodland	
	0	No impact	
	X	Adverse impact on trees/woodland	
	XX	Significant adverse impact on trees/woodland	
Impact on hedgerows	++	Significant opportunity to enhance hedgerows	GIS – aerial photographs
	+	Limited opportunity to enhance hedgerows	
	0	No impact	

	X	Adverse impact or possible loss of hedgerows	
	XX	Significant adverse impact and known loss of hedgerows	
Avoid sterilisation of mineral resources	0	No mineral designation	GIS
	X	Site is within a mineral consultation area	Durham County Council
	XX	Site is within a preferred area or area of search for mineral extraction	

### Aim 5. – Encourage and support a competitive and diverse economy

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
Location of site in relation to industrial estate / business park	++	Within 400m of employment site	GIS
	+	400m - 800m	
	0	800m -1.6km	
	X	1.6km – 3km	
	XX	3km or over	
Where a site lies within an existing employment land allocation	++	The site meets sustainable location criteria and is unlikely to be viable for employment development without public funding	Employment Land Review
	+	The site has seen no development activity for at least 5 years and meets sustainable location criteria	
	X	The site is being actively marketed as an employment site and is the only acceptable form of built development for this site	
	XX	The proposed site is currently active for employment purposes	
Avoid high quality agricultural land	0	Not applicable	www.magic.gov.uk
	X	Grade 3a	
	XX	Grade 2	
	XXX	Grade 1	

### Availability and Viability

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
Owner / developer interest	++	Established developer interest	General consultation
	+	Owner keen to sell / develop	
	0	Owner / developer intentions unknown	

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
	X	Developers have expressed doubts about viability	
	XX	Owner / landowner unwilling to sell	
Highway Access	++	Development on the site can be achieved via the existing access	Consultation with Durham County Council
	+	Some highway improvements required	
	X	Major highway improvements required	
	XX	Access is not achievable	
Planning History	+	Site with a valid planning permission for housing	Planning application records
	0	No known planning history	
	X	Site was refused planning permission for housing and the principle of development on this site was dismissed at appeal	
Avoid other overriding physical constraints that would rule out development (heavily contaminated land, steep slopes, land stability, poor access, conflict with groundwater protection etc)	0	No known constraints	GIS General consultation
	X	Some constraints	
	XX	Significant constraints	
Site availability: factors which would affect market attractiveness e.g. evidence of contamination, steep slopes, unstable land, access traffic impact	++	Site immediately available	GIS, General consultation, other plans and programmes
	+	Likely to be available within Phase 1 of the plan period	
	0	Likely to be available within plan period without major infrastructure / remediation investment	
	X	Unlikely to be available within plan period without major infrastructure/remediation investment	
	XX	Unlikely to be available in the plan period	
Emergency Planning - avoid sites within proximity of hazardous industry or installation	0	No Zone	Consultation with HSE
	X	Inner Zone	

Indicator	Predicted Impact	Score user guide	Data Source
(as defined by the Health and Safety Executive)	XX	Middle or outer zone	

This page is intentionally left blank