

Delegated Decision

15 September 2020

**Darlington Borough Local Plan 2016 -
2036**



Ordinary Decision

Report of Regeneration, Economy and Growth
Stuart Timmiss Head of Development & Housing

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

1. This report considers Darlington Borough Council's Local Plan Submission Draft which, together with the associated Policies Map and Sustainability Appraisal, was published for consultation on 6 August 2020. Comments are required by 17 September 2020. It is recommended that the draft letter in Appendix 2 of this report is endorsed as the council's response.

Background

2. Darlington Borough Council is in the process of preparing a Local Plan for the area. Once adopted the Local Plan will replace the existing adopted Darlington Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2011) and saved policies of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan.
3. Durham County Council last considered Darlington's emerging Local Plan in June 2018 and provided comments on their Draft Darlington Local Plan, Draft Policies Map and Draft Sustainability Appraisal. The Plan has now progressed to Regulation 19 stage and Darlington Borough Council are consulting on their Local Plan Submission Draft before it is submitted for independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. Amongst other matters, this report will comment on how the council's previous representations have been addressed.

The Darlington Borough Local Plan (DBLP)

4. This is the final stage of consultation before Darlington Borough Council submit the DBLP to the Secretary of State for examination.
5. The DBLP aims to establish a policy framework that guides and shapes development in Darlington Borough to 2036. It explains that it seeks to ensure that the population's needs for housing, a thriving economy, community

facilities and infrastructure are met whilst safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design.

6. The core basis of the DBLP is focused around:
 - Facilitating economic growth and the creation of at least 10,000 new homes, supporting the creation of at least 7,000 new jobs and helping to sustain a vibrant town centre and high-quality sports and recreation facilities and spaces. This includes a net portfolio of 158ha of employment land (up to 172ha of additional land is planned for during the Plan period up to 2036).
 - Capitalising on Darlington's existing connections to the national strategic transport network and seeking improvements to regional connectivity across the borough, including supporting development that enhances regionally and nationally important links such as those of Teesside International Airport; Darlington Station and the Strategic Road Network (A66 and A1M).
 - Darlington town centre and its fringe are identified as locations for regeneration in the Borough, and the potential for railway tourism is recognised. The same locations, along with Lingfield Point, Faverdale, Morton Palms, and Teesside International Airport are also identified as strategic locations for employment development.
 - Strategic housing sites for 6,500 homes are identified at Skerningham and Greater Faverdale. Greater Faverdale also includes part of the allocation for mixed employment uses.
 - Darlington has been an NHS Healthy New Towns pilot since 2016, and this informs the design principles within the Plan.

Design, Climate Change and Construction

7. This section of the Local Plan contains policies on Sustainable Design Principles and Climate Change; Flood Risk & Water Management; Health and Wellbeing; Safeguarding Amenity; and Employment and Training. None of these policies raise issues of strategic or local importance with County Durham. With regard to the Flood Risk & Water Management policy (DC2), we have no issues to raise in relation to this policy. We continue to welcome discussions regarding opportunities for any cross boundary or catchment scale flood mitigation projects going forward.

Housing

8. As mentioned above, this section of the Plan contains strategic allocations at two sites and sets out that 10,000 homes are needed during the Plan period to 2036. It sets out detailed policies on housing requirement for the Borough, housing allocations and policies on the mix of housing, affordable housing, development limits, rural exceptions, residential development in rural areas, housing intensification and accommodating travelling groups. Pertinent housing issues are discussed below.

Objectively Assessed Need

9. The DBLP explains population projections indicate an overall population increase of around 12,000 people between 2016 and 2036. Housing will be

delivered to meet a minimum requirement of 422 net additional dwellings per annum over the plan period from 2016 to 2036. This results in a total net minimum requirement of 8,440 dwellings. The ORS Darlington SHMA (2015) sets out that need is based on longer term migration trends and notes that commuting patterns will not change even under an aspirational growth scenario. Whilst it is acknowledged that the housing market has links to County Durham, North Yorkshire and Stockton-on-Tees, evidence shows that Darlington's is a self-contained housing market area.

10. From a County Durham perspective, the approach to calculating housing need has been simplified following the publication of the Government's standard methodology and this should normally limit scope for debate upon this issue at future local plan examinations. However, by departing from the Government's methodology it does require Darlington BC to fully justify its OAN to any future Local Plan Inspector. It is considered that this is not a matter which we should provide comment upon.

Approach to Housing Delivery

11. The DBLP explains that the housing delivery test will be assessed using the Government's figure of 177 net additional dwellings per annum. Darlington Borough has generally experienced low levels of delivery since 2008/09, the start of the recent economic downturn. The situation has begun to change over recent years however and the market has started to recover. It is acknowledged that a mix of homes is needed. With allocations and existing commitments, there is potential to deliver 10,000 homes in the Plan period to 2036. The build out of a number of the strategic sites extends beyond 2036, and suggests sufficient land in the plan for approximately 16,000 homes.
12. From a County Durham perspective, the approach to calculating the OAN for housing has been simplified following the publication of the Government's standard methodology and that this should normally limit the scope for debate upon this issues at future Local Plan examinations in public. However, by departing from the figure provided by the Government, it does require Darlington to fully justify its OAN to any future Local Plan Inspector. The council has no comments on the approach undertaken.

Strategic Allocations

13. The DBLP also seeks to focus new development through two strategic allocation policies. Policy H10 allocates 487 hectares on the North side of Darlington at Skerningham for the delivery of up to 4,500 dwellings. During the plan period to 2036 this site is expected to deliver approximately 1,800 dwellings. Greater Faverdale is a 177.8 hectare site in North West Darlington (Policy H11) to support a Mixed Use Development of circa 2,000 homes and circa 200,000 square metres of employment space covering B1, B2 and B8 use classes. As well as these policies, policy H2 explains the housing allocations by Urban Extensions, Urban Area and Villages with a number of Urban Extensions planned.

14. We welcome further discussions, as necessary, on any implications of major developments on the highways network in County Durham.

Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation

15. Durham County Council welcome Darlington's commitment to providing for the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

Employment for Economic Growth

16. This section of the plan makes provision for up to 172ha of additional land for employment land across the Borough in the period up to 2036 and contains detailed policies on employment development and includes a policy on Darlington farmers auction mart relocation which will relocate the mart from its current site in the town centre to Humbleton Farm on the A68. We welcome this and the benefits that it will bring to the surrounding rural areas of North Yorkshire and County Durham.
17. We note the safeguarded employment site at Aycliffe close to the Durham County boundary and note the connections between Aycliffe and Newton Aycliffe. We also note the new employment proposal east of Heighington, also upon the boundary. These adjoin existing designations and allocations within the existing Sedgefield Local Plan and the emerging County Durham Plan and we support their inclusion providing logical locations for employment.
18. The Local Plan suggests where and how a continuous and diverse supply of employment land will be provided within the Borough to meet the needs of existing and future economic development. It plans for up to 172 hectares (ha) of land allocations for employment land across the Borough in the period up to 2036. The current land available plus the allocations provides gross available employment land in the Borough of 226 ha. That translates to a net available plot portfolio of 158 ha developable for employment use for the Local Plan Period 2016-36.
19. We recognise the marked increase in employment land planned for across the Borough within the Plan period. This figure has more than doubled from 80 ha of land designated for employment within the previous Draft Plan, to 172 ha allocated within this Submission Draft. We support Darlington Borough Council's ambitions to boost economic growth across their Borough and welcome further discussions, as necessary, on any implications major developments may have on the highways network in County Durham.

Town Centre and Retail

20. This section of Darlington's Local Plan sets out a hierarchy for the town centres in the Borough, defining the role and appropriate developments for each. This is in an attempt to ensure that their role in providing food shopping and a range of local shops, leisure uses and services, is safeguarded and enhanced. We note the recognition of Darlington's role as a sub-regional centre not just for the Tees Valley but also for neighbouring parts of North Yorkshire and south and west Durham. We note the recognition and promotion

this gives Darlington as a market town. Cockerton and Mowden are recognised as district and local centres respectively. The Plan seeks to focus retail activity within the Town, District and Local Centres in the borough, and to avoid developments outside of these centres that would compromise their vitality and viability.

Environment

21. This section of the Plan includes policies on the historic environment; Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR); Local Landscape Character; Green and Blue Infrastructure and its standards; Local Green Space; Biodiversity and Geodiversity; and Outdoor Sports Facilities. With the exception of the Darlington and Stockton Railway policy (addressed below), none of these policies raise issues of strategic or local importance with County Durham. We welcome the opportunity to continue to work jointly on cross-boundary projects such as the Heritage Action Zone and encourage continued partnership working in this regard.

Darlington and Stockton Railway

22. This policy sets out the approach to the Darlington and Stockton Railway, including the trackbed and branchlines. We welcome the acknowledgement of the importance of the assets connected to the railway and also the acknowledgement of the importance of partnership working with us.
23. Following our concerns relating to the application of a 50m 'corridor' for the trackbed and branchlines - which was likely to prove overly restrictive and difficult to implement - we are pleased to note the removal of this proposal. We remain committed to working with Darlington Borough Council to ensure a comprehensive and consistent policy approach for the asset.

Transport and Infrastructure

24. The transport and infrastructure section of the Plan contains ten policies relating to matters such as Delivering a Sustainable Transport Network; Walking and Cycling; the Rail and Road Networks; Improving Access and Accessibility; Transport Assessments and Travel Plans; Parking Provision including Electric Vehicle Charging; Airport Safety; Utilities Infrastructure; Telecommunication Masts; Broadband Infrastructure; Renewable and Energy Efficient Infrastructure; and Supporting the Delivery of Community and Social Infrastructure. The policies do not cause any strategic issues for Durham County Council. We would however welcome continued discussion with Darlington Borough Council around issues connected to the provision of infrastructure.
25. Durham County Council welcome Darlington's approach to secure s106 contributions to infrastructure and in particular education. It is acknowledged that parents living in County Durham apply to Darlington Borough Council for school places and vice-versa. It is requested therefore that when a planning application is submitted to Darlington Borough Council which is close to the County Durham boundary or the closest school is in County Durham that the Pupil Place

Planning team at Durham County Council are consulted during the planning process.

26. Durham County Council welcome the implementation of the Darlington High Speed 2 Growth Hub, which encompasses new platforms at Darlington rail station as part of a commercial redevelopment, delivering a 21st century rail gateway ready for HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail. This will bring benefits to all of the North East and wider North of England, and will help to improve infrastructure benefitting the economy and prosperity of County Durham.
27. We also welcome the acknowledgement that improvements are required to Bank Top Station to improve rail links from Teesport to Hitachi at Newton Aycliffe. We recognise there are capacity constraints on the East Coast Mainline (ECML) at Bank Top stations and local trains crossing the lines may contribute to the lack of capacity at the station for EMCL services. Therefore, we are supportive of the station expansion because of the potential benefits of removing this significant bottleneck. Station improvements at Bank Top could remove an existing bottleneck and increase the regularity of strategic services on the ECML which would have a positive impact for services entering the county. Notwithstanding our strong support for station upgrades, we would request that consideration is given to any station improvements which may impact on the northern services on the Bishop line which currently accommodate services from Bishop Auckland to Saltburn. This site will also be served well by the acknowledged need for improved east-west road connectivity along the A66 from the A1(M) (including the Northern Link Road), which we also welcome.
28. Teesport is an important international gateway and road links to the Newton Aycliffe Business Park and Forrest Park will be enhanced by the Northern Link Road and investment on the A66. We also welcome more platform space for freight transportation. Further co-operation and discussion on these issues should take place to ensure that issues relevant to County Durham continue to be considered.
29. The recognition of the need to protect the Safeguarding Zone and Public Safety Zone around Teesside International Airport is also supported and welcomed. We welcome further co-operation on this issue to ensure that these zones are protected from development which could potentially prejudice safe operation of the airport and ensure a consistent approach across authorities.

Recommendation

30. That the response to the Darlington Borough Local Plan Submission Draft set out in Appendix 2 of this report is agreed and submitted.

Background Papers

31. Darlington Borough Local Plan 2016 - 2036 Submission Draft August 2020.

Contact:	Mike Allum	Tel: 03000 261 906
	Lydia Brown	Tel: 03000 261 919

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Part of our respective Duty to Cooperate responsibilities. The duty to co-operate is a legal test that requires co-operation between local planning authorities and other public bodies to maximise the effectiveness of policies for strategic matters in Local Plans.

Finance

None

Consultation

This document is being consulted upon in accordance with Darlington Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Durham County Council has been consulted upon as an adjoining local planning authority and will need to submit comments by 17 August 2020.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None

Appendix 2: Draft Response to Darlington Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 – Regulation 19 Consultation August/September 2020

Contact: Lydia Brown
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Our Ref:
Your Ref:



David Hand
Planning Policy Section
Darlington Borough Council
Town Hall
Darlington
DL1 5QT

16 September 2020

Dear Mr Hand,

Duty to Co-operate – Darlington Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 – Regulation 19 Consultation August/September 2020

Durham County Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Darlington Borough Local Plan (BDLP) Submission Draft. Although we recognise that few of the modifications to the Plan made since the previous stage of consultation are likely to significantly impact County Durham, we outline our comments on the Submission Draft below.

Design, Climate Change and Construction

With regard to the Flood Risk & Water Management policy (DC2), we have no issues to raise in relation to this policy. We would continue to welcome discussions regarding opportunities for any cross boundary or catchment scale flood mitigation projects.

Objectively Assessed Need

From a County Durham perspective, the approach to calculating housing need has been simplified following the publication of the Government's standard methodology and this should normally limit scope for debate upon this issue at future local plan examinations. However, by departing from the Government's methodology it does require Darlington BC to fully justify its OAN to any future Local Plan Inspector. It is considered that this is not a matter which we should provide comment upon.

Strategic Housing Allocations

Durham County Council note the focus of the Draft Plan on two strategic allocation policies, Policy H10 and Policy H11. As well as these policies, we note Policy H2

explains the housing allocations by Urban Extensions, Urban Area and Villages with a number of Urban Extensions planned.

We welcome further discussions, as necessary, on the implications of major developments on the highways network in County Durham.

Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation

Durham County Council welcome Darlington's commitment to providing for the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

Employment for Economic Growth

This section contains a policy on Darlington Farmers Auction Mart Relocation (E3) which will relocate the mart from its current site in the town centre to Humbleton Farm on the A68. Durham County Council welcome this and the benefits that it will bring to the surrounding rural areas of North Yorkshire and County Durham. We would welcome continued discussions on the cross boundary implications of this.

We note the safeguarded employment site at Aycliffe close to the Durham County boundary and note the connections between Aycliffe and Newton Aycliffe. We also note the new employment proposal east of Heighington, also upon the boundary. These adjoin existing designations and allocations within the existing Sedgefield Local Plan and the emerging County Durham Plan and we support their inclusion providing logical locations for employment.

We recognise the marked increase in employment land planned for across the Borough within the Plan period. This figure has more than doubled from 80 ha of land designated for employment within the previous Draft Plan, to 172 ha allocated within this Submission Draft. We support Darlington Borough Council's ambitions to boost economic growth across their Borough and welcome further discussions, as necessary, on any implications major developments may have on the highways network in County Durham.

Town Centre and Retail

We note the recognition of Darlington's role as a sub-regional centre not just for the Tees Valley but also for neighbouring parts of North Yorkshire and south and west Durham. We note the recognition and promotion this gives Darlington as a market town.

Environment

With the exception of the Darlington and Stockton Railway policy (addressed below), none of these policies raise issues of strategic or local importance with County Durham. We welcome the opportunity to continue to work jointly with Darlington BC on cross-boundary projects such as the Heritage Action Zone and encourage continued partnership working in this regard.

Darlington and Stockton Railway

This policy sets out the approach to the Darlington and Stockton Railway, including the trackbed and branchlines. Durham County Council welcome the

acknowledgement of the importance of the assets connected to the railway and also the acknowledgement of the importance of partnership working with us.

Following our concerns relating to the application of a 50m 'corridor' for the trackbed and branchlines - which was likely to prove overly restrictive and difficult to implement - we are pleased to note the removal of this proposal. We remain committed to working with Darlington Borough Council to ensure a comprehensive and consistent policy approach for the asset.

Transport and Infrastructure

The policies of this section generally are welcomed and do not cause any strategic issues for Durham County Council. We would however welcome continued discussion with Darlington Borough Council around issues connected to the provision of infrastructure.

Durham County Council welcome Darlington's approach to secure s106 contributions to infrastructure and in particular education. It is acknowledged that parents living in County Durham apply to Darlington Borough Council for school places and vice-versa. It is requested therefore that when a planning application is submitted to Darlington Borough Council which is close to the County Durham boundary or the closest school is in County Durham that the Pupil Place Planning team at Durham County Council are consulted during the planning process.

Durham County Council welcome the implementation of the Darlington High Speed 2 Growth Hub, which encompasses new platforms at Darlington rail station as part of a commercial redevelopment, delivering a 21st century rail gateway ready for HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail. This will bring benefits to all of the North East and wider North of England, and will help to improve infrastructure benefitting the economy and prosperity of County Durham.

We also welcome the acknowledgement that improvements are required to Bank Top Station to improve rail links from Teesport to Hitachi at Newton Aycliffe. DCC recognise there are capacity constraints on the ECML at Bank Top stations and local trains crossing the lines may contribute to the lack of capacity at the station for EMCL services. Therefore, DCC is supportive of the station expansion because of the potential benefits of removing this significant bottleneck. Station improvements at Bank Top could remove an existing bottleneck and increase the regularity of strategic services on the ECML which would have a positive impact for services entering the County. Notwithstanding our strong support for station upgrades, DCC would appreciate consideration of how any station improvements may impact on the northern services on the Bishop line which currently accommodates services from Bishop Auckland to Saltburn. This site will also be served well by the acknowledged need for improved east-west road connectivity along the A66 from the A1(M) (including the Northern Link Road), which we also welcome.

Teesport is an important international gateway and road links to the Newton Aycliffe Business Park and Forrest Park will be enhanced by the Northern Link road and investment on the A66. We also welcome more platform space for freight

transportation. Further co-operation and discussion on these issues should take place to ensure that issues relevant to County Durham continue to be considered.

The recognition of the need to protect the Safeguarding Zone and Public Safety Zone around Teesside International Airport is also supported and welcomed. We welcome further co-operation on this issue to ensure that these zones are protected from development which could potentially prejudice safe operation of the airport.

I trust that these comments are useful to you in progressing your Local Plan through examination. Should you wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact myself or a member of my team.

The Council looks forward to continuing to work with Darlington Borough Council on planning matters of joint interest under the Duty to Cooperate.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Timmiss

Head of Development and Housing