

# Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9 December 2013



## County Durham Plan – Pre-submission Draft Consultation – Response from Overview and Scrutiny Workshop

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### Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

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#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report details the feedback provided by participants at an Overview and Scrutiny workshop to consider the pre-submission draft of the County Durham Plan and invites the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee to endorse this feedback as the formal response by Scrutiny to the pre-submission draft consultation.

#### Background

- 2 All planning authorities have a statutory requirement to prepare and maintain an up to date development plan for their area.
- 3 The County Durham Plan seeks to guide the future development of County Durham to improve the lives of its existing and future residents. It is a plan that seeks to meet the differing needs of our communities. The plan sets the policy framework for the next 20 years to support the development of a thriving economy in County Durham. With improved economic performance central to the plan, it identifies a number of sites for new employment, new housing and new infrastructure to accommodate the growth needed to achieve these ambitions.
- 4 The plan identifies the quantity and location of new development across the city, towns and villages of County Durham and the detailed planning policies that will be used to determine planning applications. It also sets out the measures required of Durham County Council and other key service providers and stakeholders to successfully achieve the ambitions of the plan.
- 5 As part of the on-going development of the County Durham Plan, Overview and Scrutiny members and co-optees have been engaged in and have responded to the following consultation stages:-
  - (i) Issues Paper – October 2009
  - (ii) Issues and Options consultation – July 2010
  - (iii) Development of the Core Strategy consultation – July 2011
  - (iv) Preferred options consultation – October 2012

- 6 The pre-submission draft of the plan was reported to Cabinet on the 18 September, 2013 and followed by publication and a final round of public consultation which runs from the 14 October to 6 December, 2013.
- 7 Following consideration of the pre-submission draft consultation responses and the making of any minor modifications, the plan will be formally submitted in March 2014 with the examination in public to follow in June/July 2014 and finally adoption by December 2014.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Workshop**

- 8 In order to continue to provide Overview and Scrutiny members and co-optees with an opportunity to comment and provide challenge to the Pre-submission Draft of the Plan, a workshop was held on 4 November 2013.
- 9 Each participant received a briefing pack which provided background information for the workshop and the Council's Head of Policy, Planning, Assets and Environment delivered a presentation which
  - (i) Provided contextual information about the Pre-submission draft;
  - (ii) Gave an overview of the Regeneration Statement and other key supporting documents;
  - (iii) Highlighted the process taken in developing the Plan to date and, set out the process for the latest consultation and the next steps following that process.
- 10 Members were then invited to take part in a facilitated discussion on a particular key theme within the Pre-submission draft. The key themes were Housing (2 Groups), Economy including transport (2 Groups), Environment including minerals and General Strategy.
- 11 During the discussions, member and co-optees comments were recorded by a dedicated scribe for each group.
- 12 At the end of the discussions, the Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee reported that the proposed process for responding to the Pre-submission draft of the County Durham Plan would be as follows:-
  - (i) All comments would be recorded by the scribes and then circulated amongst the participants to check for accuracy and provide them with a final opportunity to comment;
  - (ii) The comments would be signed off by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee and submitted as Overview and Scrutiny's formal response to the Pre-Consultation draft by the consultation deadline of 6 December 2013;
  - (iii) A report would be considered by the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 December 2013, inviting the Committee to endorse the response to the consultation.

## **Workshop Feedback and Response to the Pre-Submission Draft of the County Durham Plan**

- 13 The comments made by participants at the County Durham Plan workshop are attached to this report. (Appendix 2)

### **Recommendations**

- 14 The Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to receive the report, note its content and endorse the submission of the County Durham Plan workshop feedback as the formal response of Overview and Scrutiny to the County Durham Plan Pre-submission Draft.

### **Background papers**

Overview and Scrutiny County Durham Plan Workshop Programme and Briefing Paper

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**Appendix 1: Implications (Taken from 18 September 2013 Cabinet Report except \* Risk)**

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**Finance –**

The Regeneration Statement and the County Durham Plan outline the approach for investment which includes Durham County's council's capital programme. The Examination in Public could cost up to £400000, including the costs of the Planning Inspector, legal advice and the employment of a Programme Officer and possibly an assistant. Provision has been made in the Planning and Asset reserve to cover this cost.

**Staffing –**

The Spatial Policy Team's work programme will reflect the requirements of the CDP Project Plan.

**\*Risk –** None for Overview and Scrutiny

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty –**

Equality and Diversity has been an integral part of policy development in the County Durham Plan. The vision as outlined in the Regeneration Statement is to *shape a County Durham where people want to live, work, invest and visit and enable our residents and businesses to achieve and maximise their potential* – this will have a positive effect on all residents, employees and visitors. Detailed Equality Impact Assessments have been and will be carried out for individual strategies or projects.

**Accommodation –** None.

**Crime and Disorder –** None.

**Human Rights –** None.

**Consultation –**

The timings of consultation is included in the Local Development Scheme. Significant consultation will be undertaken in October to December 2013 and on other occasions during plan preparation.

**Procurement –** None.

**Disability Issues –** None.

**Legal Implications –**

Legal opinion has been sought from the Council's in-house legal team and all the policies in the plan. Advice has also been received from external legal specialists on particularly complex topics, such as the funding of the relief roads.

**Overview and Scrutiny Workshop – County Durham Plan – 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2012 – Committee Room 2.**

**Group 1**

**Facilitator: David Randall, Senior Policy Officer, RED**

**Scribe: Stephen Gwilym**

**Members/Co-optees in Group:**

**Councillors Eddie Adam, Alison Batey, David Bell, and John Clare.  
Co-optees Mr Tom Bolton and Mrs Betty Carr**

**Theme: Housing**

**Key Issues:**

**Older Persons' Housing**

There was general support for the requirement of new developments to have 10% of Housing Units being specifically for older people. Concern was expressed at how this could be delivered and what measures could be taken to enforce this if necessary?

David Randall indicated that this would be achieved by the various planning conditions/consents given to applications for development sites.

The group suggested that where developments for older people were being proposed then the developers should ensure that the Unit specifications should be appropriate for the end user i.e. wider doors, over-bath showers, accessible wall sockets etc.

Reference was also made to the need to ensure that housing developments were delivered and supported by the necessary and appropriate infrastructure including schools where family accommodation was proposed; accessible healthcare via GPs; transport links for both car users and also public transport provision as well as retail provision. This would all ensure the development of communities not merely housing estates.

The group acknowledged the need for developers and the Council to acknowledge the sensitivities/tensions that may arise where mixed housing type developments were proposed, particularly in respect of the different needs and expectations of older, perhaps more vulnerable people and young families with children.

## **Planning for local circumstances/need**

Councillor Clare made specific reference to Newton Aycliffe and indicated that there needed to be a re-balancing of the housing provision in the town as currently this was located on the periphery/outskirts of the Town Centre and needed to be closer to the local amenities. He also indicated that timing was of great importance when determining which sites are released/marketed for development.

Tom Bolton referred to smaller settlements and how the need/delivery of housing developments would be managed. He referenced a degree of local resentment in the Eldon area which was historically linked to the previous County Council policy of Category D settlements. He sought assurances that the Plan contained provision for the continued development of the County's smaller settlements and referred to the local Parish Plan which for Eldon Parish Council had identified the need for housing for older people within this particular area.

In response, David Randall referred to 2 specific policies within the proposed County Durham Plan which would be applicable for any application for developments in the smaller , more rural areas of the County namely:-

POLICY 35 – Development in the Countryside  
POLICY 15 – Development on Unallocated sites.

## **Sustainable housing developments**

Concern was expressed about the potential ramifications of Government proposals to abolish the Sustainable Homes Code and how the County Durham Plan would ensure that new developments would be sustainable?

David Randall referenced Policy 16 “Sustainable design in the Built Environment” which sought to ensure that sustainability issues were included in the consideration for any new development sites. He also stressed the various building regulations available which would promote sustainability issues such as renewable and sustainable heating and lighting. This would also identify issues such as the potential reduction in the availability of Gas energy and the need for renewable electricity sources to be developed.

## **Demand for developments of Smaller Unit size**

Members referenced the potential impact of the Government's “Bedroom Tax” and an associated need/demand for accommodation of a smaller unit size and whether there was a sufficient reflection/acknowledgement of this potential demand in the proposed submission draft.

## **Inter-departmental liaison for development sites**

Having already highlighted the need to ensure that all proposed development sites identified within the County Durham Plan included the necessary infrastructure provision to be delivered also, members sought assurances that the Spatial Planning Policy team held continuous dialogue with the appropriate service groupings within the Council to ensure that all necessary considerations in respect of infrastructure provision was undertaken when development sites had been proposed.

David Randall indicated that Children and Adults Services were engaged in such dialogue in respect of school place availability and also that the Council's highways team were also engaged in determining what, if any, additional infrastructure works for Highways/transport might be required alongside specific development sites.

## **Flooding**

The group emphasised the need to ensure that the County Durham Plan reflected exiting concerns around mitigating and acknowledging the associated risks of developments and flooding. Specific reference was made to POLICY 46 Water Management which included reference to surface water flood risk considerations and also sustainable drainage systems.

Members also indicated that flooding problems arising from new housing developments which affect surface water courses should be reflected in the Plan.

Reference was also made to the planting of trees and shrubbery which could also impact upon surface water flows and drainage systems.

David Randall indicated that all developers would be asked to provide details of their green infrastructure plans in this respect in order to attempt to mitigate their potential flooding impact.

## **Green Infrastructure Plans for Housing**

The Group also referred to the need for some housing developments to be integrated into areas of green space and not merely putting developments on brownfield sites and having green infrastructure plans as an afterthought.

## **Group 2**

**Facilitator: Carol Dillon, Principal Policy Officer, RED**

**Scribe: Lucy Stephenson**

### **Members/Co-optees in Group**

**Councillors B Alderson, D Boyes, J Clark and P Crathorne**  
**Co-optee - Mr T Batson.**

### **Theme: Housing**

C Dillon provided an overview on the key policies contained within the plan which related specifically to housing, highlighting the minimum number of houses which would be built during the life of the plan, the distribution and identification of housing sites, land supply, market attractiveness, types of housing and exceptions.

Further information was provided in respect of Executive homes and houses in multiple occupation, including student accommodation.

The following points/concerns were then raised by members of the group:

- Pleased to see that there is flexibility within the plan to allow for areas to be developed for housing which would have not necessarily been considered in the past.
- Student accommodation – this is an issue within Durham City, and members were also mindful of this when considering current planning applications.
- Community development – members suggested that it was important to fix what currently existed in the county, regenerate those properties and make them work. It was also felt that by doing this some areas would be more attractive to developers and businesses.
- Specific concerns were raised relating to Easington Colliery which was felt to be in desperate need of regeneration, but was not however, identified for new housing. It was felt that building 900 homes in the neighbouring Easington Village would further add to a spiral of decline. It was noted that Policy 16 of the plan did allow for developers to come forward with proposals for sites which had not been allocated in the plan, however some Members felt that this was unlikely as the areas were unattractive to developers.
- Discussion took place regarding changes to allocation sites, and why some had been removed from the previous draft. It was reported that some sites may have had little prospects for delivery and therefore would have been removed.
- Happy to see that 10% of older people's housing will be provided but did think this description was not explicit enough and should be extended to cover those with disabilities who may not necessarily be old, but do require level access properties, with aids and adaptations. In addition it was recognised that there was a shortage in 1-2 bedroom bungalows.
- Infrastructure was considered a problem in some areas where development had taken place especially in smaller villages.



- Concerns regarding the amount of boarded up shops in smaller villages and towns.
- Empty Homes – Major issues where concentrations of homes were empty. Questions were raised as to why so many new homes were being built when there was a significant number of empty homes in the County which were not being regenerated.
- Neighbourhood Planning – it was felt that information relating to this needed to be communicated better to those in the community, including Town and Parish Councils and should be done so alongside consultation on the County Durham Plan.
- Concerns were raised regarding settlement boundaries and the importance of retaining those boundaries, where development borders properties of homes in another settlement.
- Concerns were also raised regarding land banking. It was noted that renewals would be reassessed in the context of this plan.
- Important to ensure that information was getting to those in outlying areas and villages.

## **Overview and Scrutiny Workshop on the County Durham Plan Monday 4 November 2013**

### **Group 3**

**Facilitator: Mike Allum, Spatial Policy Manager, RED**

**Scribe: Martin Tindle**

**Members/Co-optees in Group:**

**Councillors: B Graham, J Gray, O Gunn and M Hodgson**

**Co-optee: B Henderson**

**Theme – Economy**

#### **Balancing Economy vs Environment (inc. Housing)**

Mike Allum (MA) – As noted in the overview presentation, driving the economy is the major priority for the CDP. However, there was a need to balance environmental concerns against development. Did Members feel that it was ever appropriate to loosen environment constraints? Was this an issue of the scale of any development?

- Members noted that it would be dependent upon each case, based on the needs of the area.
- Members did not think it was simply an issue of scale, it was a matter of whether the benefits to the economy, job creation etc. balanced against any environmental considerations.
- Members noted a flexible approach was required, and that issues of communication and clarity as regards the context of any development, i.e. what is “brown field”, “green field” and “green belt” was important.

MA – green belt is a specific designation, and there were constraints to stop urban sprawl and help define settlements

- Members noted issues of mixed development, industrial and residential, in some locations, such as DurhamGate, Spennymoor and reiterated the need for a balanced approach.
- Members reiterated that there was a need to look at each individual situation, citing areas such as Willington and Hunwick, containing a conservation area and small hamlets.
- Members recalled a previous draft of the CDP set out 280 houses for Willington and asked what is allocated now? Also a planning permission being granted for a supermarket at the Industrial Estate, with no movement on this being taken forward. Members noted the need to link housing with industrial and retail development, having the jobs for people, the places for them to live, and places for them to shop.

MA – referring to the relevant map within the CDP document, noted that there was an allocation of 290 houses for Willington. It was added that those existing industrial

estates that were struggling to attract businesses would not be allocated in the CDP, they would continue to be industrial estates, but would not be protected such that if a proposal for development of another kind came along, it would not be blocked on principle, though it would need to go through the usual process.

- Members asked whether there was difficulty with developers “banking” land.

MA – can be difficult, and in some cases where development takes place, such as DurhamGate some additional land was safeguarded for any necessary expansion (MA to provide Councillor B Graham with plan showing land opposite DurhamGate).

### **Tourism**

- Members noted the development of Tourism, at locations such as Witton-le-Wear, large numbers of caravans, encouraging visitors and providing employment opportunities.
- Bishop Auckland has had a lot of positive work carried out, the marketplace, Town Hall, Castle, parks and the food festival

MA – noted that Tourism was an important part of the County Durham economy and that there needed to be a flexible approach, to try and help encourage businesses and create jobs. It was noted that the work at Auckland Castle was acknowledged in that it had its own supplementary plan, with some other land owned by the owner of Auckland Castle that may be developed, hopefully creating more jobs.

### **Retail Development and Town Centres**

MA – DCC looks to allocate sites by need in respect of retail, looking at spending power versus the provision of shops. The previous draft of the CDP had 6 allocations for retail sites, now rationalised to 2 sites: expansion at the Arnison Centre, Durham City and Queen Street, Crook. It was added that while only 2 sites were allocated, the CDP did not exclude any submissions from developers in respect of potentially developing any other sites.

MA – noted that also the importance of town centres was identified within the CDP, including the policy of preventing hot food takeaways beyond 5% of the units within a town centre and the creation of 400m exclusion zones around centres of education.

- Members noted the effect of “out-of-town” provision on town centres, the issue of some town centres being in private ownership.
- Members added when town centres are improved, landlords increase rent.
- Members agreed that the proliferation of hot food takeaways was to the detriment of town centres, and support preventing further in cases of greater than 5%, and support exclusion zones, but noted that they may not prevent those children that choose to seek take away food.

- Members were mindful of issues such as public health (food deprivation rather than the unhealthy nature of the majority of take away food) and also that the prevention of further takeaways could be seen as anti-competitive, cost jobs and lead to possible vandalism of vacant units.

### **Employment Land**

MA – the CDP has a hierarchy in respect of employment land, linked to how Business Durham would look to attract businesses to the County.

It was noted there were no allocations as such for the Dales, but as explained in the presentation, there was an exemption policy so that if an opportunity for employment and/or housing land was identified it could be developed.

It was added that other exceptions could be possible if they were to safeguard and protect jobs in local communities, however this was an innovative policy and would be subject to test by the Inspector upon submission of the CDP.

- Members support innovation and flexibility, noting that it was important to help develop high value industry, such as the technology innovation at NetPark – clustering to maximise benefits, and providing additional units to allow for growth and so on.

### **Transport Infrastructure**

MA – Members were reminded of CIL and s106 agreements as obligations on developers in contributing to infrastructure with 3 CIL projects identified being the Northern Relief Road, Super Routes - for cycling and the Horden Rail Station.

- Members noted that sewer capacity was an issue, especially with many flooding incidents over recent years
- It was noted that the Northern Relief Road was not a bypass, would it have much effect?
- Members noted that transport infrastructure was key in supporting the economy, it was now an expectation for people to travel for work, therefore public transport, both road and rail, together with private vehicles using the road network were vital. Car users should not be punished, and the provision of adequate parking within new developments was important.

MA – it was noted that Northumbrian Water was using the CDP as part of a bid to Ofwat for funding to expanding sewer capacity, and in the shorter term, there could be solutions put in place by developers of new schemes. The Northern Relief Road was shown to be effective in the modelling carried out, impacting positively on the flow of traffic into and through Durham, not only at the location of the relief road itself, but along all the major arterial routes into Durham City from the surrounding areas. A longer term proposal was noted for a bypass road from the A690 at Durham City through to Consett, however this would be a major project for a time in the future when funding might be secured.

# **Overview and Scrutiny Workshop on the County Durham Plan Monday 4 November 2013**

## **Group 4**

**Facilitator: Stuart Timmiss, Head of Policy, Planning, Assets and Environment, RED**

**Scribe: Paula Nicholson**

### **Members/Co-optees in Group:**

**Councillors J Chaplow, G Holland, A Hopgood, K Hopper and M Simpson,**

**Co-optees : Mr D Kinch and Mr A Kitching**

### **Theme – Economy**

Stuart Timmiss explained that Economy was a broad area and included Industrial Estates, Hot Food Establishments, Visitor Economy, Visitor Attractions and Visitor Accommodation.

The Group discussed the County Durham Plan in relation to the Theme – Economy and made the following comments:-

- Need to make County Durham attractive to investors.
- Wanted to see strategies to increase employment but were concerned about the impacts on the environment i.e. quarry expansion.
- Protect people who live in County Durham.

### **Renewable and Low Carbon Economy**

- Jeopardises jobs
- Reduce or increase Carbon  
(The Plan is not about reducing Carbon Economy it is getting the balance right).

### **Wind Turbine Development**

- Members raised concerns over the number of wind turbine farms.  
(Stuart Timmiss advised Members that County Durham had reached its limit with wind turbine farms but individual wind turbines were not classed as farms but they needed to be judged on how they would sit within the landscape).

### **Tourism**

- Concerns were raised on tourism being reduced by £1m.

- Tourist office in Durham closed which was a concern.
- A tourist office could be established in the Town Hall, Durham as they currently received a number of visitors who thought they were the tourist office.
- Tourists want a personal contact as not everyone was able to use the internet to gain information.
- Members wanted more to be done about tourism in particular raising awareness of attractions i.e. Kelloe Gardens.
- Need to promote tourist attractions amongst local people.
- Visitors come to the City for the day but don't stay so don't contribute enough to the economy.
- Offers for Blue Badge Holders in Durham were low in comparison to other areas.
- Promote that people could stay in Durham as a base and visit other attractions i.e. The Lakes.

#### Air Quality, Light and Noise Pollution

- Members wanted to see the results of the monitored Air Quality. (Only two areas in the County currently had issues).

#### Local Amenity

- Empty shops in towns as people purchased from the internet or went to out of town outlets where parking was free (Floor space in towns was too small which was why businesses went out of town. Parking charges were not part of the plan).
- Shops were empty in town centres due to high rents.
- Members raised that you were unable to purchase a cup of tea or coffee in town centres after 4.00 pm as coffee shops were closed. Where were tourists meant to go? (cafés were not included in the plan)

#### Sustainable Design

- The Arnison Centre is at capacity in relation to traffic and there are plans to build an additional 1200 houses in this area without an additional road. Households would be unable to get to their properties due to congestion.
- The Arnison Centre is turning into a town centre with houses all around it.

#### Measures of Success

- Stuart Timmiss advised the group that the plan was monitored every 5 years and the plan was part of a tool kit.
- The plan is a living document.

Infrastructure vital in supporting the economy across the County, particularly transport, with public transport, cycling and walking all having a role to play, but in a County with large rural areas and clearly separated towns and villages it was important to acknowledge the role that cars have in enabling people to be able travel for work. Members felt that this was not to be at the point of being out of balance with environmental concerns.

## **Group 5 – Environment**

**Facilitator - Gavin Scott, Area Planning Team Leader, RED**

**Scribe – Kirsty Gray  
Councillors/Co-optees in Group**

**Councillors B Knevitt, J Maitland, N Martin, P May, S Morrison and  
H Nicholson**

**Co-optee - Mr D Easton.**

### **Environment**

Members had various comments to make regarding the following;

- Energy Efficiency - Members were concerned that the plan did not include compulsory building requirements in relation to building sustainable homes, such as the inclusion of solar panels and fibre optic broadband connections on every new home
- Residential Developments for older people - Members queried why high quality accessible homes for older people were not specified as part of the plan as many older people did not seek to downsize from a family home, but to move to a more easily accessible home of a similar standard
- Transport Infrastructure – Members were concerned that new residential developments were not designed for households with multiple cars and often lack of spaces resulted in cars parking on footpaths, which rendered it impossible for mobility vehicles or pushchairs to use them appropriately
- Open Space - Members discussed the issue of open space requirements for new developments. Planning applications did not specify the size or type of space and it was sometimes not desirable for all age groups or large enough for various pastimes. Members also had concerns that the cost of maintaining those areas eventually fell upon the Council
- Off Shore Wind Turbines – Members discussed the feasibility of these being introduced on County Durham coastline
- Regeneration – Members had concerns regarding the lack of regenerative work on dwindling high streets – there were many existing premises which could be utilised

## **Group 6:**

**Facilitator: Michelle Robinson, Principal Policy Officer, RED**

**Scribe: Ann Whitton**

**Members/Co-optees in the Group:**

**Councillors: M Simmons, P Stradling, O Temple, E Tomlinson and A Willis**

**Co-optee: Reverend K Phipps.**

**Theme: General Strategy**

The facilitator set out that the theme of the group was the general strategy and specifically policy 2- spatial approach and policy4 – distribution of development. She asked if members of the group would consider the challenges and opportunities which had been highlighted in the presentation in relation to the general strategy.

Councillor Stradling stated that there were challenges in respect of towns sprawling into villages and villages becoming extensions of towns. He suggested that there should be something in the plan to recognise villages and for them to retain a measure of identity. Councillor Stradling also suggested that some industries can only be located in certain places and that the plan should reference this and be more specific. For example industry for rail transportation could not be located where there are no rail links.

Councillor Temple talked of the ratio of employment land to housing land and suggested that some areas of the County there was a skew of employment expectations and an assumption of dormitory areas where more housing development was indicated, Consett identified strongly with this due to the number of housing developments in the area. He identified from the ratios that there was a low allocation of employment land in North Durham area. Consett has a strong engineering base which has inward investment.

There was a general view that employment land does not always align with housing land.

The group spoke about development on green belt land and suggested that housing that is no longer fit for purpose and beyond repair should be demolished providing developers with an opportunity to provide new housing, but that will also regenerate communities.

Councillors discussed moving retail space out of towns, such as Bishop Auckland, Reverend Phipps said that the dynamic of the retail experience in Bishop Auckland had changed. Councillor Simmons gave an example of a resident of Hamsterley who can get the bus into Bishop Auckland but cannot get to Tindle Crescent where some of the shops including Marks and Spencer have relocated. Members of the group were advised that it was national policy which covered out of town shopping. Members of the group suggested there should be a different weighting of retail. The



group discussed the potential of small business units in towns to create a mixed economy the group suggested that small to medium enterprises could be the salvation of communities.

The group then went on to discuss the relativity of Durham City as a retail centre, Councillor Stradling pointed out the residents in the East of the County were more likely to make a short journey (5/6miles) to Hartlepool or Sunderland than a 14 mile journey into Durham. Councillor Temple described a similar experience for residents living in the Consett area who have a regular bus service to Newcastle. The group went on to talk about the importance of good public transport links.

Discussion took place on the role of Durham City as a tourist centre and an educational centre with the university, however it was pointed out that there are other tourist attractions within the County. Members suggested that Crook with its proximity to Weardale and the North Pennines should perhaps market itself as gateway to the Durham Dales.

Members discussed position and availability of employment land and suggested the reasons for Newton Aycliffe being attractive to employers is its position or location and available land. Durham City doesn't have employment land available but members did discuss the potential of the Aykley Heads site and expressed concerns over transport links even with new road networks in place.

Members suggested that the plan should address poor quality housing as a challenge. Members suggested that the plan should include awareness of expenditure but shouldn't be based on how 'things' are now as the austerity measures will not last for ever.