

Darlington Proposed Submission Local Plan (2016 -2036)

Climate Change Topic Paper

February 2021

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This topic paper will set out how the Proposed Submission Darlington Local Plan (2016 - 2036) policies have been prepared and are intended to ensure that the development and use of land in the Borough contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In July 2019, Members acknowledged the threat of climate change and passed a motion committing Darlington Borough Council to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 on its own operations. As part of this commitment the Council has developed a Climate Change Strategy (2020) which sets out the baseline of the Council's carbon emissions and identifies the key actions and intervention measures required to meet this commitment. It also sets out what measures the Council will take to deal with unavoidable impacts of climate change.
- 2.2 No specific emissions target has been established for the Borough as a whole nor has a specific target been set out in the Proposed Submission Local Plan. The Council does however acknowledge the government commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions nationally by 2050 as demonstrated by committing to make its own operations net zero carbon by 2050.

3.0 Overall proposed strategy and approach

- 3.1 The Darlington Proposed Submission Local Plan (2016- 2036) has been developed to support the transition to a low carbon future and to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change as required by paragraphs 148 and 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2019.
- 3.2 One of the overarching aims of the Proposed Submission Local Plan is to 'deliver sustainable development to meet the Borough's needs through a cohesive plan which makes the best use of land and resources.
- 3.3 The more detailed specific aims and objectives established in the Proposed Submission Local Plan include:

Specific Aim 6: Responding to climate change and reducing energy consumption – support the continued move towards a low carbon community by encouraging efficient use of resources, good design and well located development, whilst increasing resilience to impacts from climate change.
- 3.4 In order to achieve this aim the following objectives are set:
 - a. **Manage flood risk from all sources**

- b. **Maximise opportunities to generate and use renewable energy in all developments**
- c. **Actively encourage energy and water efficient design in all new and existing housing, industrial and commercial developments**
- d. **Locate developments in areas not susceptible to flooding and encourage flood resilient design where necessary**

- 3.5 There are other Specific Aims and Objectives that also contain a range of measures which contribute towards mitigating and adapting to climate change including Objective A of specific aim 3 which seeks to ensure new development is reasonably accessible to sustainable transport. Many of the objectives within Specific Aim 4 also seek to ensure sustainable and close access to facilities, services and green spaces along with creating walkable, healthier neighbourhoods and more accessible public transport. Specific Aim 5 and its supporting objectives seek to protect and enhance green infrastructure, biodiversity and the natural environment as well as mitigate flood risk from the Rivers Tees and Skerne.
- 3.6 The Proposed Submission Local Plan and its spatial strategy has been developed to ensure that the proposed strategy and policies will as required by paragraph 148 of the NPPF (2019) help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the re-use of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 3.7 This has primarily been achieved through the Sustainability Appraisal process and the assessment of the proposed aims, objectives, policies and sites along with reasonable alternative options against 16 sustainability objectives, which together incorporate a range of measures seeking to avoid, mitigate and adapt to climate change and reduce carbon emissions. The relevant sustainability objectives and prompt questions include:

SA Objective 1 - Provide a mixture of affordable, well designed and sustainably located new housing, and improve the standard of existing housing, especially to provide for young people, families and older people

- a. Will it deliver housing in sustainable locations with access to a range local services and facilities within easy walking and cycling distance?
- b. Will it provide good quality and safe connections to cycle and walking networks?

SA Objective 7 - Encourage sustainable travel. Provide development which reduces reliance on private vehicles, maximising access to public transport and active travel modes

- a. Will it reduce the distance people need to travel to work or to access services and facilities and will it prioritise development on well-located sites, especially the town centre?
- b. Will it provide access to a range of employment, education, health service and leisure opportunities via a frequent public transport service?

SA Objective 8 - Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the Borough's resilience to climate change

- a. Will it reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (and other sources of air pollution including fumes and smoke), including by encouraging energy efficiency?
- b. Will it increase renewable energy generation?
- c. Will it ensure climate adapted design and resilient infrastructure?
- d. Will it include a sustainable approach to water management?
- e. Will it facilitate the use of low carbon fuelled vehicles?

SA Objective 9 - Make the most efficient use of land and resources

- a. Will it reduce contaminated sites and increase remediation?
- b. Will it maximise the use of brownfield land and minimising the loss of greenfield land to development?
- c. Will it lead to the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land?
- d. Will it increase the prevention, re-use, recovery and recycling of waste?

SA Objective 11 - Avoid and reduce flood risk from all sources including fluvial, surface water and sewer flooding

- a. Will it increase flood risk elsewhere?
- b. Will it include/encourage integrated drainage and rainwater harvesting?
- c. Will it increase the use of SUDS?
- d. Does it follow the sequential approach to avoiding higher flood risk areas?
- e. Does it consider updated climate change allowances?

SA Objective 12 - Protect and enhance air and water quality and make efficient use of water

SA Objective 14 - Protect and enhance green infrastructure of all types

- a. Will it protect existing and / or enhance / create good quality green infrastructure?
 - b. Will it promote increased access to green infrastructure?
- 3.8 The assessment of policy options, strategic development options and proposed allocations against these objectives to determine their overall sustainability and subsequent use of these conclusions to inform the selection of the preferred strategy, policies and allocations clearly demonstrates that the Council has proactively sought to ensure that the future development and use of land in the Borough proposed within the Proposed Submission Local Plan contributes towards the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. This has also been balanced against the other economic, environmental and social matters that the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) requires Local Plans to account for and address.
- 3.9 The Sustainability Appraisal in summary concluded that none of the selected policy options or sites would have a significant negative impact upon Objective 8 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the Borough's resilience to climate change.
- 3.10 In addition to the Sustainability Appraisal outcomes proposed housing allocations were also selected through the use of further criteria including:
- Directing development to within the urban area, as urban extensions and to the service villages, in accordance with the locational strategy;
 - Selecting sites in sustainable locations with good access to public transport, services, shops, employment locations and community facilities;
 - Including brownfield sites where possible, taking into account site constraints and economic viability;
 - Avoiding areas which have significant physical constraints and avoiding environmentally sensitive locations;
- 3.11 The application of these criterion has ensured that sites proposed for allocation contribute to addressing, mitigating and adapting to climate change by being located in the most sustainable locations with good access to the full range of services, which in turn minimises travel and enables/encourages the use of sustainable forms of travel assisting in reducing emissions from less sustainable forms of travel. The application of this criterion has also ensured that sites in environmentally sensitive or at high risk of flooding and therefore development can be adaptable to climate change.

4.0 Proposed Policies

4.1 The Proposed Submission Local Plan has also been prepared to include a range of proposed policies, which through their implementation at the application stage will enable the Council to ensure development mitigates and is adaptable to climate change. The following list is not exhaustive but does demonstrate that this runs throughout the Local Plan and policies of relevance include:

- **Policy SH1 Settlement Hierarchy** – Seeks to focus future development at the most sustainable and most accessible location to services and transport in and adjoining the Darlington Urban Area which will minimise the need for less sustainable forms of travel and journey times. It also restricts development in the rural villages and countryside which are the least sustainable locations for development
- **Policy DC1 Sustainable Design Principles and Climate Change** – Requires good design to help reduce carbon emissions and increase the resilience of development to the effects of climate change. This includes:
 - Criterion (b) which requires applicants to demonstrate the layout, orientation and design of buildings helps to reduce the need for energy consumption and also demonstrate how buildings have been made energy efficient and measures have been implemented to reduce carbon emissions from development.
 - Criterion (c) encourages the incorporation of energy efficiency measures and low carbon technologies where this does not harm the significance of a heritage asset.
 - Criterion (d) requires non-residential buildings of 1,000sqm floorspace or more to meet BREEAM ‘very good’ standard
- **Policy DC2 Flood Risk and Water Management** – seeks to focus new development in areas of low flood risk (flood zone 1) in accordance with the sequential approach in national policy. It also expects all development to mitigate and adapt to climate change by being designed to ensure a range of criteria is achieved including:
 - a. Safe from flooding for its lifetime;
 - b. Flood risk is not increased elsewhere and will, where possible, reduce flood risk overall;
 - c. Opportunities are taken to mitigate flood risk elsewhere;
 - d. Full separation of foul and surface water flows;
 - e. Sustainable Drainage Systems are prioritised; and
 - f. Opportunities for rainwater harvesting are utilised

- **Policy DC3 Health and Wellbeing** – Criterion (d) seeks to ensure new developments are easily accessible on foot or by bicycle and are designed to promote active travel and physical activity through the arrangement of buildings and uses and access to open space and landscaping. It also seeks within criterion (e) to promote improvements and enhance accessibility to the Borough's green spaces and green infrastructure corridors.
- **Policy E4 Economic Development in the Open Countryside** – Part C criterion (b) requires proposals for tourist accommodation in areas susceptible to flooding to provide a specific Flood Risk warning and Evacuation Plan.
- **Policy TC6 Town Centre Fringe** – Criterion (a) requires development in the Town Centre Fringe area to manage flood risk along the whole of the river corridor that incorporates enhanced river habitat and green infrastructure within the River Skerne Green Infrastructure Corridor. Criterion (d) requires development in the Town Centre Fringe to provide improvements in connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport in to and through the area to allow access to jobs, leisure and business opportunities
- **Policy ENV4 Green and Blue Infrastructure** – expects developments to protect and improve green and blue infrastructure which includes it biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- **Policy ENV7 Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Development** – requires development proposals to ensure that sites and features of biodiversity and geodiversity importance are protected. Biodiversity is required to be conserved and enhanced with a net gain in biodiversity achieved and impact on priority and protected habitats and species avoided or mitigated
- **Policy IN1 Delivering a Sustainable Transport Network** – Focuses on the provision of infrastructure improvements to encourage greater use of sustainable modes of transport leading to less reliance on single occupancy vehicle journeys. Criterion (a) establishes a range of priorities including protecting existing footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways; supporting development of strategic priority routes; requiring development to provide permeability, connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists and cycle storage; improve walking and cycling connections across busy transport corridors which act as barriers; protect and enhance public rights of way; support the creation of a walking and cycling route along the Stockton and Darlington Railway line; and; create routes to allow residents in outlying villages to access Darlington by bicycle and foot. Policy IN1 also seeks to ensure high quality bus and rail links along with high quality interchange facilities to encourage use.

- **Policy IN2 Improving Access and Accessibility** – expects development to promote accessibility and permeability by creating places that are well connected with each other and existing transport networks and should prioritise the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, bus and rail users to reduce the need to travel by private vehicle and reduce the number and length of car trips to local amenities. A range of further criteria require all new neighbourhoods to be permeable and provide easily accessible and safe walking and cycling routes to services and facilities. It also requires access to the existing Brough-wide cycling and walking network and public transport route, cycle storage and sets out that contribution will be sought for sustainable travel measures.
- **Policy IN4 Parking Provision including Electric Vehicle Charging** – requires every new residential property which has a garage or dedicated marked out residential car park space to include an electrical socket suitable for charging electric vehicles. It also requires non-residential development over 50 spaces to provide at least 1 double electric vehicle charging point (2 spaces) for every 50 spaces provided.
- **Policy IN9 Renewable Energy Infrastructure** – This policy seeks to support renewable and low carbon energy development in appropriate locations and establishes specific criteria in relation to wind, solar and hydro power. It also requires developments of over 300 homes to be enabled for district heating energy connection where feasible and viable.

5.0 Summary

- 5.1 Overall this topic paper has set out how the Proposed Submission Darlington Local Plan (2016 - 2036) policies have been prepared and are designed to secure that the development and use of land in the Borough contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change as required by section 19(1A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004).
- 5.2 It also demonstrates that as required by paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2019) that the Local Plan takes a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change through the implementation of a range of policies and that the plan seeks to help shape places in a way that contributes to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimises vulnerability and improves resilience as required by paragraph 148 of the NPPF (2019).