

Extracts from the Darlington Proposed Submission Local Plan 2016-2036

Aims, objectives and strategic economic and transport context;

Policy IN1 Delivery A Sustainable Transport Network; and

Employment Allocation Policy no. 368, Central Park South

1 INTRODUCTION

1.4.2 One Darlington: Perfectly Placed (2014) - Key Outcomes sought

We will improve quality of life for all and reduce inequality by ensuring we have:

- Children with the best start in life
- More businesses and more jobs
- A safe and caring community
- More people caring for our environment More people active and involved
- Enough support for people when needed
- More people healthy and independent
- A place designed to thrive

1.4.3 The Local Plan identifies the Town Centre and the Town Centre Fringe as locations for regeneration in the Borough. The same locations, along with Greater Faverdale, Central Park, Ingenium Parc and Symmetry Park / Link 66 are also identified as strategic locations for employment development. New housing will be focused on the main urban area, but significant additional land is also needed at the North West Urban Fringe and Eastern Urban Fringe. Together these factors have been identified by the Council as Economic Growth Zones (Central, North Western and Eastern) and are aligned with the ambitions and actions supporting the local economic strategy.

2 VISIONS, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Local Plan Vision

2.1.1 The Vision for the Local Plan, set out below, reflects comments made during the Strategic Issues and Scoping consultation process and sets out what the Plan is seeking to achieve.

'In 2036, Darlington Borough will have maintained its identity as a cohesive historic market town situated amongst countryside and villages, whilst developing its reputation for ingenuity and its status as an economic driver in the Tees Valley. Its coherent community, natural and historic environment will be enhanced and continue to be cherished protected and celebrated. The opportunities available in Darlington and its links with other centres will make the Borough an attractive place for both residential and commercial investment, with the Borough's needs for housing, jobs and other development being met, supported by new and improved built and green infrastructure and community facilities. Together with excellent

national and regional connectivity and accessibility, these characteristics will mean Darlington continues to thrive and be a great place to live, work and invest.'

2.1.2 The following Aims and Objectives will provide the link between the Vision and the spatial strategy. They represent a translation of the Vision into specific themes and what this will mean for place making in the Darlington context if it is to be successful.

Specific Aims and Objectives

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3. A Well Connected Borough – to capitalise on Darlington’s excellent existing connections to the national strategic transport network and seek improvements to regional connectivity across the Borough. New development that supports delivery of key infrastructure and a sustainable pattern for growth will be supported.

In order to deliver this Aim we have the following Objectives:

1. Ensure that new development is in places where it will be reasonably accessible by public transport, cycling and walking.
2. Maintain and improve transport links between communities within the Borough and further afield.
3. Support development that enhances regionally and nationally important transport links including those offered by Darlington Station, Teesside International Airport, Teesport and the Strategic Road Network.
4. To improve the local highway network by managing out strategic highway demands.
5. Delivery of communication infrastructure, including broadband, to enhance business and social interaction.

4. Create Cohesive, Proud & Healthy Communities – create and support cohesive communities through good place-making to achieve lively, well located and distinctive places with an increased sense of civic pride.

To achieve this Aim, our Objectives are;

- a. Protect, maintain and enhance Darlington's historic environment and identity as a historic market town, set amongst countryside and surrounding villages with strong links to Railway, Quaker and Industrial heritage.
- b. Maintain a vibrant, attractive and safe market town centre that embraces its historic character whilst functioning as a modern centre offering retail, culture, leisure, tourism and employment opportunities.
- c.

TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE 10

10.0.1 The Local Plan seeks to improve connectivity, minimise the distance and length of the journey, and make best use of existing public transport and the highways network while delivering sustainable transport choices. The majority of new residential, commercial and employment development is

therefore guided to the main towns and larger villages and sustainable methods of transport will be prioritised.

10.0.2 Infrastructure can be physical (e.g. transport, utilities), community and social (e.g. education, health) and environmental (e.g. parks and green spaces). Environmental infrastructure is dealt with in the 'Environment' section of the plan. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan accompanies the Local Plan and sets out the types and levels of infrastructure required to accommodate the growth proposed.

10.0.3 If infrastructure is not delivered alongside new development, it can put pressure on existing facilities that may not have the ability or capacity to cope with the additional demand.

10.0.4 The provision of infrastructure is achieved by a wide range of organisations. The Local Plan, in conjunction with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, will play a key role in securing public and private sector involvement in infrastructure delivery.

10.0.5 The local plan objectives relating to transport and infrastructure are to:

Ensure that new development is in places where it will be reasonably accessible by public transport, cycling and walking.

Maintain and improve transport links between communities within the Borough and further afield.

Support development that enhances regionally and nationally important transport links including those offered by Darlington Station, Teesside International Airport, Teesport and the Strategic Road Network.

Improve the local highway network by managing out strategic highway demands.

Deliver communication infrastructure, including broadband, to enhance business and social interaction.

Facilitate the delivery of strategic infrastructure that supports economic growth, including the supply of appropriate housing.

Secure provision of necessary infrastructure to support growth including improvements to existing services.

Ensure residents have reasonable access to education facilities within the Borough and where necessary developers should contribute to the provision of education facilities in sustainable locations.

Create connected neighbourhoods, with local social infrastructure and inclusive public spaces that enable people of all ages and abilities from all backgrounds to develop strong communities.

Delivering a Sustainable Transport Network

10.1.1 It is vital that the Borough is accessible by a choice of transport modes and that improvements to the transport infrastructure and services encourage sustainable travel. This is important to unlock the economic growth opportunities within the Borough, and to connect to neighbouring regional centres and strategic national and international gateways such as Teesside International Airport, Teesport and the East Coast Mainline. Owing to its location and existing infrastructure, Darlington Borough also has a key role to play in delivering the wider vision for sustainable transport across the Tees Valley and beyond. The transport and travel needs of those with specific requirements (such as disabled and elderly people, parents with small children and wheelchair users) is also integral to this agenda.

Policy IN 1

Delivering a Sustainable Transport Network (Strategic Policy)

The Council is committed to delivering an efficient transport system with a focus on the provision of infrastructure improvements, to encourage greater use of sustainable modes, leading to less reliance on single occupancy vehicle journeys. We will work with partners and developers to make the best use of and improve existing transport infrastructure, where appropriate, using developer contributions to manage the impact of development on the transport network.

To achieve this, the following priorities and actions have been identified:

A) For cycling, walking and other sustainable transport:

- i. Protecting existing footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways from development which would impair their functioning for recreation or as alternatives to the private car for accessing employment opportunities, shops and other community facilities;
- ii. Supporting the development of the 'Strategic' priority corridors identified within the Tees Valley Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and 'Local Green Corridors' identified in the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy and safeguarding their routes from development which would impair their functioning for recreation or as routes for pedestrians and cyclists to access employment opportunities, schools, shops and other community facilities;
- iii. All new developments will provide permeability and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists to make walking and cycling the first choice for short journeys, including cycle parking provision at new commercial developments, and residential developments should give consideration as to where bicycles will be stored;
- iv. Improving local connections across busy transport corridors which act as a barrier to local access. This will include working with Highways England and Network Rail to ensure the permeability of the A66 and rail networks respectively;
- v. Protecting and enhancing public rights of way as set out in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, 'Local Green Corridors' identified in the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy and links to long distance routepaths such as the Teesdale Way and NCN 14;
- vi. Identification and creation of a route that mirrors the original Stockton and Darlington Railway line as close as practicable in advance of the 2025 bicentenary (See also Policy ENV 2);
- vii. Support the creation of routes that allow residents in outlying villages to access Darlington, particularly by bicycle.

B) For rail-based transport network:

- i. **Improving inter and sub-regional links to neighbouring centres by ensuring that the Borough is served by high quality rail and bus links;**
- ii. **Improving connectivity between other forms of sustainable travel and the rail network mainly by providing improved interchange facilities;**

Specific priorities for the rail network:

iii. Supporting the improvement of Darlington Station. Informed by a masterplan, work will be undertaken to improve interchange facilities and improvements to the mainline, local and inter-regional routes, potential high speed rail services and sustainable access to the station including bus, walking and cycling.

[Emphasis added]

Regional and Local Context

Transport for the North

10.2.1 Transport for the North (TfN) became the first Sub-National Transport Body in April 2018. Work is ongoing on developing a pan-northern Strategic Transport Plan which sets out the case for strategic transport infrastructure investment through to 2050. Their vision is of a thriving North of England, where modern transport connections drive economic growth and support an excellent quality of life.

10.2.2 The 30 year plan has been developed which outlines how transport connections across the North of England need to be transformed over the short, medium and long term to drive sustainable economic growth by 2050.

10.2.3 As part of developing the evidence base for the Strategic Transport Plan, the Integrated Rail and Major Roads Reports identified a series of connectivity priorities to support economic growth in the North.

10.2.4 Seven corridors are identified across different modes (and multi modes) of transport, three of which are relevant to the Tees Valley and Darlington Borough.

1. Connecting the Energy Coasts (Multi-Modal) - This corridor seeks to enhance the strategic connectivity, for people and goods, between the advanced manufacturing and energy generation research centres and assets. This is crucial to support the transformational growth potential within this economic area. For Darlington improvements to the East-West linkages for both road and rail are key considerations relating to this corridor.
2. East Coast to Scotland (Rail) - Strengthening rail connectivity and capacity along the East Coast Main Line and other key parallel rail lines, such as the Durham Coast Line, to provide enhanced strategic and local connectivity in the North East, Tees Valley, East Riding and North Yorkshire. The strategy identifies that investment is required at rail stations, including Darlington, to increase capacity, promote economic growth, and make the most of the opportunities provided by high speed rail services.
3. Yorkshire to Scotland (Road) - This road corridor looks to strengthen and complement the East Coast Road Corridor to Scotland and examines the transformational requirements to better connect the economic centres (including the Tees Valley) in this corridor beyond the current Road Investment Strategy commitments.

10.2.5 Darlington is the gateway to the Tees Valley, and contains many key elements of the sub-regional transport network. Darlington is the point of arrival for those arriving by road via the A1(M) and A66, by air via Teesside International Airport and by rail from Darlington Station on the East Coast Main Line. Figure 10.1 below shows the key features of the sub-regional transport network.

10.2.6 The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) was created in April 2016 to drive economic growth and job creation. The five Tees Valley authorities work closely with the business community and other partners to make local decisions to support the growth of our economy. Under the devolution deal with the government TVCA have taken on new responsibilities previously held by central government to enable investment decisions to be made locally based on the priorities of communities and businesses in the Tees Valley.

10.2.7 The Tees Valley Combined Authorities' Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)[63] identifies one of the key objectives to unlock future growth as being 'to be better connected'. It is identified within the document that there is a need to improve road and rail connectivity for the region, in order to ensure Tees Valley firms can access UK and European supply chains, particularly in the Northern Powerhouse and that Tees Valley residents can benefit more fully from emerging job opportunities. Four priorities for delivering new transport infrastructure across the Tees Valley are also identified within the SEP over the next 10 years. [

63] Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan: The Industrial Strategy for Tees Valley 2016-2026, TVCA.

10.2.8 Two of these priorities directly relate to Darlington transport infrastructure:

1. Implementation of the Darlington Station Improvement Project, which encompasses new platforms at Darlington rail station as part of a commercial redevelopment, delivering a 21st century rail gateway ready for high speed rail services;
2. Improved east-west road connectivity to provide a high quality, resilient corridor along the A66 from the A1(M) to the international gateway at Teesport.

10.2.9 In addition, the devolution deal recognises Tees Valley's ambitions to continue to strengthen the bus network and the relationship and influence it has with local bus operators. The options to achieve this have now been formalised in legislation in the Local Bus Services Act.

Figure 10.1 Key features of the sub-regional transport network



10.2.10 A Strategic Transport Plan has also been prepared by the TVCA to support the Strategic Economic Plan, and sets out how we will improve and invest in the transport network to make this vision a reality. It is aimed at people living and working in the Tees Valley, as well as business owners, developers, Government, partner organisations and investors. The Strategic Transport Plan was adopted in January 2020.

10.2.11 In preparing the Strategic Transport Plan, a framework was developed based upon five themes, which are closely linked together and will all require improvement in order to meet the overall transport vision of Tees Valley. The five key themes are:

1. National Rail;
2. Major Roads;
3. Connecting Centres;
4. Supporting Economic Growth;
5. Local Journeys.

10.2.12 To support the Strategic Transport Plan itself, a series of supporting documents have been prepared which go into more detail on the current and future issues, and the interventions needed, across the five themes listed above.

Darlington Borough

10.2.13 The council's Local Transport Plan sets out the short, medium and long term interventions required to improve the local transport network to meet the Council's and wider community objectives for the economy, carbon reduction, health and social inclusion. LTP3⁽⁶⁵⁾ seeks to maintain and improve all aspects of the local transport system within tight financial constraints, focusing on maintaining the transport network for all types of travel and managing it to improve reliability and performance.

10.2.14 The Local Transport Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy both acknowledge that the existing capacity of the road network is a major issue for the Borough in delivering growth over the plan period. Some locations already experience traffic congestion during peak periods and this is likely to increase if no interventions are made. By focusing new development in parts of the Borough which have good access to existing or planned public transport provision, the spatial strategy of the Local Plan is designed to keep the impact of new development on the transport network to a minimum, but some supporting highway improvements will still be needed to enable regeneration plans to be delivered.

10.2.15 A new transport Local Implementation Plan for Darlington will be published for consultation upon adoption of the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan. This will integrate the strategic vision for the Tees Valley and local policies to meet the transport and travel needs of those working, living and visiting Darlington Borough.

Rail Network

10.4.1 Darlington is the main interchange hub in the Tees Valley for national and inter-regional rail connections, making it a 'gateway' for rail journeys into and out of the Tees Valley. In 2016/17 over 2.2 million passengers used Darlington station.

10.4.2 However, in comparison to its excellent north-south connectivity, Darlington is relatively inaccessible from other key centres within the Tees Valley and from nearby employment areas of South Durham via the Bishop Line. Journey times to Darlington from Middlesbrough and Stockton (as adjacent key centres) are improving, taking between 26-28 minutes which is comparable with car travel, however there are currently no direct train services from Stockton or Hartlepool to Darlington. The service is currently operated every 30 minutes with aspirations to a 15 minute frequency through to Saltburn. This relatively poor east-west connectivity by rail within the Tees Valley impacts on the external connectivity of the Tees Valley as a whole, reducing the attractiveness of the excellent north-south links from Darlington to potential users from the rest of the Tees Valley. However, capacity issues at Darlington are currently a constraint to enhancing these local rail links. In addition Darlington Station has been identified as one of the stations that will need to be upgraded as necessary to accommodate HS2 services.

10.4.3 Darlington to Bishop Auckland by train is around a 27 minute journey but is only operated on an hourly service. There are ambitions to increase this to a half hourly service.

10.4.4 Given the predicted increase in car ownership in the Tees Valley and the advantage of car journey times, increased trips are forecast on the road network. Therefore, improvements to local as well as long distance rail services are sought by 2036.

10.4.5 Ensuring that rail freight can move easily to and from Teesport will be an important issue during the Local Plan period, for example, the operation of the Hitachi train manufacturing at Newton Aycliffe is identified as being one of the key employment opportunities in the North East and it is intended that components and other supplies required by the plant are transported by rail as often as possible. For the site to be well served by rail from Teesport, improvements and upgrades to Darlington Station are required. Teesport is by some margin the most important port in the North East and the fifth largest in the UK, and handled 35 million tonnes of cargo in 2015.

Creating a more efficient rail network

10.4.6 The Council is working with TVCA and other local authorities along the route of the East Coast Main Line (ECML) to make the case to Government and the rail industry for further investment in the ECML. Investment is seen as essential to improve journey times, service reliability, service frequency and the line capacity that is needed to support the movement of people and freight envisaged for

Darlington and the Tees Valley, as set out in Darlington's Economic Strategy and the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan. The local authorities are keen to have a strong partnership with the rail industry, to create a vision for, and the strategic development of, the ECML and connecting services and routes, both for passengers and freight. Improvements that may be brought forward within the Plan period are:

- A. A revised platform layout and better passenger facilities at Darlington Station, either for local train services only or for ECML/future high speed rail services and local train services;
- B. Modifications to rail infrastructure to permit larger shipping containers to be moved on freight trains, thus increasing the competitiveness of local businesses including Teesport;
- C. Improving sustainable travel options to stations, including:
 - Plan for the improvement of Darlington Station - first phase being the construction of Parkgate Footbridge completed in 2018;
 - Public realm Improvements from town centre to Darlington Station.
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B HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATION STATEMENTS

Site 368 - Central Park South (Employment)

The 9.84 hectare Central Park South site is a strategic employment site close to Darlington's town centre and Bank Top Station. The site is located north of Yarm Road and encompasses John Williams Boulevard South. The site is the only employment area classified as a Tees Valley Enterprise Zone in Darlington and is already the location for a number of buildings key to economic growth in the town such as Business Central, the Advanced Biologics Manufacturing Centre and the National Horizon Centre.

Issues and requirements

1. Comply with the revised Masterplan for Central Park South (2016), providing plots for B1 and B2 land uses.
2. Ensure that a high quality of design is delivered that meets the aspirations of the Central Park Enterprise Zone.
3. Provide a suitable landscape buffer to East Coast Mainline and residential areas to the East and North of the site.
4. Enhance connectivity to Bank Top Station and Teesside University and College.