

Darlington
Local Development
Framework
Core Strategy:
Preferred Options



Summary

Darlington Borough Council October 2008



Introduction

The Council must prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF) to replace its adopted Local Plan. The LDF will consist of several documents, and the principal document will be the Core Strategy. It will help bring about the land uses and development needed to deliver the Borough's sustainable community strategy (SCS), 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed'.

The Core Strategy sets out the overarching and key planning policies guiding the use and development of land over the next 15 years or so. This Core Strategy Preferred Options document sets out the Council's draft policies, on which comments are now invited.

The findings of sustainability appraisal and the comments received in response to consultations on the Issues and Options earlier this year have been taken into account in preparing this document.

The latest national, regional, sub-regional and local planning and other policy documents and policies have also been considered.

Comments on this document will inform the preparation of the Core Strategy for submission to Government for independent examination. The recommendations arising from that examination will then be reflected in the final version of the Core Strategy that the Council adopts, likely to be during 2010.

What the Document Contains

The LDF Core Strategy includes a spatial vision and strategic objectives, a series of policies, including overarching policies and theme-based policies, a key diagram that illustrates where policies will apply and a delivery plan.

Responses to the consultation can be made using the comments form provided. Copies of these are available in the local libraries, or can be downloaded from the Council's website. Alternatively, you can use the on-line reply facility at www.darlington.gov.uk.

Completed forms and any other comments should be sent to the Council's Strategy Manager.

By post: Strategy Manager
Chief Executive's Department
(Regeneration)
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Town Hall
Darlington
DL1 5QT

By e-mail: planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk

THE CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF COMMENTS IS 5PM, FRIDAY 5TH DECEMBER 2008.

For more information on the LDF Core Strategy and how to make comments on it, please consult the Council's website, www.darlington.gov.uk/planningpolicy

Achieving a more Sustainable Community

Darlington's Sub-regional Role and Locational Strategy

Darlington needs to accommodate further economic and housing growth to fulfil the quality of life aspirations of local people and to contribute towards meeting national and regional growth targets. However, the historic environments, greenspaces and countryside are what give Darlington its character, and any development that is required must be

planned so that it is as sustainably located as possible and conserves this character.

Draft Policy CS1 sets out the key strategic locations where new development and regeneration will take place. They are the town centre, Town Centre Fringe, Central Park, Urban periphery north-west, Urban periphery east and the Durham Tees Valley Airport area. The policy also limits development in the Borough's villages to that supporting the vitality and viability of the village, its services



or the rural economy. Outside development limits, only development that meets identified rural needs or development in the strategic locations identified above will be permitted.

Promoting High Quality, Sustainable Design

Good design which improves the quality of the built environment and its public spaces will enhance quality of life, help to create a sense of place and make the Borough more attractive. Sustainability is a key aspect of good design and in Darlington, safeguarding the Borough's unique identity and distinctiveness, improving accessibility and promoting community safety are also important.

Draft policy CS2 sets out nine criteria against which all new development will be considered, including a requirement for new development layouts to meet nationally recognised Code For Sustainable Homes ratings (residential) and 'BREEAM' (non residential) ratings.

Paying for Development Infrastructure

New development can place additional demands on the physical, social and environmental infrastructure of the Borough, and contributions

can be sought from developers to mitigate this impact. Contributions are usually secured through planning obligations, and the level of contribution will depend on the scale of the proposed development, the capacity of existing infrastructure and the impact of the development on it.

Draft policy CS3 sets out the parameters for seeking contributions from developers through planning obligations, and the range of matters for which contributions could be sought, e.g. affordable housing, renewable energy generating provision and skills training. For major developments, the policy also sets out the kinds of strategic infrastructure, e.g. transport, sports facilities and public art for which contributions may be sought.

Promoting Renewable Energy Generation

Increasing renewable energy generation capacity is a key way of helping to reach challenging local, regional and national targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Renewable energy developments include wind farms, biomass, and small-scale renewable energy generation on individual developments, such as solar panels, ground source heat pumps and small wind turbines. National policy indicates that significant weight should be given to the wider environmental and economic benefits of renewable energy generation.

Draft policy CS4 sets out the criteria against which commercial scale renewable energy schemes will be considered, including environmental and local amenity considerations, and impact on operation of air traffic and radar systems. It also highlights the need for comprehensive assessment of individual and cumulative impact.

The area of least constraint in terms of landscape impact is the north-eastern corner of the Borough.

Prosperous Darlington

Supporting the Local Economy

Darlington has a key role in sustaining economic growth in the north east over the next 15 years or so. Sites that are attractive to a range of business and industrial uses will need to be available to attract new businesses and allow existing ones to grow.

The draft policy (CS5) aims to provide a continuous supply of employment land to meet existing and future requirements. This amounts to 235ha of additional land in the period to 2021 and a further 69ha to 2026, focussed on seven broad locations, such as Central Park, Town Centre Fringe and the urban periphery east. Additional land will be provided at Faverdale and Heighington Lane as key employment locations, and existing viable employment sites will be protected.

Expanding Tourism, Leisure and Cultural Provision

Good quality leisure and cultural venues like the Civic Theatre and the Borough's several golf courses are attractive to existing residents, potential investors and tourists alike.

The draft policy (CS6) seeks to retain, improve and expand the Borough's tourism, leisure and cultural facilities, taking advantage of the Borough's location as a gateway to the north east, and its green spaces, railway heritage and historic built environment. The area near the A68/A1(M) interchange is identified as a strategic tourism opportunity, whilst in local neighbourhoods, encouragement will be given to making school facilities and playing fields more accessible for community cultural and leisure use.

A Vibrant Town Centre and Accessible Local Services

The Town Centre

Darlington town centre is the focus of shopping, service, civic, leisure and cultural provision in the Borough and is its historic heart.



A major leisure and retail scheme planned at Commercial Street is intended to maintain the strong sub-regional role of the town centre, and the development of the Feethams/Beaumont Street area will add to the centre's vitality and viability.

The draft policy (CS7) seeks to safeguard the town centre's functions and focus further town centre uses there. The development of the Commercial Street area is given priority over the Feethams/Beaumont Street area, with the Town Centre Fringe only intended to accommodate town centre uses which cannot be accommodated within the town centre.

Further Retail Provision

There is enough food shopping provision to meet needs for several years to come, but there are geographical gaps in provision. For non-food shopping, more floorspace is

needed in the town centre in the short-medium term to help the centre compete with other retail locations. Draft policy (CS8) indicates that additional non-food and food shopping floorspace will be needed beyond 2016, the focus for non-food shopping floorspace being the town centre and food shopping floorspace being where it will be most accessible to residents and visitors.

District and Local Centres and Freestanding Local Facilities

The draft policy (CS9) sets out the hierarchy of centres in Darlington; the town centre is a sub-regional centre, Cockerton and North Road are

district centres, and local centres are identified at Mowden, Neasham Road, Whinfield, Yarm Road, West Park and Middleton St. George; the last two are new. The district and local centres provide food shopping and meet other day to day needs, and will be protected and enhanced to a degree that is appropriate to the centre and its accessibility by transport modes other than the car.

Smaller clusters of shops and individual shops that meet day to day needs will be protected, if they are accessible to local residents.

Quality Housing for all

New Housing

New housing is needed to accommodate the predicted increase in households associated with economic growth and declining household size. Some new housing will also be needed to replace obsolete properties.

The draft policy (CS10) plans for about 500 new houses per year until 2016 and 350-400 thereafter, with the Feethams area, the Town Centre Fringe, Central Park and the Lingfield area being key locations for new housing, as part of mixed-use schemes. The draft policy



also prioritises the use of previously developed land and the conversion of existing buildings. Average densities of 30-40 homes per hectare will be sought, with higher densities required in the most accessible places.

Housing For All

Providing housing that people can afford and properties that are suitable for older people are key challenges, whilst more larger houses are needed to meet 21st century housing aspirations.

The draft policy (CS11) aims to achieve a supply of housing that better matches evolving needs and aspirations. It requires a mix of housing on sites of 15 dwellings or more in the urban area and 5 or more dwellings in rural areas, to include affordable housing, lifetime homes, older persons and special needs housing and larger family housing.

The Existing Housing Stock

The existing housing stock is where most local housing needs and choices are met. Initiatives to reduce the number of vacant houses and improve existing houses to meet local need and demand will make the best use of this resource.

The draft policy (CS12) encourages the regeneration of existing housing areas, particularly in the Town Centre Fringe and North Road areas. Works could involve remodelling dwellings, altering estate layouts and other environmental improvements and where there is sustained low demand and obsolescence, demolition. Where works are planned, the policy indicates community engagement will take place.

Accommodating Travelling Groups

The draft policy (CS13) will retain the provision for travelling groups at Neasham Road, Honeypot Lane and other smaller sites. New sites that meet an established unmet need will have to be accessible to schools, shops and other local facilities, not adversely affect residential or landscape amenity or have a significant impact on the natural, archaeological or historic environment. This approach is consistent with national policy.

A Distinctive, Greener, Cleaner, Safer Darlington

Local Character and Distinctiveness

The distinctiveness of the Borough is an important and highly valued part of local identity, and caring and nurturing it fosters local civic pride and helps to make the Borough attractive.

Draft policy CS14 set out specific local features that contribute to the borough's distinctiveness, ranging from the central area skyline of historic buildings, green corridors, the landscape along the Tees Valley, archaeological sites and the Borough's rural villages. The policy seeks to protect and, where appropriate, enhance these features.



Biodiversity and Geodiversity

The Borough has a role to play in protecting nationally rare and declining species, e.g. water voles and black poplar trees, and contributing to the regional target of returning key biodiversity resources to viable levels by 2010. The key improvement needed is to link up existing wildlife sites and expand habitats.

Draft policy CS15 highlights the links with the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan (DBAP) and sets out four actions needed to achieve the DBAP objectives and targets.

Environment Protection

People and the environment need to be protected from the adverse effects or risks of pollution, noise and flooding. The Borough's industrial history means that contaminated land is a significant issue on some sites but the areas that are likely to be subject to flooding in the Borough are relatively limited. Air pollution, where it does occur, is mostly the result of road traffic.

Draft policy CS16 sets out the strict criteria that need to be satisfied if new development is to be permitted in an area of unacceptably high flood risk. It also sets out the controls that will be applied to ensure people are protected from unsafe, unhealthy and polluting development.

A Healthy Darlington

Green Infrastructure

Accessible and attractive open spaces are important in supporting healthy lifestyles, whilst trees and greenery can moderate temperature, reduce air pollution, absorb carbon dioxide and reduce the risk of flooding. The extensive network of green spaces is what makes the town distinctive, but continued protection and enhancement

of the network is needed to make sure we make the most of it.

The draft policy (CS17) seeks to protect and enhance the green infrastructure network and sets out the key sites and features of the network, and the criteria that would need to be satisfied to justify the loss of any part of the network. It accords with the Council's adopted Open Space Strategy.

Efficient and Effective Transport Infrastructure

Planning for more sustainable travel and travel choice

Accessibility for everyone to jobs, shops, schools, leisure facilities and other services is an important part of creating sustainable communities. Policies in the LDF complement the more detailed policies and delivery plans of the Council's Local Transport Plan 2 and Transport Strategy.

The draft policy (CS18) sets out how traffic congestion will be tackled to get the best use out of the existing road network, and the priority that will be given improving pedestrian, cycling and public transport networks.

Improving Transport Infrastructure

Transport infrastructure encompasses roads, public transport, cycling and walking networks and facilities. The Regional Spatial Strategy tasks authorities with rebalancing the transport system in favour of sustainable travel modes.

The draft policy (CS19) sets out the priorities of the Council and its partners for improving transport infrastructure in the short, medium and long term. Schemes listed include protecting and promoting urban radial routes, upgrading the capacity on the A66(T) to the east and south of the urban area and promoting the implementation of the Tees Valley Metro system using the existing rail line from Darlington to the rest of Tees Valley. Further work is to be undertaken to



identify what needs to be done to tackle congestion 'hotspots'.

Monitoring and Delivering the Core Strategy

This section of the document links the LDF with other delivery plans of the Council and its partners. It also highlights the role that planning obligations can have in contributing to the implementation of many of the policies, and explains that the LDF Annual Monitoring Report is where the performance of policies and progress on proposals will be set out. The section also contains a table setting out who will implement each policy, what resources are required and how progress in implementation will be measured.

Contact Us

If you would like any more information about the Core Strategy, the consultation events, or would like copies of the document, response form or this leaflet please contact:

Strategy Manager
Chief Executive's Department (Regeneration)
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Darlington, DL1 5QT

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E: planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk

Or view online at www.darlington.gov.uk/planningpolicy

An inclusive approach

If English is not your first language and you would like more information about this document, or if you require information in large print, Braille or on tape please contact the Policy Unit on 388017.

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BRAILLE



Darlington Borough Council October 2008



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