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# Darlington Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment

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Screening Report

for

Darlington Borough Council

January 2008



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# 1. Introduction

## Background

Darlington Borough Council (DBC) is in the process of developing their Local Development Framework. As part of this, Darlington is in the process of developing their Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008. In accordance with The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 and European Communities (1992) Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, Darlington is required to undertake Screening for Appropriate Assessment of their Core Strategy. BDP has been commissioned, in its role as planning advisor to DBC, to carry out the screening process on behalf of the council.

## Appropriate Assessment Process

Under the Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment is an assessment of the potential effects of a proposed project or plan - either a development plan document (DPD) or a supplementary planning document (SPD) - on one of more sites of international nature conservation importance. Projects and plans can only be permitted where the 'competent authority' (in this case Darlington Borough Council) is satisfied that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the relevant nature sites.

BDP's approach is based on the EU document 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC' (Oxford Brookes University, for European Commission Environment DG. European Commission Environment DG, 2001), in particular the Annex 2 assessment forms.

Stage 1 of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process is the screening of proposed plans or projects for significant effects. Assessment of the significance of effects is undertaken in relation to the designated interest features and conservation objectives of the European site. Any effect which would compromise the functioning and viability of a site and prevent it from sustaining those features in a favourable condition is judged to create a significant effect. Where no significant effects are identified then no further steps need to be taken. Where significant effects seem likely, a more detailed Appropriate Assessment of the proposed plan or project is necessary. If insufficient information is available to make a clear judgment the precautionary principle should be adopted. This process will often establish mitigation measures or alternatives, which can offset all significant adverse effects and enable the plan or project to go forward. Where this is not the case, other more stringent measures need to be considered.

## Natura 2000 sites

Natura 2000 sites are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species within the European Community. Natura 2000 sites include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU 'Wild Birds' Directive, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the EU 'Habitats Directive' and Offshore Marine Site (OMS).

Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' states that Ramsar sites should be taken to be part of the Natura 2000 network and treated accordingly (para 6, PPS9, ODPM, 2005). Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance, designated under the International Wetlands Convention, which took place at Ramsar in Iran.

In this report the term 'Natura 2000 sites' refers to Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites.

## Outline of the report contents

This report documents the Screening process to determine if Darlington's Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008 will have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. This report is structured as follows:

- a. Description of Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008
- b. Identification and description of Natura 2000 sites potentially affected by the plan
- c. Sets out the likely significance of the effects of the Core Strategy on Natura sites through the completion of Annex 2 Assessment Forms in the EU Guidance.
- d. Conclusions and Recommendations.

## 2. Description of the Plan

### Introduction

In this section of the report the Core Strategy: Issues and Options 2008 is reviewed to identify any aspects of the strategy that might influence the key environmental conditions that need to be maintained or improved in order to preserve the integrity of European sites. Indirect as well as direct impacts have been considered.

### Core Strategy Issues and Options Report

The emerging Core Strategy is the first of a number of Development Plan Documents (DPDs), which will form part of Darlington's Local Development Framework (LDF). The Core Strategy is the key document within the framework, as it sets out the strategic framework for planning policy and future development within the Borough and will therefore be used to inform the other LDF documents. It will comprise:

- A broad spatial vision of what the Borough will be like in 2026;
- Strategic objectives for the area;
- A spatial strategy;
- Core policies setting out how that vision can be achieved, through a wide range of land use and development decisions; and,
- The general direction and conditions within which the Council considers development should take place over the next 15 years or so.

It will not identify sites for development or set out detailed guidelines against which development proposals will be assessed.

### Core Strategy Objectives

The Core Strategy sets out a series of objectives which aim to promote a sustainable community for Darlington.

1. Create an environment that encourages quality of life and promotes healthy, well educated and inclusive communities whilst supporting economic vitality for Darlington;
2. Ensure continued and sustainable levels of economic growth that provides a high quality, variety of employment for residents of Darlington and the surrounding area, supports existing businesses and encourages new businesses to set up in Darlington;
3. Provide a range of decent housing, in sustainable locations ensuring an appropriate supply and mix of private and affordable housing and homes that can be adapted over a lifetime to meet the needs and support the aspirations of the people who wish to live in the Borough;
4. Enhance and promote the historic market town centre of Darlington as the hub for shopping, culture, tourism and civic administration whilst protecting and enhancing key commercial centres and accessible local commercial and community facilities for which there is, or is expected be, a continuing need;
5. Protect and enhance the separate identities and character of the town, distinctive parts within it, and the villages, and promote development that is in keeping with the size, character and function of the location;
6. Promote developments that conserve natural resources, minimise the impact of climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, help to reduce waste and minimise the risk of flooding and pollution.
7. Encourage high quality, sustainable and safe design for places and spaces, in both the private and public realm;
8. Protect and enhance the Borough's natural environment, biodiversity value and its historic heritage whilst promoting its continued evolution and growth;

9. Promote development in locations which will be accessible by various modes of travel, including sustainable transport such as public transport, walking and cycling, optimise the use of existing infrastructure, and minimise the need to travel;
10. Enhance the Borough's transport infrastructure by increasing permeability, maintaining and enhancing existing links and removing barriers;
11. Contribute to social inclusion by recognising the various needs of different sections of the community, such as the needs of various age groups, ethnic groups, genders and disabled people;
12. Provide a continuous supply of previously developed land and greenfield sites in sustainable locations, that will meet our strategic requirements for housing, employment, shopping, recreation, education and other services and minimise the loss of the countryside and agricultural land;
13. Develop an integrated and accessible open space, recreation, leisure, culture and services framework, to meet the needs of our residents and visitors;
14. Provide a framework to facilitate delivery of physical and social infrastructure to meet community and business needs.

## Core Strategy Themes

The Core Strategy Issues and Options is structured around 7 themes. They include:

- Theme 1: Achieving A More Sustainable Community
- Theme 2: Quality Housing For All
- Theme 3: Prosperous Darlington
- Theme 4: A Distinctive, Greener and Cleaner Environment
- Theme 5: A Healthy and Safe Darlington
- Theme 6: A Vibrant Town Centre and Accessible Local Shops and Facilities
- Theme 7: Efficient and Effective Transport Infrastructure

An overview of the key issues for each Core Strategy theme is presented in subsequent paragraphs. For more detailed information on the individual issues and options, reference should be made to Appendix 1.

### **THEME 1           ACHIEVING A MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY**

This theme aims to make Darlington a place where people want to live, work and visit now and in the future. Options seek to achieve this by creating a strong and diverse local economy through promoting Darlington's sub regional role and ensuring accessibility for all in a settlement hierarchy that provides sufficient land for housing and employment to meet the needs of the community. To ensure that economic growth is sustainable this theme also includes improving and protecting the local landscapes and townscapes, promoting high quality safe design, mitigating the impacts of climate change through the promotion of renewable energy generation and sustainable building design.

### **THEME 2           HOUSING FOR ALL**

This theme aims to provide the right mix of tenure, type and size of housing in sustainable locations to meet the needs of new and existing residents. This includes improving older housing stock, new housing, affordable housing and sites to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

### **THEME 3           CREATING AND SHARING PROSPERITY**

This theme aims to promote a sustainable supply and distribution of new and existing employment throughout the Borough, recognising the importance of both the urban area and countryside locations to ensure a range of employment opportunities are accessible to all.

### **THEME 4           PROVING A HIGH QUALITY ENVIRONMENT**

This theme aims to ensure that the environmental and historic distinctiveness of the Borough is protected and enhanced. This includes protecting and enhancing local heritage, biodiversity, trees and woodland and reducing flood risk and pollution.

#### **THEME 5            LIVING SAFELY AND WELL**

The options within this theme aim to improve the quality, function and value of the Borough's open spaces. Options seek to ensure that new development promotes high quality safe design, whilst protecting and enhancing the Borough's open spaces within the urban and rural areas.

#### **THEME 6            A QUALITY TOWN CENTRE, LOCAL SHOPS AND SERVICES**

This theme seeks to define the role and function of centres across the Borough, in order to establish a hierarchy of centres, with particular importance placed upon strengthening the role of the town centre. It also considers the potential for allocating new centres in order to promote and improve accessibility to services for all residents to local facilities.

#### **THEME 7            TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

This theme aims to assess whether or not land for the central section of the Cross Town Route should be safeguarded.

### **Potential types of impact**

Following consideration of the Core Strategy objectives, themes and issues and options (Appendix 1) a number of potential impacts have been identified that could affect Natura 2000 sites. These potential impacts include:

- Air quality - Change in the composition of air that disperses in the vicinity of a Natura 2000 site can damage vegetation and harm species living in these habitats.
- Water quality - Change in the composition of water that flows to Natura 2000 sites can damage vegetation and harm species living in these habitats.
- Hydrology - Changes in hydrology can result in drought or flooding of Natura sites that can damage vegetation and species living in these habitats.
- Habitat / species disturbance - Disturbance both to habitats and to species travelling to Natura 2000 sites can damage vegetation and species living in these habitats.
- Climate change - Climate change will require habitats to be mobile so they can adapt to climate change, restrictions to movement will restrict ability to adapt to climate change.

Table 2.1 identifies the elements of each theme that are likely to affect the identified impacts. This table will be used as part of the methodology to determine which Natura 2000 site should be included in the screening process. It will also be used to screen the Core Strategy for full Appropriate Assessment.

**Table 2.1 Potential Impacts of the Core Strategy on Natura 2000 sites emerging from Core Strategy Issues and Options**

Theme	Issue	Option	Impact type	Rationale
1	Issue 1: Darlington's Sub Regional Role	Sub regional centre within the City Region  Key Centre within the Tees Valley City Region	Air quality  Water quality  Hydrology  Habitat Disturbance  Climate change	A stronger sub regional role can lead to increased visitors and commuters which can lead to increased vehicle pollution that can adversely affect Natura 2000 sites.  A stronger sub regional role can lead to development that can influence quality of surface run off to rivers. This could affect the water quality of watercourses and affect Natura 2000 sites down stream.  A stronger sub regional role can lead to development that can influence quantity of surface run off to watercourses and groundwater. This could influence hydrology of Natura 2000 sites downstream.  Development projects could cause direct disturbance to Natura 2000 sites.  Development projects could restrict ability for migration of Natura 2000 sites to cope with climate change.
1	Issue 2: Planning for growth	Increased population and economic growth	Air quality  Water quality  Hydrology  Habitat Disturbance  Climate change	High growth can lead to increased visitors and commuters can lead to increased vehicle pollution that can adversely affect Natura 2000 sites.  High growth can lead to increased development that can influence quality of surface run off to rivers. This could affect the water quality of watercourses and affect Natura 2000 sites down stream.  Increased development can influence quantity of surface run off to watercourses and groundwater. This could influence hydrology of Natura 2000 sites downstream.  Development projects could cause direct disturbance to Natura 2000 sites.  Development projects could restrict ability for migration of Natura 2000 sites to cope with climate change.
1	Issue 3: Accessibility for all	Leave to transport market	Air quality	Leaving accessibility to the transport market is likely to increase travel by private vehicle, leading to increased vehicle pollution that can adversely affect Natura 2000 sites.

Theme	Issue	Option	Impact type	Rationale
1	Issue 6: Renewable energy generation	Biomass	Air quality	Biomass generators emissions will affect air quality. Poor air quality could adversely affect Natura 2000 sites.
		Wind farms	Species disturbance	Turning blades on wind turbines can strike bats and birds travelling to and from Natura 2000 sites.
2	Issue 9: Sustainable housing provision	Meeting wider housing needs/ market led	Water quality	Housing development can influence quality of surface run off. This could affect the water quality of watercourses and affect Natura 2000 sites down stream.
			Hydrology	Housing development can influence quantity of surface run off to watercourses and groundwater. This could influence hydrology of Natura 2000 sites downstream.
			Habitat Disturbance	Development projects could cause direct disturbance to Natura 2000 sites.
			Climate change	Development projects could restrict ability for migration of Natura 2000 sites to cope with climate change.
3	Issue 14: Sustainable employment provision	Maintain high employment growth	Air quality	High employment growth can increase visitors and commuters that can lead to increased vehicle pollution that can adversely affect Natura 2000 sites.
			Water quality	High employment growth can lead to development that can influence quality of surface run off. This could affect the water quality of watercourses and affect Natura 2000 sites down stream.
			Hydrology	High employment growth can lead to development that can influence quantity of surface run off to watercourses and groundwater. This could influence hydrology of Natura 2000 sites downstream.
			Habitat Disturbance	Development projects could cause direct disturbance to Natura 2000 sites.
			Climate change	Development projects could restrict ability for migration of Natura 2000 sites to cope with climate change.

Theme	Issue	Option	Impact type	Rationale
3	Issue 17: Darlington's Tourism Offer	Gateway to the North East  Gateway to the Tees Valley City Region  Darlington as a Rural City	Air quality	Increased visitors can lead to increased vehicle pollution that can adversely affect Natura 2000 sites.
7	Issue 33: Transport infrastructure	Continue safeguarding land for central section of the Cross Town Route	Air quality  Habitat Disturbance  Climate change	Increase road capacity could increase level of vehicle usage and associated emissions.  Development projects could cause direct disturbance to Natura 2000 sites.  Development projects could restrict ability for migration of Natura 2000 sites to cope with climate change.

### 3. Identification and description of Natura 2000 sites

#### Introduction

When assessing the impact of a plan on Natura 2000 sites it is important to consider the impact on Natura 2000 sites not only within the area the plan is to be implemented, but also Natura 2000 sites outside of the plan boundary that still could be affected by the plan. There is no defined distance within which Natura 2000 sites could be affected by a plan, and potentially a plan could impact upon a site a significant distance away from the plan area. Consequently the catchment area within which Natura 2000 sites could be affected by the plan should be considered on a case by case basis.

#### Methodology

A methodology has been developed to determine which Natura 2000 sites should be included for screening for Appropriate Assessment. It will assess the criteria listed below:

1. Identify the likelihood for impacts to arise from the Core Strategy that could have an impact on a Natura 2000 site by analysing the contents of the plan. This is given in Table 2.1 in the previous section of this report.
2. Identify the likelihood for impacts of the plan to travel by air, including dust, emissions and noise, from impact sources to a Natura 2000 site.
3. Identify the likelihood for impacts of the plan to travel from impact source by pathways such as roads and waterways to a Natura 2000 site.
4. The likelihood for species to be impacted as members of the species travel across Darlington Borough to Natura sites as part of their migration or foraging patterns.

All of the above will be considered to determine if activity in the Borough related to the Core Strategy could potentially affect Natura 2000 sites. Sites identified through this process will be considered in the screening assessment to determine if the Core Strategy requires full Appropriate Assessment.

#### Impact Type

Type of impacts that could emerge from the Core Strategy are as follows:

- Air quality
- Water quality
- Hydrology
- Species / habitat disturbance
- Climate change

Further details are given in Table 2.1 earlier in this report.

#### Distance

Figure 3.1 shows the location of Natura sites within Darlington Borough and within 25km (at 5km intervals) of the Borough boundary. It shows there are no sites within the Borough, no sites within 5km and only one site within 10km of the Borough. Consequently it is very unlikely that noise and dust pollution originating in the Borough as a consequence of the Core Strategy would impact a Natura 2000 site. Despite the long distance between the Borough and the Natura 2000 sites, there is some potential for impacts by transportation of gas emissions by the prevailing north westerly wind. Consequently Natura 2000 sites to the north west of the Borough will be included in screening

process. This includes Thrislington SAC, Castle Eden Dene SAC, Durham Coast SAC and Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/Ramsar in Hartlepool district and in Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland districts.

## Rivers

Figure 3.2 shows the rivers that flow from Darlington Borough. It shows that a number of rivers flow through Natura 2000 sites or to another river that flows through Natura 2000 sites. Natura 2000 sites that are linked to the Borough by river include Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay from Darlington Borough including Billingham Beck, Lustrum Beck and River Tees. Activities proposed by the Core Strategy within or on the banks of these rivers could impact upon this site in terms of waterborne pollution and hydrology.

The River Tees flows through part of the Pennine Moors but as it is 20km or more upstream of Darlington, activities within the Darlington Core Strategy will not have an impact on this site.

There are no other Natura 2000 sites that have rivers that flow through them from Darlington Borough.

## Roads

Research has shown that emissions from road traffic from motorways and major roads reach background levels beyond 200m, therefore emissions from motorways can be higher than background levels within 200m of a major road<sup>1</sup>. English Nature's (now Natural England's) advice to Runnymede Borough Council on traffic-related air pollution, based on interim guidance from the Department for Transport (2005), was that NO<sub>2</sub> emissions only needed to be considered if there is a road carrying a significant proportion of new traffic related to the plan within 200m of a European site<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, Natura 2000 sites within 200m of a major road could be damaged as a consequence of higher than normal levels of pollutants from vehicle emissions.

As there are no Natura 2000 sites within Darlington Borough, if Natura 2000 sites are to be affected by increased traffic generation it will occur as a result of traffic travelling to and from the Borough from locations outside the Borough. Figure 3.3 identifies the main centres of population outside of Darlington Borough and the main roads linking these centres to Darlington. The main centres of population are within the Tees Valley City Region including Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. Other potential centres are those to the north in Tyne and Wear and centres in North Yorkshire, both accessed by the A1. The map shows the main routes between these centres and Darlington do not pass within 200m of a Natura 2000 Site. Consequently it is unlikely increased traffic generation as a consequence of the Core Strategy will impact a Natura 2000 site.

## Species movement

As Figure 3.1 shows, the distance between the Borough and Natura 2000 sites means it is unlikely that species movement to and from Natura 2000 sites will be affected by the Core Strategy with the exception of birds. Bird species crossing the Borough when migrating or feeding could be impacted upon by the Core Strategy option that promotes wind energy generation as the blades of turbines can strike passing birds. While we can determine which Natura 2000 sites surrounding Darlington provide habitat for birds and we can determine general distances these birds are likely to travel when foraging and during migration, the location and direction of bird movement across Darlington Borough cannot be determined due to a lack of information and research on bird movements. Consultation with Natural England has been undertaken to resolve this issue.

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<sup>1</sup> Draft Appropriate Assessment for the North East Regional Spatial Strategy, page 21

It is proposed that once the preferred option and spatial plan for the Core Strategy's renewable energy generation policy has been determined, Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken that includes site surveys to determine if birds travelling to and from Natura 2000 sites pass the development site in question. Consultation with Natural England has also suggested the following advice should be taken with regards to assessing the impact on birds travelling to and from Natura 2000 sites at the current point in time:

- There are a number of Natura 2000 sites that provide habitat for coastal birds within 20-30km of Darlington Borough. These sites should inform initial investigations into the impact of wind farms on birds as these sites particularly contain birds that migrate and forage over large distances.
- While sites within 25km - 30km have been identified for the purposes of this report, there is the potential for birds to forage up to hundreds of kilometres from their habitat and migrate thousands of kilometres, hence focus should be on migratory flight paths rather than just the movement of species at nearby Natura 2000 sites.

DBC are involved in the emerging Tees Plain and East Durham Limestone Wind Capacity Study and proposed Migratory Birds Mapping Project which may help identify impact of migratory birds and impact of wind energy in the Borough.

### Natura 2000 sites to be assessed under screening process

Based on the assessment in the previous section of this chapter, the Natura 2000 sites listed below are to be included in the screening assessment. These sites include:

- Castle Eden Dene SAC, Easington
- Thrislington SAC, Sedgfield
- Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool
- Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool and Redcar & Cleveland
- Durham Coast SAC, Easington

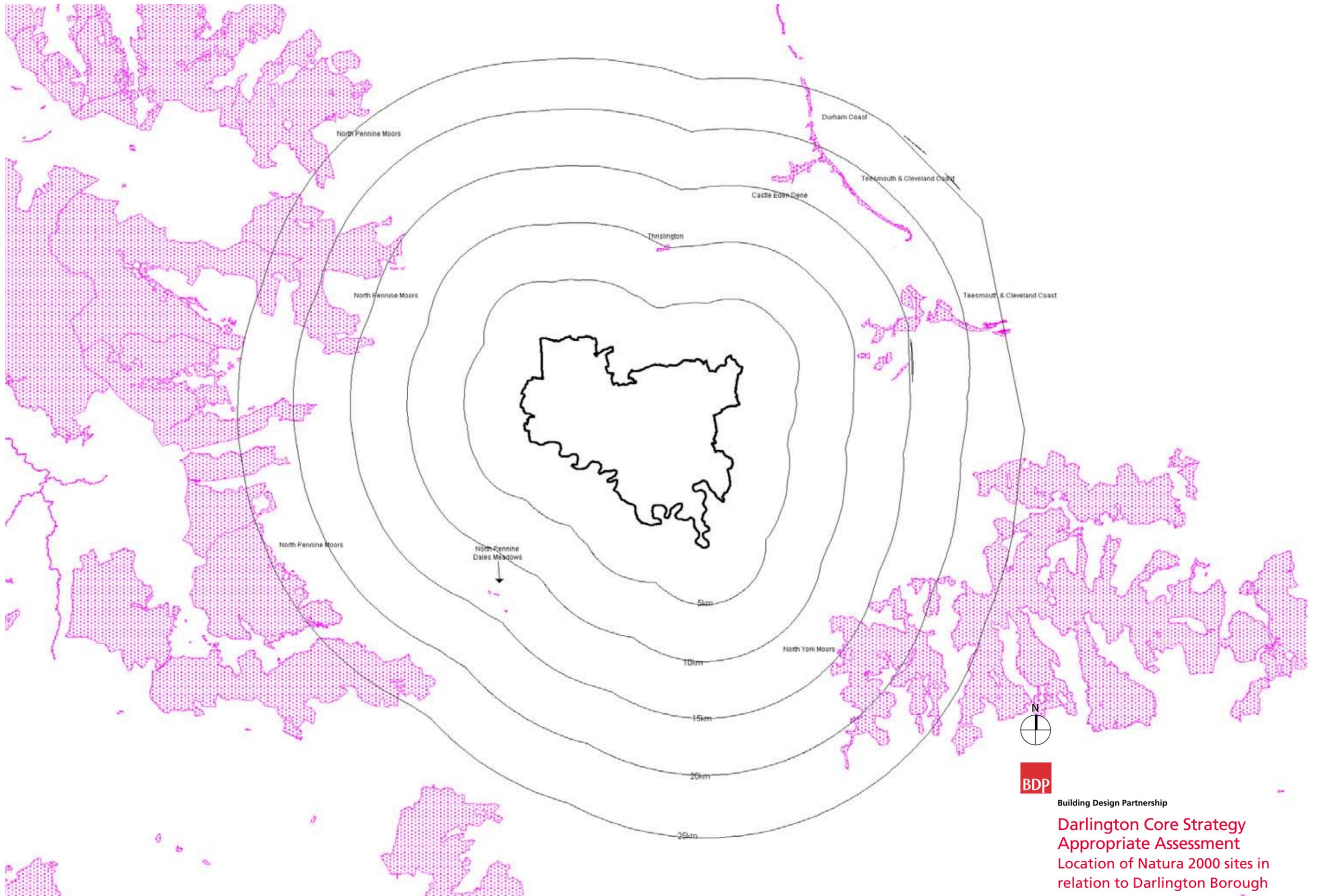
To understand the potential impacts of the Core Strategy on the Natura 2000 sites it is important to understand the following key factors about each site:

- Description of each site in terms of species and habitats it contains.
- Conservation objectives of each site
- Aspects of the site that are vulnerable and could be particularly sensitive to change in the environment.

Tables 3.1 to 3.5 provide this information for each of the identified Natura 2000 sites.

A number of data sources were used to compile this data. The data sources used are listed below:

- English Nature, Appropriate Assessment development plans - North East England, provision of site information.
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee [www.jncc.gov.uk](http://www.jncc.gov.uk)
- Government Office for the North East, Draft Appropriate Assessment of the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- Natural England GIS Digital Boundary Datasets [http://www.english-nature.org.uk/pubs/gis/gis\\_register.asp](http://www.english-nature.org.uk/pubs/gis/gis_register.asp)

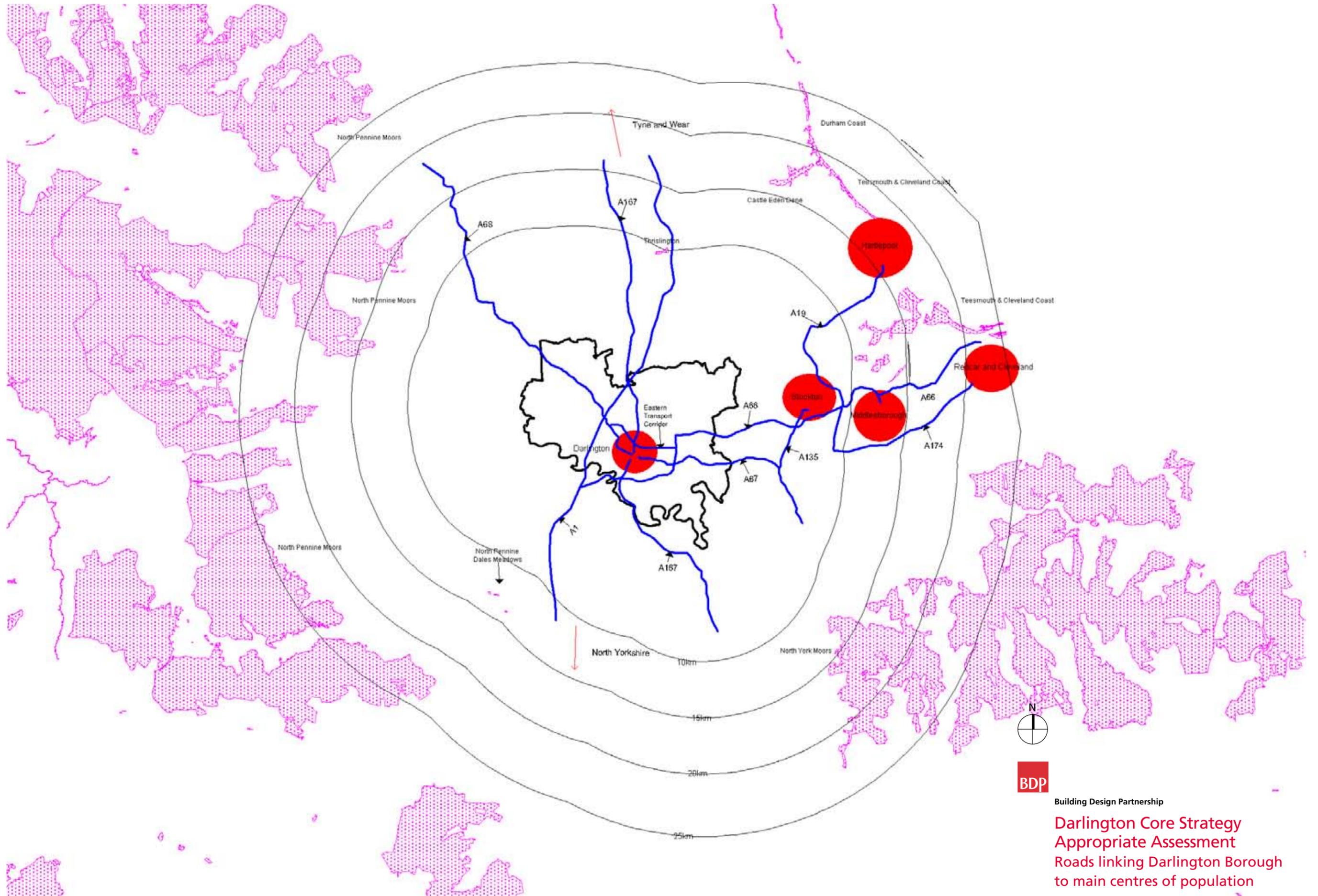


**BDP**

Building Design Partnership

**Darlington Core Strategy  
Appropriate Assessment  
Location of Natura 2000 sites in  
relation to Darlington Borough**

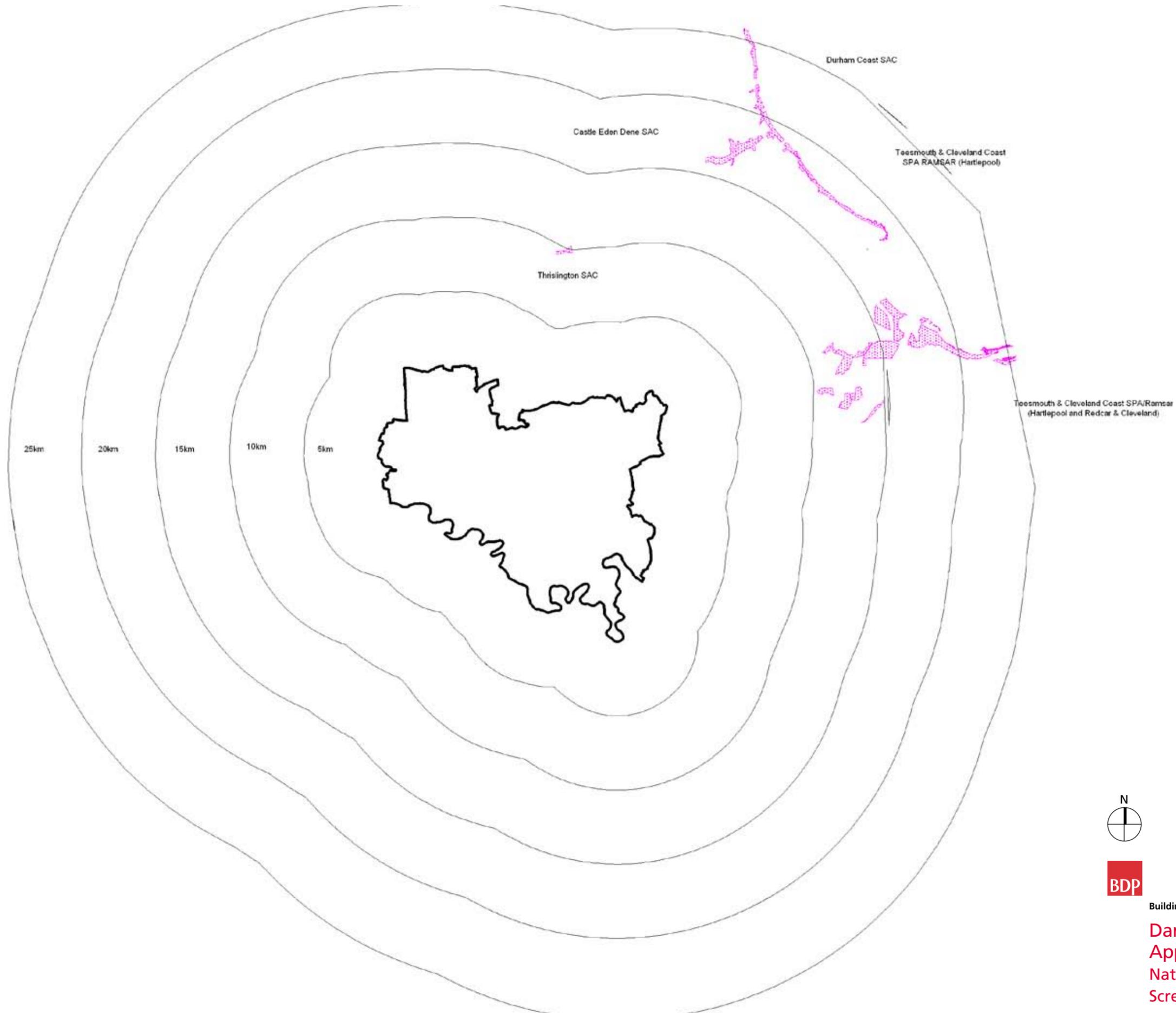




**BDP**

Building Design Partnership

**Darlington Core Strategy  
Appropriate Assessment  
Roads linking Darlington Borough  
to main centres of population**



Building Design Partnership

**Darlington Core Strategy  
Appropriate Assessment  
Natura 2000 sites to be included in  
Screening Assessment**

Table 3.1 - Description of Thrislington SAC

<i>Thrislington SAC</i>		
Local Authority - Sedgfield		Area - 22.58 hectares
Brief Description	Conservation Objectives	Vulnerability
<p>The whole of Thrislington SAC is located within 20km of the Borough of Darlington.</p> <p>This site is designated under <b>Article 4.1</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>)</b></li> </ul> <p>Thrislington is a relatively small site but contains the largest of the few surviving stands of CG8 <i>Sesleria albicans</i> - <i>Scabiosa columbaria</i> grassland</p> <p>(Source: JNCC, Natura 2000 Data form for Thrislington SAC as submitted to Europe, via JNCC website)</p>	<p>To maintain, in favourable condition,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the unimproved calcareous grassland, with particular reference to semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (CG8 grasslands)</li> </ul> <p>(Source: English Nature's, SAC: Thrislington Component SSSI: Thrislington Plantation Draft Conservation objectives for the European interest on the SSSI, 2006).</p>	<p>The conditions of these grasslands are dependent upon continuous management by seasonally-adjusted grazing and no fertiliser input. The site is now a National Nature Reserve and management on these traditional lines has been reintroduced at the site.</p> <p>The site is fairly stable and therefore there are little vulnerabilities. Strategies increasing the population, the amount of traffic and development are likely to exacerbate air quality impacts.</p> <p>The vegetation composition and structure is also at risk of being affected by increased nutrient inputs.</p>

Table 3.2 - Description of Durham Coast SAC

<i>Durham Coast SAC</i>		
Local Authority - Durham		Area - 393.63 hectares
Brief Description	Conservation Objectives	Vulnerability
<p>This site is located partially within 20km of the Borough of Darlington.</p> <p>This site is designated under <b>Article 4.1</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts.</b></li> </ul> <p>The only example of vegetated sea cliffs on magnesian limestone exposures in the UK. These cliffs extend along the North Sea coast for over 20km from South Shields southwards to Blackhall Rocks.</p> <p>Within these habitats rare species of contrasting phytogeographic<sup>2</sup> distributions often grow together forming unusual and species-rich communities of high conservation interest. The communities present on the sea cliffs are largely maintained by natural processes including exposure to sea spray, erosion and slippage of the soft magnesian limestone bedrock and overlying glacial drifts, as well as localised flushing by calcareous water.</p>	<p>Subject to natural change, to maintain, in favourable condition, the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts</li> </ul> <p>(Source, English Nature, SPA: Northumbria Coast, SPA: Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast, SAC: Durham Coast Component SSSI: Durham Coast Draft Conservation objectives for the European interest on the SSSI, 2006)</p> <p>This can be done by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ maintaining the overall length and/or area of habitat with no increase in linear extent</li> <li>▪ maintaining a range of physical conditions on the site, continued range of maritime grasslands and community transitions</li> <li>▪ No further increase in species not normally associated with this community in the UK.</li> </ul>	<p>Vegetated sea cliffs range from vertical cliffs in the north with scattered vegetated ledges, to the Magnesian Limestone grassland slopes of the south.</p> <p>The site is currently affected by, or at risk from increasing physical constraints which would reduce the mobility of the cliffs and reduce the range of communities.</p> <p>Any changes in the composition of cliff vegetation communities will damage site integrity.</p>

<sup>2</sup> Phytogeography is the study of the geographic distribution of plant species.

<i>Durham Coast SAC</i>		
Local Authority - Durham		Area - 393.63 hectares
Brief Description	Conservation Objectives	Vulnerability
<p>Parts of the site are managed as a National Nature Reserve, and plans provide for the non-interventionist management of the vegetated cliffs.</p> <p>The majority of the site is in public ownership and an agreed management plan is being developed to protect nature conservation interests.</p> <p>(Source, JNCC Natural 2000 data form Durham Coast SAC, via JNCC website)</p>		

Table 3.3 - Description of Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA

<i>Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA</i>		
Local Authority - Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool		Area - 1247.31 hectares
Brief Description	Conservation Objectives	Vulnerability
<p>This site is located partially within 20km of the Borough of Darlington.</p> <p>Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast includes a range of coastal habitats - sand- and mud-flats, rocky shore, saltmarsh, freshwater marsh and sand dunes - on and around an estuary which has been considerably modified by human activities.</p> <p>This site is designated under <b>Article 4.1</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i></b>, during breeding season, 37 pairs representing at least 1.5% of the breeding population in Great Britain (4 year mean 1993-1996).</li> <li>▪ <b>Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i></b>, on passage, 2,190 individuals representing at least 5.2% of the population in Great Britain (5 year mean 1991-1995)</li> </ul> <p>Supporting criterion for;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i></b>, on passage, 634 individuals representing at least 1.3% of the Europe/Northern Africa - wintering population (5 yr mean spring 91-95) (On Passage)</li> </ul>	<p>The Conservation Objectives are to maintain, in favourable condition;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the habitats for populations of Annex 1 [Wild Birds Directive] (Little Tern) species of European importance, with particular reference to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intertidal sand and mudflats</li> <li>- sand dunes</li> <li>- coastal waters</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ the habitats for the populations of migratory bird species (Redshank and Knot) of European importance, with particular reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rocky shores</li> <li>- intertidal sand and mudflats</li> <li>- saltmarsh</li> <li>- freshwater marsh</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ the habitats for the populations of waterfowl that contribute to the wintering waterfowl assemblage of European importance, with particular reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rocky shores</li> <li>- intertidal sand and mudflats</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Disturbance caused by offshore/marine activity is a key issue for designated species - this may take the form of recreational use of surrounding waters.</p> <p>This site is influenced by chemical discharges from industrial use along the Tees and from nutrient enrichment from agricultural use of the Tees Valley.</p> <p>Increased nitrogen deposition is likely to have a negative affect on the site. It is likely to alter the vegetation structure and composition, and reduce the area of un-vegetated beach suitable for nesting Little Tern.</p> <p>Increased recreational use of waters surrounding the site is likely to affect Tern breeding success.</p> <p>Reduced water quality may affect the invertebrate populations supporting wintering and breeding birds.</p>

<i>Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA</i>		
Local Authority - Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool		Area - 1247.31 hectares
Brief Description	Conservation Objectives	Vulnerability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Knot</b> <i>Calidris canutus</i>, Over winter, 4,190 individuals representing at least 1.2% of the wintering North eastern Canada/Greenland/Iceland/North western Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)</li> <li>▪ <b>Redshank</b> <i>Tringa totanus</i>, over winter, 1,648 individuals representing at least 1.1% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 87-91)</li> </ul> <p>Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance.</p> <p>The area qualifies under <b>Article 4.2</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl</p> <p>Over winter, the area regularly supports 21,406 individual <b>waterfowl</b> (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>, Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>, Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>, Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>, Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>, Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>.</p> <p>(Source, JNCC Natural 2000 data form for Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA, via JNCC website)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- saltmarsh</li> <li>- freshwater marsh</li> <li>- standing water</li> </ul> <p>(Source, English Nature, SPA: Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast (Extended Area) Component SSSI: Tees and Hartlepool Foreshore and Wetlands Draft Conservation objectives for the European interest on the SSSI, 2006)</p> <p>This can be done by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ maintaining food availability</li> <li>▪ suitable areas for breeding terns</li> <li>▪ lack of disturbance</li> <li>▪ maintenance of hydrology and flow, suitable water depth</li> </ul>	

Table 3.4 - Description of Teesmouth and Cleveland Ramsar

<i>Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Ramsar</i>		
Local Authority - Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool		Area - 1247.31 hectares
Brief Description	Conservation Objectives	Vulnerability
<p>This site is located partially within 20km of the Borough of Darlington.</p> <p>Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast includes a range of coastal habitats - sand- and mud-flats, rocky shore, saltmarsh, freshwater marsh and sand dunes - on and around an estuary which has been considerably modified by human activities.</p> <p>This site is designated under <b>Article 4.1</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Waterfowl</b>, internationally important numbers of passage /winter water birds at designation: 9258 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99 - 2002/2003).</li> <li>▪ <b>Common redshank</b>, (<i>Tringa totanus totanus</i>): 883 individuals, representing an average of 0.7 % of the UK population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)</li> <li>▪ <b>Red knot</b> (<i>Calidris canutus islandica</i>). (migrating from West and Southern Africa) (wintering): 2579 individuals, representing an average of 0.9 % of the UK population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)</li> </ul>	<p>Whilst no information is available on the conservation objectives they are likely to be similar to Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA</p> <p>The Conservation Objectives are to maintain, in favourable condition;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the habitats for populations of Annex 1 [Wild Birds Directive] (Little Tern) species of European importance, with particular reference to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intertidal sand and mudflats</li> <li>- Sand dunes</li> <li>- Coastal waters</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ the habitats for the populations of migratory bird species (Redshank) of European importance, with particular reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rocky shores</li> <li>- intertidal sand and mudflats</li> <li>- saltmarsh</li> <li>- freshwater marsh</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The site is currently affected by nitrogen enrichment from sewage discharges, encroachment of scrub into dune habitats, disturbance from recreational use of the site and incursion of coarse marine sediment into estuary - however, the latter is a natural process.</p> <p>Disturbance caused by offshore/marine activity is a key issue for designated species. This may take the form of recreational use of surrounding waters which is likely to affect Tern breeding success.</p> <p>Reduced water quality may affect the invertebrate populations supporting wintering and breeding birds.</p>

Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Ramsar		
Local Authority - Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool		Area - 1247.31 hectares
Brief Description	Conservation Objectives	Vulnerability
<p>Supporting criteria for designation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little Tern (<i>Sternula albifrons albifrons</i>) nationally important numbers of breeding (40 pairs, circa 2% of the national population)</li> </ul> <p>Passage species of importance (at designation):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) (migrating between NW and C Europe): 7 individuals representing an average of 0% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3);</li> <li>Common greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>), (migrating between Europe and West Africa): 7 individuals representing an average of 1.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3).</li> </ul> <p>Nationally important invertebrates (British Red Data Book species):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pherbellia grisecens</li> <li>Thereva valida</li> <li>Longitarsus nigerrimus</li> <li>Dryops nitidulus</li> <li>Macroplea mutica</li> <li>Philonthus dimidiatipennis</li> <li>Trichohydriobius suturalis</li> </ul> <p>Nationally scarce higher plants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Festuca arenaria</li> <li>Puccinellia rupestris</li> <li>Ranunculus baudotii</li> </ul>		

<i>Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Ramsar</i>		
Local Authority - Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool		Area - 1247.31 hectares
Brief Description	Conservation Objectives	Vulnerability
(Source: JNCC, Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) via JNCC website)		

Table 3.5 - Description of Castle Eden Dene SAC

Castle Eden Dene SAC		
Local Authority - Durham		Area - 194.4 hectares
Brief Description	Conservation Objectives	Vulnerability
<p>This site is located within 20km of the Borough of Darlington.</p> <p>This site is designated under <b>Article 4.1</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Taxus baccata woodland</b></li> </ul> <p>Castle Eden Dene in north-east England represents the most extensive northerly native occurrence of yew <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods in the UK. Extensive yew groves are found in association with ash-elm <i>Fraxinus-Ulmus</i> woodland and it is the only site selected for yew woodland on magnesian limestone in north-east England.</p> <p>(Source, JNCC Natural 2000 data form for Castle Eden Dene SAC, via JNCC website)</p>	<p>To maintain, in favourable condition, the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the <i>Taxus baccata</i> woodland.</li> </ul> <p>(Source, English Nature, SAC: Castle Eden Dene Component SSSI: Castle Eden Dene Conservation objectives for the European interests on the SSSI, 2006)</p> <p>This can be done by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensuring no loss of ancient semi natural stands</li> <li>▪ Site management</li> <li>▪ Limiting air pollution</li> <li>▪ Limiting grazing by ungulates where it leads to undesirable shifts in the composition/structure of the land.</li> </ul>	<p>Yew woodlands are distributed throughout the site in a matrix of other woodland types. The site is managed as a National Nature Reserve and the Management Plan provides for regeneration of this special woodland type.</p> <p>Site management is essential to maintain the current level and structural diversity.</p> <p>It is currently affected and at risk from pollution, including eutrophication from adjacent farmland; whilst excessive browsing/grazing may lead to undesirable changes in composition and structure.</p> <p>Increased air pollution is likely to damage site integrity through disease of trees and an associated increase in the rate of <i>Taxus baccata</i>-mortality in the long term.</p>

## 4. Assessment of likely significance

### Introduction

As part of the screening process described in the EU Guidance for Appropriate Assessment (Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC) it is a requirement to complete the assessment forms in Annex 2 of the guidance. The assessment forms to be completed include:

- Screening Matrix
- Finding of no significant effects report matrix

This section of the report address the questions set out in the assessment forms. The evidence that inform the answers given to the assessment form questions is contained in Sections 2 and 3 of this report, plus supporting information in Tables 3.1 to 3.5 and Table 4.1.

### Assessment Table

In Table 4.1, the potential impacts of the Core Strategy, as identified in Section 2 of this report, are assessed in terms of how these could affect the Natura 2000 sites identified and described in Section 3 of this report. This table clearly attempts to link the potential impacts of the Core Strategy to the Natura 2000 sites.

The following potential impacts identified in Section 2 of this report have been eliminated by the assessment tables as these impacts have been found to be unlikely:

- Climate change
- Habitat disturbance

The assessment table concludes that there is uncertainty regarding certain types of impact that could be generated by the Core Strategy, which could then have an adverse affect on Natura 2000 sites. These impacts are determined as:

- Air quality - Change in the composition of air that disperses in the vicinity of a Natura 2000 site can damage vegetation and harm species living in these habitats. In Section 3, the main local, sub regional and regional highways do not pass within 200m of a Natura 2000 Site so it is unlikely increased traffic generation as a consequence of the Core Strategy will impact a Natura 2000 site. Consequently impacts due to air pollution could be generated due to air emissions from industry. The only industry identified by the Core Strategy that could have an impact on air quality is off site Biomass renewable energy generation.
- Water quality - Change in the composition of water that flows to Natura 2000 sites can damage vegetation and harm species living in these habitats. This will be relevant for to issues and options that generate development located near to rivers.
- Hydrology - Changes in hydrology can result in drought or flooding of Natura sites that can damage vegetation and species living in these habitats. This will be relevant for issues and options that generate development located near to rivers.
- Species disturbance - Disturbance of species travelling to Natura 2000 sites can damage vegetation and species living in these habitats. This will be relevant for issues and options that disturb species travelling across the borough to their habitat or to forage.

The following issues and options contained within the Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008 could generate the impacts identified above:

Issue	Option
Issue 1: Darlington's Sub Regional Role	Sub regional centre within the Tees Valley City Region Key Centre within the Tees Valley City Region
Issue 2: Planning for growth	High growth
Issue 6: Renewable energy generation	Biomass Wind farms
Issue 9: Sustainable housing provision	Meeting wider housing needs/ market led
Issue 14: Sustainable employment provision	Maintain high employment growth

The Core Strategy Issues and Options report is a strategic policy document. As such details regarding the nature of development and projects that will emerge from the issues and options are not included. Until we know the nature and the approximate location of projects that are likely to emerge from the Core Strategy policies, it is impossible identify any significant effects of the Core Strategy.

As a precautionary measure, the assessment table (Table 4.1) includes mitigation measures that should be considered when developing the Core Strategy to Preferred Options stage to ensure significant effects on the Natura 2000 sites do not materialise. Additionally, these issues should be re-assessed under the appropriate assessment regulations once the preferred options for the Core Strategy are identified.

## Assessment with Other Plans

Even where a plan on its own may not have a significant impact on a European site, it may have a significant 'in combination' impact with other trends, plans and projects. However it is important to note that if the Core Strategy does not generate any impacts it is not necessary to consider in combination impacts.

On pp. 24 of Appropriate Assessment of Plans (2006) by Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants et al. it is advised that:

*If the plan plus existing trends alone are unlikely to significantly affect a site, then the effects of other plans and projects do not need to be considered.*

At this stage of the assessment no likely impacts can be established, hence it is not possible to assess in combination impacts at this stage.

Table 4.1 Assessment Table

Possible Impacts	Relevant Issues	Sites Potentially Affected	Impact Source	Significance	In combination with neighbouring plans/policies?	Mitigation	Conclusion
Air Quality	1, 2, 3, 6, 14, 17 and 33.	Thrislington SAC	Industrial air emissions as part of economic growth	Uncertain	Uncertain	If potentially polluting development is identified such as biomass plants or industrial development to support economic and employment growth the impact of these in terms of emissions (and potentially dust) carried by air should be carefully considered in the context of prevailing winds carrying pollutants towards Natura 2000 Sites to the north west of the Borough.	At present it is not certain that potentially polluting developments will emerge from the Core Strategy and there are no sites proposed for such development. Therefore this element can be screened out at this stage.
		Durham Coast SAC	Industrial air emissions as part of economic growth	Uncertain	Uncertain		
		Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay	Industrial air emissions as part of economic growth	Uncertain	Uncertain		
		Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Hartlepool	Industrial air emissions as part of economic growth	Uncertain	Uncertain		
		Castle Eden Dene SAC	Industrial air emissions as part of economic growth	Uncertain	Uncertain		

Possible Impacts	Relevant Issues	Sites Potentially Affected	Impact Source	Significance	In combination with neighbouring plans/policies?	Mitigation	Conclusion
Water Quality	1, 2, 9, 14	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay	Water borne pollution from River Tees, Billingham Beck, and Lustrum Beck due to development on the banks of these watercourses.	Uncertain	Uncertain	Development within or on the banks of the River Tees, Billingham Beck and Lustrum Beck should minimise pollution to water in line with Theme 4 option to 'Limit pollution generating development' for the issue 'Manage water resources'.	At present it is not known if potentially polluting land uses will emerge from the Core Strategy or where they will be located so the impact cannot be determined. The Core Strategy includes an option to limit pollution generating development that will mitigate this impact. Therefore at this stage this impact can be screened out.
Species Disturbance	6	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay	Wildlife displacement and disturbance, collisions and destruction of habitats, particularly with, Terns, Little Terns and Sandwich Terns which may range 60+km to feed.	Uncertain Would be dependent upon location of wind turbines.	No	If wind farms are used to generate renewable energy turbine arrays should be sited and designed in such a way as to provide minimum disturbance to birds,	At present it is not certain wind farms will merge from the Core Strategy and there are no sites proposed and therefore this element can be screened out.

Possible Impacts	Relevant Issues	Sites Potentially Affected	Impact Source	Significance	In combination with neighbouring plans/policies?	Mitigation	Conclusion
		Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Hartlepool	Wildlife displacement and disturbance, collisions and destruction of habitats, particularly with Terns, Little Terns and Sandwich Terns which may range 60+km to feed.	Uncertain Would be dependent upon location of wind turbines.		given their patterns of movement. This will be considered further when individual wind farms are proposed.	Note further sites could be impacted by birds travelling to other Natura 2000 sites but this is very difficult to determine given the lack of data regarding bird movement across the Borough.
Direct Disturbance	1, 2, 6, 9, 14, 33	None	None	None	No	N/A	The sites are too far away to be significantly affected by direct disturbance.
Hydrology	1, 2, 9, 14	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay	Up stream development emerging from the Core Strategy can influence water flow potentially altering hydrology of the site.	Uncertain	Uncertain	Development within watersheds that include watercourses that flow upstream of Natura 2000 Sites should not adversely influence hydrology of the river downstream.	At present it is not known where land use change will take place as a consequence of the Core Strategy or what this land use change will comprise, so the impact cannot be determined. The Core Strategy includes an option to limit pollution generating development that will mitigate this impact. Therefore at this stage this impact can be screened out.
Climate Change	1, 2, 9,		None	None	No	N/A	The sites are too far away

Possible Impacts	Relevant Issues	Sites Potentially Affected	Impact Source	Significance	In combination with neighbouring plans/policies?	Mitigation	Conclusion
Does the plan hinder the potential for habitats to adapt to climate change? (this can include restrictions to movement of species and habitats for them to adapt to climate change)	14, 33	None					to significantly hinder the potential for habitats to adapt to climate change.

## Screening Matrix

Tables 4.1 to 4.3 describe the possible impacts of the Core Strategy on the Natura 2000 sites that have been identified as possibly being affected by activities in the Borough (identified in Section 3 of this report). The assessment in Table 4.1 has been used to complete the Screening Matrix.

**Table 4.2 Screening Matrix**

<p><b>Brief Description of the Project or Plan</b></p> <p>The Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008 is the preceding document to the Core Strategy Preferred Options Report. The Core Strategy will be the principle document in Darlington's Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy Issues and Options Report is structured by the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Achieving a More Sustainable Community</li> <li>▪ Housing for All</li> <li>▪ Creating and Sharing Prosperity</li> <li>▪ Providing a High Quality Environment</li> <li>▪ Living Safely and Well</li> <li>▪ A Quality Shopping Environment</li> <li>▪ Excellent Communication Links</li> </ul> <p>The Core Strategy policies will apply to the whole of Darlington Borough. See Section 2 and Appendix 1 for further details of the plan.</p>
<p><b>Brief Description of Natura Sites</b></p> <p>The following sites have been included in the Screening Matrix for the Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Castle Eden Dene SAC, Easington</li> <li>• Thrislington SAC, Sedgefield</li> <li>• Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool</li> <li>• Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool and Redcar &amp; Cleveland</li> <li>• Durham Coast SAC, Easington</li> </ul> <p>Further details regarding the location of these sites are given in Section 3 and a description of each site is given in Tables 3.1 to 3.5.</p>
<p><b>1. Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on a Natura 2000 site.</b></p> <p>A number of impacts have been identified that potentially could impact up on Natura 2000 sites with regard to Core Strategy Issues 1, 2, 6, 9 and 14. There is, however, a lack of information regarding how these Issues in the Core Strategy will be delivered consequently these impacts cannot be considered likely impacts of the Core Strategy. The rest of the issues in the Core Strategy are not likely to give rise to impacts on Natura 2000 sites.</p>

2. Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 site by virtue of:

- size and scale;
- land-take;
- distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;
- resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);
- emissions (disposal to land, water or air);
- excavation requirements;
- transportation requirements;
- duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;
- other.

A number of impacts have been identified that potentially could impact up on Natura 2000 sites with regard to Core Strategy Issues 1, 2, 6, 9 and 14. Potential impacts include:

- Air quality - Change in the composition of air that disperses in the vicinity of a Natura 2000 site can damage vegetation and harm species living in these habitats. In Section 3, the main local, sub regional and regional highways do not pass within 200m of a Natura 2000 Site so it is unlikely increased traffic generation as a consequence of the Core Strategy will impact a Natura 2000 site. Consequently impacts due to air pollution could be generated due to air emissions from industry. The only industry identified by the Core Strategy that could have an impact on air quality is off site Biomass renewable energy generation.
- Water quality - Change in the composition of water that flows to Natura 2000 sites can damage vegetation and harm species living in these habitats. This will be relevant for to issues and options that generate development located near to rivers.
- Hydrology - Changes in hydrology can result in drought or flooding of Natura sites that can damage vegetation and species living in these habitats. This will be relevant for issues and options that generate development located near to rivers.

Due to the uncertainty regarding issues 1, 2, 6, 9 and 14 it is not possible to screen out appropriate assessment at this stage but it is also not possible to identify if these impacts are likely.

**3. Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:**

- reduction of habitat area;
- disturbance to key species;
- habitat or species fragmentation;
- reduction in species density;
- changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);
- climate change.

An impact has been identified that potentially could impact up on Natura 2000 sites with regard to Core Strategy Issue 6. Potential impact is:

- Species disturbance - Disturbance of species travelling to Natura 2000 sites can damage vegetation and species living in these habitats. This will be relevant for issues and options that disturb species travelling across the borough to their habitat or to forage.

Due to the uncertainty regarding the delivery of the options for issue 6 it is not possible to screen out appropriate assessment at this stage, it is also not possible to identify likely impacts.

<p>4. Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;</li> <li>• interference with key relationships that define the function of the site.</li> </ul>
None found
<p>5. Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• loss;</li> <li>• fragmentation;</li> <li>• disruption;</li> <li>• disturbance;</li> <li>• change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.).</li> </ul>
None found
<p>6. Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.</p>
<p>The scale and magnitude of impacts on the following sites that could be impacted by issues 1, 2, 6, 9 and 14 is not known:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Castle Eden Dene SAC, Easington</li> <li>• Thrislington SAC, Sedgefield</li> <li>• Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool</li> <li>• Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool and Redcar &amp; Cleveland</li> <li>• Durham Coast SAC, Easington</li> </ul>

Due to the uncertainty regarding Issues 1, 2, 6, 9 and 14 it is not possible to screen out appropriate assessment at this stage. For all other issues in the Core Strategy it is possible to screen out Appropriate Assessment.

## Finding of no significant effects report matrix

For all Issues in the Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008, except issues 1, 2, 6, 9 and 14, no significant effects have been identified. As such a matrix that reports the finding of no significant effects (Table 4.3) has been completed.

**Table 4.3: Finding no significant effects report matrix**

Criteria	Assessment
Name of project or plan	Darlington Borough Council Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008, except issues 1, 2, 6, 9 and 14.
Name and location of Natura 2000 site	Castle Eden Dene SAC, Easington Thrislington SAC, Sedgefield Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool and Redcar & Cleveland Durham Coast SAC, Easington  See Section 3 of this report for further information.
Description of the project or plan	The Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008 is the preceding document to the Core Strategy Preferred Options Report. It contains issues and options for the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Achieving a More Sustainable Community</li> <li>▪ Housing for All</li> <li>▪ Creating and Sharing Prosperity</li> <li>▪ Providing a High Quality Environment</li> <li>▪ Living Safely and Well</li> <li>▪ A Quality Shopping Environment</li> <li>▪ Excellent Communication Links</li> </ul> The Core Strategy policies will apply to the whole of Darlington Borough.
Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?	No
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?	No

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This report finds no significant affects of the Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008 for the following issues:

- ISSUE 3 Accessibility for All
- ISSUE 4 Degraded Landscapes and Townscapes
- ISSUE 5 High Quality, Safe Design
- ISSUE 7 Darlington Settlement Pattern
- ISSUE 8 Paying for Development Infrastructure
- ISSUE 10 Providing Housing in the Right Place
- ISSUE 11 Housing Needs, Mix and Affordability
- ISSUE 12 Improving Older Housing
- ISSUE 13 Providing for Gypsy and Traveller Needs
- ISSUE 15 Distribution of new employment development
- ISSUE 16 Loss of employment land and relocation of businesses
- ISSUE 17 Darlington's Tourism Offer
- ISSUE 18 Employment in the villages and countryside
- ISSUE 19 Local Heritage
- ISSUE 20 Urban Fringe
- ISSUE 21 Biodiversity
- ISSUE 22 Trees and Woodland
- ISSUE 23 Flood Risk
- ISSUE 24 Protecting People and The Environment
- ISSUE 25 Protecting the Open Spaces Network
- ISSUE 26 Playing Pitches
- ISSUE 27 Open Spaces for Children and Young People
- ISSUE 28 Quality and Safety of Open Spaces
- ISSUE 29 Open Space in Rural Areas
- ISSUE 30 The Town Centre
- ISSUE 31 The Hierarchy of Centres
- ISSUE 32 Access to Local Facilities
- Issue 33 Transport infrastructure

For all these issues in the Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008, Appropriate Assessment can be screened out.

The following issues have been identified as potentially having an impact on Natura 2000 sites, but the likelihood and significance of the potential impacts is uncertain as there is insufficient information that could allow us to determine this.

Core Strategy Issue	Relevant Options
Issue 1: Darlington's Sub Regional Role	Sub regional centre within the Tees Valley City Region Key Centre within the Tees Valley City Region
Issue 2: Planning for growth	High growth
Issue 6: Renewable energy generation	Biomass Wind farms
Issue 9: Sustainable housing provision	Meeting wider housing needs/ market led
Issue 14: Sustainable employment provision	Maintain high employment growth

While this report does not find any significant effects of Core Strategy Issues 1, 2, 6, 9 and 14, under the precautionary approach it is recommended Appropriate Assessment can only be screened out for these issues once the following actions have been undertaken as the preferred options are developed for these issues.

### Recommendations

1. As Preferred Options for the Core Strategy are developed and further substantiated, the potential impacts identified in this Appropriate Assessment for these issues and options are carefully considered.
2. Preferred options for these issues should be assessed under Appropriate Assessment using this report as the basis for further assessment.
3. If likely impacts (they do not have to be considered significant) are established as part of the further assessment of Issues 1, 2, 6, 9 and 14, the plans listed in Appendix 2 should be considered to establish if significant cumulative impacts will arise.

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## Appendix 1 - Core Strategy Policy Description

## THEME 1: ACHIEVING A MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

### 1.1 ISSUE 1 Darlington's Sub Regional Role

*Which sub regional role should Darlington promote?*

- Sub regional centre within the Tees Valley City Region?
- Sub regional centre, with other investment to meet residents needs only?
- Key centre within the Tees Valley City Region?

### 1.2 ISSUE 2 Planning for Growth

*How much growth should there be in Darlington?*

- Accommodate natural population change?
- Accommodate increased population change and economic growth?
- Constrain population growth?

### 1.3 ISSUE 3 Accessibility for All

*How can we provide accessibility for all?*

- Promote new development in the most sustainable locations, particularly the town centre and near public transport nodes?
- Promote more mixed use development including live-work schemes?
- Require new developments to adopt travel plans and promote walking, cycling and public transport?
- Leave to the 'transport market'?
- Combination?

### 1.4 ISSUE 4 Degraded Landscapes and Townscapes

*How can we improve Darlington's poor and degraded landscapes and townscapes?*

- Improve the appearance of the main road, rail and river corridors, access to the town centre, the airport and key gateway sites?
- Prioritise environmental improvements to specific sites/areas in the 11 priority wards?
- Identify contaminated, unused or underused brownfield sites and prioritise for alternative uses?
- Promote heritage based regeneration schemes to improve the built fabric on Northgate/High Northgate and approaches to Darlington railway station?

### 1.5 ISSUE 5 High Quality, Safe Design

*How can we promote high quality, safe design in new developments?*

- Promote community safety in all new developments?
- Promote high quality design Borough wide that reflects and enhances the local distinctiveness of the area?
- Promote high quality, distinctive design on key sites to reflect the local character of the area?
- Seek high quality, distinctive design for all major developments to reflect the local character of the area?

## 1.6 ISSUE 6 Climate Change: Reducing Darlington's Carbon Footprint

### *Renewable Energy Generation*

*Which renewable energy facilities should we encourage in Darlington?*

- Biomass?
- Wind energy?
- Combination?

### *On Site Renewable Energy Generation*

*Which on site renewable energy facilities should we encourage in major developments in Darlington?*

- Solar power?
- Wind energy?
- Combined Heat and Power Units?
- Biomass?
- Ground source heat?
- Combination?

*What standard of provision should Darlington seek from on site renewable energy facilities?*

- 10%?
- 10% to 2010, then 20% to 2020?
- 20% or above?

### *Sustainable Design In New Development*

*What level of sustainable building standards should Darlington seek from new development?*

- BREEAM and Eco Homes very good - excellent rating or Code for Sustainable Homes 1-6 and reduce use of the car?
- BREEAM and Eco Homes excellent rating or Code for Sustainable Homes 3-6 rating, promote use of sustainable transport, and reduce use of the car?
- BREEAM and Eco Homes excellent rating or Code for Sustainable Homes 6 rating, promote use of sustainable transport and alternative carbon neutral transport?

## 1.7 ISSUE 7 Darlington Settlement Pattern

*Where Should Development Go?*

- Sustainable brownfield locations within the Urban Area?
- Sustainable locations within the Urban Area?
- Sustainable locations within and adjoining the Urban Area?
- Sustainable locations within and adjoining Darlington Urban Area and service and main villages?

## 1.8 ISSUE 8 Paying for Development Infrastructure

*Which of the following benefits are most important for the Council to secure through planning obligations?*

- Affordable housing?
- Open space?
- Children's play space?
- Public transport improvements?
- Convenient cycle and pedestrian links?
- Education?
- Community facilities?
- Sport and recreation facilities?
- Creation and management of wildlife habitats?
- Public art?
- Public Realm?
- Employment and Training?
- Housing Improvement/Housing Renewal?
- Heritage Interpretation?
- Travel Plans?
- Regeneration?
- Combination?

*How should the Council secure planning obligations?*

- Negotiate planning obligations on a site by site basis?
- Apply a standard tariff?
- Apply a standard tariff with 'in kind' contribution on or off site where appropriate?

## **THEME 2: QUALITY HOUSING FOR ALL**

### **2.1 ISSUE 9 Sustainable Housing Provision**

*How much new housing should there be in Darlington?*

- Meeting the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy target only\*?
- Meeting the wider housing market?
- Market-led housing growth?\*

### **2.2 ISSUE 10 Providing Housing in the Right Place**

*Where should new housing be located?*

- Limited growth in the Urban Area?
- Moderate growth across the Borough?
- Substantial growth across the Borough?

### **2.3 ISSUE 11 Housing Needs, Mix and Affordability**

*What types of specialist housing should be provided?*

- Affordable housing?
- Lifetime homes?
- Live-Work housing?
- Combination?

## 2.4 ISSUE 12 Improving Older Housing

*How should improvements for older housing be achieved?*

- Through environmental improvements?
- Through market intervention?
- Through planning obligations?
- Cross subsidy provision?
- Combination?

## 2.5 ISSUE 13 Providing for Gypsy and Traveller Needs

*Where should Gypsies and Travellers needs be accommodated?*

- On existing Council sites and private sites only?
- On new or extended Council and private sites?
- On Transit sites?
- Combination?

## THEME 3: PROSPEROUS DARLINGTON

### 3.1 ISSUE 14 Sustainable employment provision

*How much employment growth should there be in Darlington?*

- Modest employment growth to 2015 followed by reduced growth?
- Maintain modest employment growth?
- Maintain recent high employment growth?

### 3.2 ISSUE 15 Distribution of new employment development

*How should employment land supply be distributed?*

- Restricted employment land supply across the Borough?
- Managed employment land supply across the Borough?
- Market led employment land supply?

### 3.3 ISSUE 16 Loss of employment land and relocation of businesses

*How can the Borough's existing supply of employment land be best used?*

- Loss and relocation of employment land and businesses?
- Redevelopment with new employment provision?
- Safeguard employment land?

- Combination?

### 3.5 ISSUE 17 Darlington's Tourism Offer

#### *How Should We Promote Tourism in Darlington?*

- Gateway to the North East?
- Gateway to the Tees Valley?
- Position Darlington as a 'rural city'?

### 3.5 ISSUE 18 Employment in the villages and countryside

#### *How should we promote a viable countryside?*

- Employment for local needs?
- Farm diversification and local needs?
- Employment development throughout the countryside?
- More protection of the best and most versatile farmland?
- Combination?

## THEME 4: A DISTINCTIVE CLEANER AND GREENER ENVIRONMENT

### 4.1 ISSUE 19 Local Heritage

#### *How Should We Protect and Enhance Darlington's Heritage?*

- Only preserve and enhance the character or appearance of statutory historic and environment features and landscapes?
- Protect and enhance the Borough's key townscape, landscape and nature conservation features?
- Promote heritage based regeneration schemes for improvements to specific parts of the town?
- Combination?

### 4.2 ISSUE 20 Urban Fringe

#### *How should we manage Darlington's urban fringe?*

- Promote greater levels of access and informal recreation?
- Promote multifunctional spaces?
- Encourage variation in agricultural practice that promotes a high quality landscape?
- Encourage only high quality, small scale appropriate development that adds value to urban fringe?
- Combination?

### 4.3 ISSUE 21 Biodiversity

#### *How Should We Promote Biodiversity?*

- Keep the current level of protection and promote biodiversity in new development?
- Keep the current level of protection and identify areas at risk to provide additional protection where needed?

- Identify and protect a network of sites and corridors, introduce improved management of the network for biodiversity?
- Provide additional protection on all sites?
- Give priorities to local nature reserves, local sites, the Tees Forest and key, identified sites?
- Combination?

#### 4.3 ISSUE 22 Trees and Woodland

*How should we enhance Darlington's trees?*

- Only protect existing tree cover from loss or damage from new development?
- Protect existing tree cover and support woodland planting on key brownfield development sites, along the urban fringe and major transport corridor sites?
- Maintain and protect healthy trees, promote replacement planting, community forest development and new planting in areas with low levels of tree cover?

#### 4.4 ISSUE 23 Flood Risk

*How can we reduce flood risk in Darlington?*

- Requirements new developments to meet the Exception Test and provide a flood risk assessment?
- Require sustainable drainage systems as part of all new developments?
- Require all new development to have a layout and form that reduces flood risk and to include sustainable drainage systems?
- Combination?

#### 4.6 ISSUE 24 Protecting People and The Environment

*How can we reduce pollution in Darlington?*

- Develop strict guidelines over the location of new development which could add to air pollution?
- Provide locational guidelines for developments that could cause vibration, noise and dust?
- Develop appropriate controls for the development of contaminated, unused or underused brownfield sites?
- Combination?

### THEME 5: A HEALTHY AND SAFE DARLINGTON

#### 5.3 ISSUE 25 Protecting the Open Spaces Network

*How should Darlington's open spaces be protected?*

- Only permit development of open spaces if identified as redundant in needs assessment?
- Only permit development of locally important open spaces if ancillary to open space use and improves the remaining part of the open space open space network if identified as redundant in needs assessment?
- Allow development of open spaces if for regeneration and equal alternative provision is made elsewhere?

#### 5.1 ISSUE 26 Playing Pitches

*How can we provide good quality, accessible playing pitches?*

- Encourage use of playing pitches to meet identified local needs, the active population and the location of underused pitches at schools?
- Identify high quality strategic sites and lower quality local sites?
- Require new or extended private playing pitches to have a community access agreement?
- Combination?

#### 5.2 ISSUE 27 Open Spaces for Children and Young People

*How can the quality, quantity and accessibility of open spaces for children and young people be improved?*

- Protect and improve existing sites?
- Identify high quality strategic sites and quality local sites?

#### 5.4 ISSUE 28 Quality and Safety of Open Spaces

*How can the quality and safety of Darlington's open spaces be improved?*

- Require all new open spaces to be designed to secured by design standards?
- Make improvements to the quality and safety of existing open spaces from planning obligations?
- Use public investment and partnership funding to improve quality and safety of open spaces and planning obligations for children's play areas?
- Identify priority areas for public investment?
- Combination?

#### 5.5 ISSUE 29 Open Space in Rural Areas

*How can the quality, quantity and accessibility of rural open spaces be improved?*

- Same policy for open spaces in villages as for the urban area?
- Develop separate provision standards for the larger, serviced villages in consultation with the local community, taking account of population and access to existing provision?

### THEME 6: A VIBRANT TOWN CENTRE AND ACCESSIBLE LOCAL SHOPS AND FACILITIES

#### 6.1 ISSUE 30 The Town Centre

*How should we safeguard and promote the vitality and viability of the town centre?*

- Adopt a rigorous and pro-active approach to promoting the vitality and viability of the town centre?
- Adopt a less rigorous approach recognising the potential benefits of some 'town centre-type' development elsewhere in the Borough?

#### 6.2 ISSUE 31 The Hierarchy of Centres

*Is the current hierarchy still appropriate or should it be changed?*

- Keep the Current hierarchy?

- Designate further Local Centre(s)?
- Amend the hierarchy to more strictly reflect PPS6?
- Amend the hierarchy less severely?
- Change the hierarchy in a different way?

### 6.3 ISSUE 32 Access to Local Facilities

*How can we provide good access to local shops and services?*

- Keep local shops and services close to homes and require sites to be set aside in new development areas?
- Protect existing facilities from proposals elsewhere which would undermine their vitality and viability or from redevelopment?
- Combination?

## THEME 7: EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

### 7.1 Issue 33 Transport infrastructure

*Should We Continue To Provide Land for the Cross Town Route?*

- Continue to safeguard a line for the central section of the Cross Town Route, if supported by a detailed technical assessment?
- Remove the safeguarding line for the central section of the Cross Town Route?

## Appendix 2 - List of Other Plans for Assessment of Cumulative Impacts

## Assessment with Other Plans

At this stage of the assessment no likely impacts have been established, hence it is not necessary to assess cumulative impacts at this stage.

This report recommends that further assessment is undertaken before screening out Issues 2, 6 and 14. If likely impacts are established as part of this assessment the following plans should be considered to establish if cumulative impacts will arise.

This list has been developed to include land use plans that will influence spatial development from the local authorities the identified Natura 2000 sites are located in and the relevant regional planning documents. This list should be reviewed to ensure it is up to date with the associated local authorities current Local Development Frameworks.

### Other Plans

Darlington Local Plan 1997

Darlington Affordable Housing SPD 2007

Darlington Local Transport Plan 2 2006 - 11

Tees Valley Minerals and Waste Issues and Options 2007

County Durham Waste Local Plan 2005

County Durham Waste Local Plan 2005

North East Regional Spatial Strategy Proposed Modifications 2007

Easington Local Plan 2001 (save policies only)

Easington Core Strategy Issues and Options 2006

Sedgefield Local Plan 1996

Sedgefield Core Strategy Preferred Options 2007

Sedgefield Major Allocations Alternative Options 2007

Sedgefield Draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2007

Hartlepool Local Plan 2006

Hartlepool Core Strategy Issues and Options 2007

Redcar and Cleveland Core Strategy DPD 2007