
Darlington Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment

Screening Report Executive Summary

for

Darlington Borough Council

January 2008





Executive Summary

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.

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.

Potential Impacts

The Core Strategy: Issues and Options 2008 were 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. Following this, 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.

The catchment area within which Natura 2000 sites could be affected by a plan has to be considered on a case by case basis and is dependant on both the potential impacts of the plan and how these impacts can be linked to Natura 2000 sites. While there are no Natura 2000 sites within Darlington Borough, it has been identified that impacts could potentially be linked to Natura 2000 sites by the following pathways:

- By air, particularly in the direction of the prevailing wind
- By rivers
- By roads
- By disturbance of species travelling to and from Natura 2000 sites





Based on the assessment of impacts and pathways, the Natura 2000 sites listed below are to be included in the screening assessment:

- 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

Figure 1 shows the location of these Natura 2000 sites.

Assessment

The following potential impacts have been eliminated by the assessment as these impacts have been found to be unlikely:

- Habitat disturbance
- Climate change

The assessment 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 include:

- Air quality
- Water quality
- Hydrology
- Species disturbance

These impacts are uncertain as, for some of the issues and options, there is insufficient details regarding the nature of development and projects that will emerge from the issues and options. Consequently, it is impossible identify any significant effects of the Core Strategy.

Appropriate assessment includes the assessment of impacts on Natura 2000 sites that arise from in combination impacts with other plans. As no likely impacts can be established it is not possible, at this stage, to assess in combination impacts.

Conclusions

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 from the Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008 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.

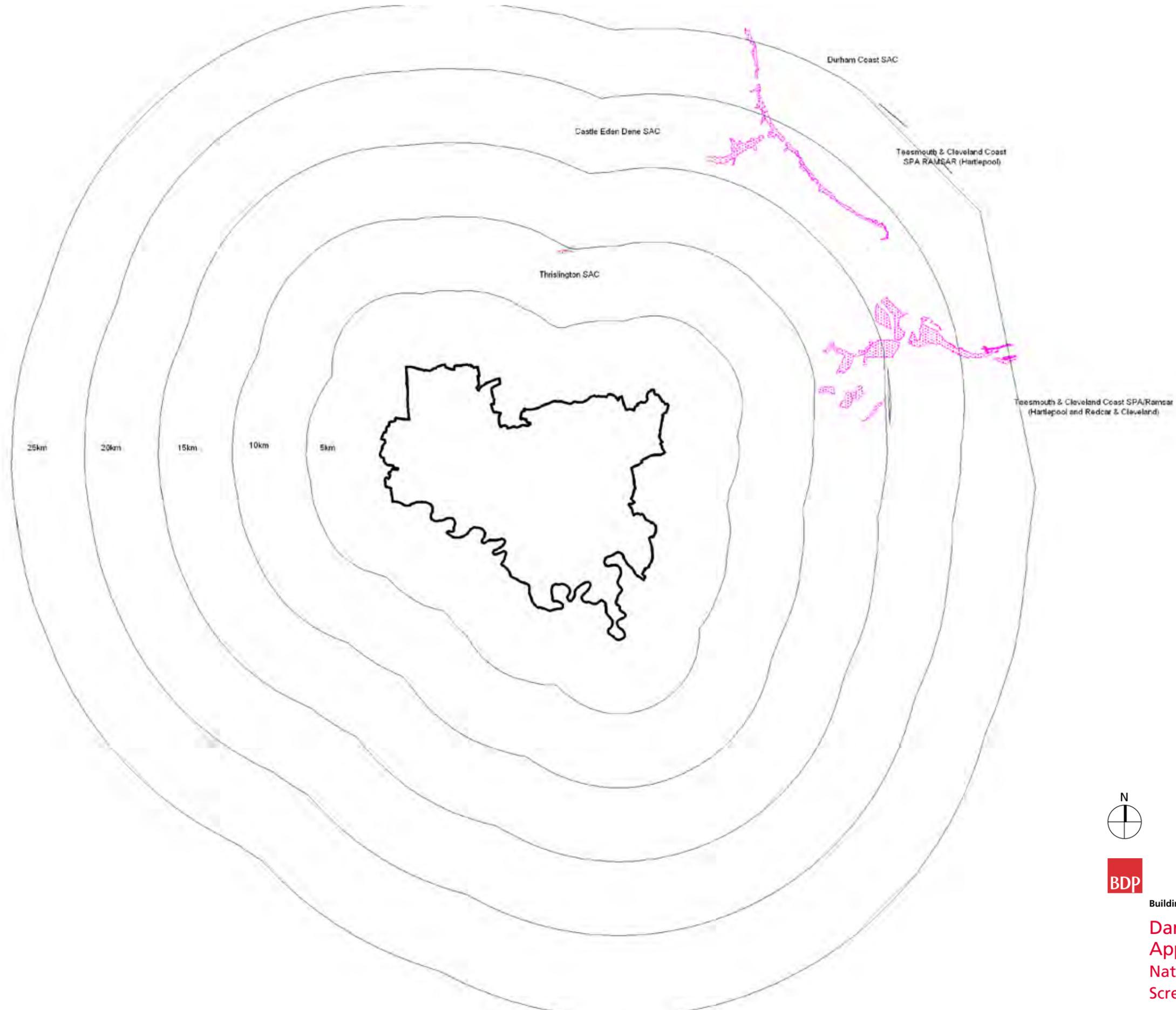
Core Strategy Issue	Relevant Options
Issue 1: Darlington's Sub Regional Role	Sub regional centre within the Tees Valley City Region Key Centre within the Tees Valley City Region
Issue 2: Planning for growth	High growth
Issue 6: Renewable energy generation	Biomass Wind farms
Issue 9: Sustainable housing 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 recommendations have been undertaken when 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 the Screening 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 the Screening Report should be considered to establish if significant cumulative impacts will arise.





Building Design Partnership

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