



WHAT THE LOCAL PLAN SETS OUT TO DO

- Help deliver the objectives, priority actions and key projects identified in the adopted Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Achieve the quantity, quality and accessibility standards of open space provision set out in the Open Space Strategy
- Protect and where appropriate, enhance and extend the network of green space and allotments and improve accessibility to them
- Achieve the hierarchy of provision for sports facilities set out in the Core Strategy in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

Two new documents have recently been adopted by the Council which aims to protect and improve the quality of green space in Darlington, where appropriate:

Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy (October 2013): will help deliver a quality landscape and townscape with healthy ecosystems, an accessible green multi-functional network for sport, recreation and play, that is well managed and maintained and is also highly productive and can help mitigate and adapt to climate change

Planning Obligations SPD (January 2013): through new development, where appropriate, new green infrastructure and/or developer contributions will be used to make sure that local green spaces and sports facilities can cope with the extra use from new residents.

Informal Parks: In October 2014, **Friends of Cockerbeck** successfully put in a new pond with external funding. Throughout 2015/16, phase 2 will involve working towards improving access to the pond. The group are actively doing a lot of work themselves to improve the area and are also planning to plan up to 1,000 trees in Cockerbeck, involving Branksome local school in this.

Friends of Beechwood are currently seeking funding to implement the agreed management plan in partnership with Ground Work North East. Darlington Council provided support in producing the management plan. Through the plan, the group will take forward projects such as implementing the Tree Management plan to improve the quality and diversity of the small woodland that surrounds the grand central feature in the shape of the copper beech tree.

Local Nature Reserves: The **Maidendale Friends Group** is currently working towards taking a lead role in implementing the agreed management plan for the Nature Reserve. A key example of the activities that the group will look to implement include improving the diversity of the wildflower meadows through additional bulb planting and plug planting. This is likely to be in conjunction with Tees Valley Wildlife Trust using funding from the Tees Valley Wild, Heritage Lottery Fund project. The **Friends of Drinkfield** are also applying for funding to help with improving the water bodies that lie alongside the whesoe road entrance, making them better for water vole and other species including king fishers and the occasional passing otter which has been reported as visiting the site.



The **Friends of Maidendale LNR** are also very active in attempting to source funding to improve the main entrance to the reserve along Salters Lane by building an attractive natural stone wall around the car park that will make the entrance much more attractive and help deter unlawful motorcycling. They are also engaged in improving species diversity, helping improve their wildflower meadows and work closely with the probation service, keeping the paths clear. The **Friends of Cockerbeck** are very active in bringing new wetlands into the park and are supportive of the continuing efforts to reconnect the cockerbeck to its source, currently diverted away from the valley by the Baydale Beck.

Formal Parks: Like many of the friends groups across the Borough, the **Friends of the Denes** are an increasingly active group and are playing a big part in counteracting the ever present litter problem. In addition, they are working closely with the Council, looking at ways of improving the play facility by offering a new alternative area for teenagers to hang out, relieving the pressure on the play equipment. They are also very active in improving the footfall in the park by running the annual events programme and the group are also working with the River Tees Trust in looking at ways of improving the interest of the Beck as it flows through the park.

The **Friends of West Park** are very active in looking at celebrating the 10 year anniversary of the park being created with a big world music event in August 2015 and the **Friends of South Park** are very supportive of the Council's new initiative to rediscover the glories of some of the features of the park such as the rose garden and the water and the sensory garden.

More generally, the friends groups around the town are also helping explore the possibilities for recreating the connected landscape that green infrastructure is focussed on creating. The best examples are illustrated by the partnership working carried out by the **Friends of the River Skerne**, the work being put into improving the river corridor by the **Friends of Snipe Pond** and the work carried out by the **Friends of Rockwell** alongside the Education Village and the River Tees Trust, to remove invasive species along the River Skerne.

Allotments: While demand for allotments continues to exceed available land, the waiting list for allotments has begun to stabilise. The Council and the Self-Managed Associations that run some allotments have successfully re-allocated many plots, in some cases sub dividing plots so that more people can grow their own food. The Council is also working with developers to identify new land for allotments within the development process. Opportunities are being explored for new land as part of the western urban fringe strategic housing area and the Eastern Urban Fringe.

In terms of management of the allotments, in the last year there has been an increase from six to seven self-managed allotment sites. Cockerton is the first multi-use allotment site to become self-managed with just over 100 plots on site.



Snipe Pond

Darlington Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2014/15

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FACT SHEET



Open Space: People value the multiple uses that much of the Borough's open space provides, but, for the purposes of monitoring changes in provision, it is the primary function of the space which is of particular importance. A summary of open space in the Borough is shown in the table below.

Open Space: Primary Purpose 2012

	No of Spaces 2012	Total Site Area (Ha) 2012
Parks and gardens	14	82.41
Informal recreation	85	73.73
Green Corridors	39	142.5
Wildlife friendly green spaces	31	109.91
Children and young people provision	25	14.48
Landscape amenity space	41	17.59
Cemeteries and churchyards	9	33.37
Civic Spaces	4	0.71
Total	247	473.7
Allotments	28	28.43

During the last year, a new wildlife friendly green space has been identified at Alderman Leach Primary old school site, increasing the total to 31 and total site area to 109.91 hectares.

Biodiversity: The Borough has four Sites of Special Scientific Interest, whose management plans are overseen by Natural England, all are in favourable condition. The number of Local Wildlife Sites designated by the Tees Valley Nature Partnership has increased to 31 of which 16 are being actively managed. The new sites are South Burdon and Baydale Beck which have been designated for their water vole interest. Water vole have started to show some signs of returning to some locations in Darlington, coinciding with the resurgence of the Otter. The presence



Black Poplar at Baydale Beck
Local Wildlife Site



South Burdon
Local Wildlife Site

of Otter can often assist water vole by driving out the American Mink, which predares ferociously on the Water Vole. Water vole has lost over 90% of their population and range since the 1970's, so any occurrence of this well-loved species is welcome.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The Council has continued to work in partnership with Friends Groups, Self-Managed Associations, education facilities, the community and other organisations to progress key projects which are designed to improve the quality of local open spaces, and the range of activities that can take place there. A key priority is to make sure that as many residents as possible have access to high quality open space particularly in and around the urban area and urban fringe.

In this challenging economic climate, the increasing involvement of the community and other partners is more important than ever to help secure funding that is unavailable to the Council. Projects that deliver multiple objectives in the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy will be prioritised to make best use of limited resources available.

MOVING THINGS FORWARD: KEY ACTIONS

- Provide up to date standards for each type of open space, including allotments and playing fields in the emerging Making and Growing Places DPD
- Make more land available for allotments by converting land where this is viable, by re-allocating existing open space or by changing the management of sites where this is possible
- Work with developers to ensure open space and land for allotments is provided for by new development, where appropriate.

Last Updated Summer 2015

Contact Us: You can access more information on planning policy in Darlington at:
www.darlington.gov.uk/planningpolicy

If you are particularly interested in statistics and data for Darlington borough, you can view these at:
<http://lis.darlington.gov.uk/>

Alternatively, contact the Planning Policy Team on **01325 388644** or email planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk

This document is available in different formats on request.