



WHAT THE LOCAL PLAN SETS OUT TO DO

- Provide a continuous and diverse supply of employment land to meet the needs of existing and future economic development. The focus and priority up until 2021 will be Darlington Town Centre and Town Centre Fringe. The second priority throughout the plan period (2011-2026) will be Faverdale, Lingfield Area, Morton Palms Business Park Area and Durham Tees Valley Airport.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

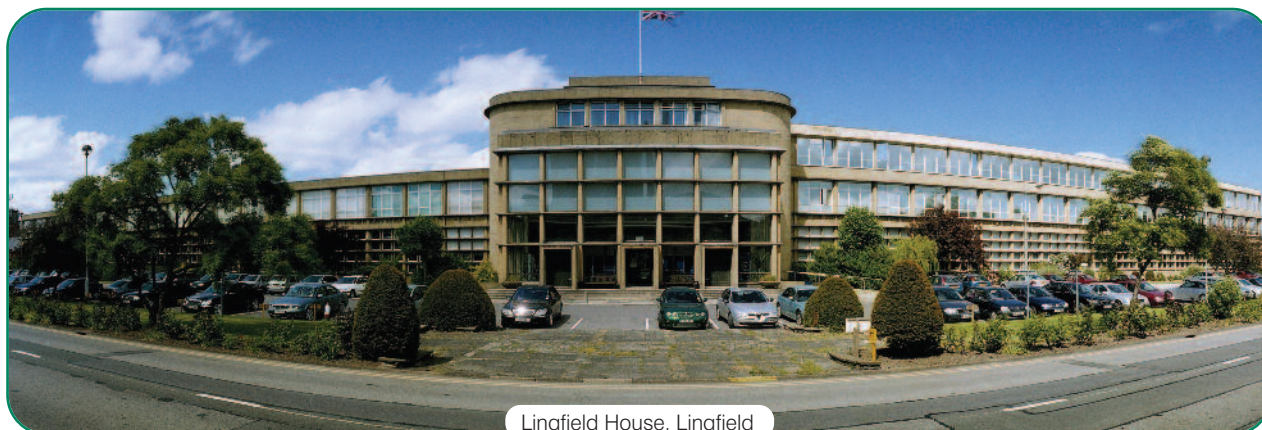
Economic Strategy for Darlington 2012 – 2026



A new Economic Strategy (2012 -2026) was prepared during 2011/12, and was finalised and adopted by Darlington Partnership in September 2012. The Council is working with delivery partners to develop detailed Action Plans to underpin each of the Priority Actions of the Strategy. The Strategy re-affirms the importance of strategic employment sites such as Morton Palms, Faverdale, Lingfield and Central Park that are being actively promoted for employment development. It also provides a strategic approach to tackling constraints to development and identifies investment in infrastructure as key to unlocking further development at these locations.

This is particularly important given the lack of completed development on employment land over the past year. The Council's employment land monitoring database shows that there have been no significant changes in the composition of employment land during the monitoring period from 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012. While the database records are only based on starts and completions which are signed off by the Local Authority, it is a clear indication of a slowdown in economic activity within the Borough, reflecting circumstances more widely across the Sub-region and Nationally. Whilst there have been no additions to employment floor space during 2011/12, neither have there been any recorded losses of employment land to other uses during this period.

A key piece of work is now underway to provide a comprehensive review of employment land. This is in the form of a 'Business Sites and Premises Review' which commenced in September 2012. This study will provide evidence for the allocation of sites within the Local Plan, including the costs of overcoming any constraints to development and it will also inform the preparation of detailed Action Plans which will underpin the Economic Strategy. It is due to be completed in December 2012.



Lingfield House, Lingfield

Darlington Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2012

ECONOMY FACT SHEET



Work is continuing on projects that will help to unlock development at strategic employment locations in the medium to long term as set out below.

Town Centre: Planning permission has been granted for the Northern Echo offices to be converted into a department store. Reconfiguration of the building and change of use would create 5,516m² of additional A1 retail floor space. On the edge of the Town Centre, Sainsbury's supermarket has completed a 2,323m² expansion of retail floor space. A developer has been selected by the Council to deliver a cinema multiplex and associated food and drink facilities on land to the south of the Town Hall, in the Feethams area of the Town Centre. This will create an additional 13,000m² of leisure and retail space.

Town Centre Fringe: In May/June 2012, the Council consulted residents, businesses and stakeholders on a draft masterplan for the regeneration of this area over the next 15-20 years. The area has the potential to accommodate around 650 new homes, around 22,225m² of commercial space and office space, as well as leisure and recreation opportunities, to add a new dimension to the Town's offer.



Central Park: In August 2011, Central Park was approved as one of 12 sites in the Tees Valley Enterprise Zone (EZ). EZ status covers the Commercial Quarter of a wider priority regeneration scheme close to Darlington's Town Centre, which will include new employment, leisure and recreational uses and up to 500 new homes.

Enterprise Zone status brings business rate relief, simplified planning rules and superfast broad band, aimed at supporting and facilitating the emerging and fast-growing digital sector.

A Local Development Order is also in place permitting development for all business (B1) land uses, with limited retail (A1), café and restaurant (A3) and drinking establishment (A4) uses where this helps to sustain the viability and vitality of Central Park.

In September 2012, planning permission was granted for a hybrid planning application, reflecting a revised Master Plan (May 2012). This paves the way for development to commence on the first phase of housing in 2014/15, but the Commercial Quarter is not expected to be implemented until 2016/17.



Central Park Masterplan, May 2012 (image: IDP Partnerships)

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ECONOMY FACT SHEET



Faverdale: Newton Aycliffe based company Tekmar, who specialise in marine engineering solutions, moved onto the Faverdale East Business Park, acquiring a 1,858m² unit.

Lingfield Area: The security firm AEL Systems leased 92.9m² of office and 92.9m² of storage space at Lingfield Point to allow it to expand into the solar power sector. Offices that form part of the former Paton & Baldwins wool factory at Lingfield Point, named YARN, have been occupied by a number of businesses, including First Software Solutions, Avec Training Partnership, VoiceAbility, Capital Accounts, ROVIN Energy, LighterLife, Mintronics and Para-sols. Four Seasons Healthcare continue to expand their base at Lingfield Point.

Morton Palms Business Park Area: Development of the 8ha former Torringtons site, which has stood vacant since 2003, commenced this year, and is due to be completed in phases. This will provide some 1665m² of B2 floor space and some 57,630m² of B2/B8 floor space. It also includes a Toby Inn restaurant which is now complete and a Travel Lodge is under construction.

Durham Tees Valley Airport: Following the recent disappointment arising from the refusal of the application for Regional Growth Funding, the Council is currently working with joint owners, the Peel Group, to develop plans which will sustain the Airport and support new employment development.



Pioneer House, Morton Palms



Durham Tees Valley Airport

Also during this period, specific activity for existing businesses across other employment areas in the Borough included:

Yarm Road Industrial Area: Cleveland Bridge secured a contract worth over £35 million to build over 200 bridges for the Sri Lankan Government. Family-run Stone Technical Services, based on Kellow Road, won four new contracts as it continues to grow nationwide working with some of the leading architectural and building practices in the country.

Albert Hill Industrial Area: Henry Williams Limited at Albert Hill, won a contract to supply two of the UK's biggest road schemes. Mech-tool Engineering invested over £500,000 in new machinery, allowing it to make the majority of its machinery in-house. It previously contracted out more than half of its steel pressing work.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The lack of significant completed development in the Borough reflects the National, Regional and Sub-regional economic position over recent years, and is not unique to Darlington. The new Economic Strategy for Darlington is the basis of the local response to this.

Allocation of new sites through the new Local Plan, including identifying areas of opportunity in the Town Centre and Town Centre Fringe, is just one strand of the actions identified in the Economic Strategy. Despite little physical development over the last year, there is evidence of exciting moves, developments and continued investments in existing companies.

The continuing weak market for employment land and premises is resulting in pressure from some developers to consider permitting a mix of uses on allocated employment land, for example at the Former Torrington's site, where some commercial uses have been permitted to make viable, the main employment development on the site. These issues are being considered as part of the 2012 Business Sites and Premises Review which will inform employment land allocations in the Making and Growing Places Development Plan Document.

MOVING THINGS FORWARD: KEY ACTIONS

- Complete the Darlington Business Sites and Premises Review by the end of 2012.
- Adopt the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan in January 2013.
- Make site allocations in accordance with the locational strategy in the Core Strategy.

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.