



Date: 23rd August 2016

Tel: 01325 

Planning Policy,
Darlington Borough Council,
Town Hall,
Darlington,
DL1 5QT,

FAO of 



Darlington Borough Council – Local Plan 2016-2036: Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

Dear 

Please find attached comments from Durham Bird Club in relation to the above.

We agree the sustainability appraisal should focus on what is needed to address the likely significant effects of the Local Plan. It should rightly focus on the environmental, economic and social impacts that are likely to be significant.

We would expect the sustainability appraisal to include an environmental report evaluating the likely effects on the environment of implementing the Local Plan. There should be an environmental appraisal or assessment to support this as the Local Plan covers a large area with significant environmental effects. The sustainability appraisal needs to incorporate the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and we agree should take into account the findings of a Habitat Regulations Assessment if it is considered that the Local Plan will have significant effects on European habitats or species.

We further agree that the sustainability appraisal scope should include the context of the plan and

- an understanding of the existing conditions (base line conditions) and
- identify key issues, problems and data gaps.

We would like the appraisal scope to

- evaluate alternative options with implications for each for ready comparison
- consider deliverability and affordability
- monitor and measure the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan.

I'm not sure if there are any sites within Darlington itself that will require a Habitats Assessment but developments in Darlington may impact on such sites elsewhere (particularly Teesmouth). I think that the council should make it clear that it will be looking into this. (Durham County Council, in conjunction with their last Plan, assessed the potential impact of mineral sites in Durham on relevant Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) or Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in Cumbria and Teesside).

The Sustainability Appraisal needs to consider the Report of the Natural Capital Committee and the benefits that this can bring to the economy and to well-being. It may have the added benefit of improving productivity of the workforce. This could include taking positive and relatively cheap steps when determining planning applications to include provision for wildlife. New developments could be designed to be sympathetic to existing wildlife and their habitat and promote its longevity by including nest boxes for Owls and Swifts and wall cavities for Starlings and Sparrows. Whilst this maybe not desirable in all housing developments it could certainly fit into employment sites.

In terms of data gaps for the Environmental Assessment and to support new policies the Council should consult with Environmental Records Information Centre North East (ERIC), Durham Bird Club, British Trust for Ornithology, Durham Wildlife Trust and Tees Wildlife Trust to ascertain sensitive sites.

Finally we would like the appraisal to also consider the following

- Biodiversity and green infrastructure to take into account the objectives of Durham and Tees Biodiversity Action Plan species.
- Consider options to address declines in farmland, woodland and urban species and prevent further loss, damage and deterioration to key wildlife habitats and nature reserves.
- Promote enhanced biodiversity and quality of life in urban areas including biodiversity in policies for sustainable communities.

My response hopefully covers your key questions in relation to additional issues to be considered and any perceived omissions. Finally, thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,

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