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Town Hall
Darlington
DL1 5QT

Our ref: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Your ref:
Date: 23 September 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

Darlington Sustainability Appraisal Draft Scoping Report Consultation

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the above document. We have the following suggestions to make in response to your consultation questions:

Consultation Question 1- Are there any other plans, policies or programmes that you think should inform the Sustainability Appraisal of the Darlington Local Plan?

The Northumbria River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) should be referenced. The Northumbria RBMP provides the overarching framework for all decisions that are relevant to water management to ensure the protection and improvement of the water environment. The overall objectives of the Northumbria RBMP are to:

- prevent deterioration
- deliver protected area objectives
- improvements that make progress towards 2027 objectives where the benefits are greatest. Environmental objectives have been set for each of the protected areas and water bodies in the Northumbria river basin district. The Council must have regard to these objectives when making decisions that could affect the water environment.

The Northumbria RBMP document was updated and published in 2016 and can be found on our website using the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/river-basin-management-plans-2015>

We acknowledge that the Flood Management Plan (2009) for the Wear and Tees Catchments have been referenced in Draft Table 2. However, we do recommend that the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Management Medium Term Plan is also referenced with Draft Table 2, as this sets out our investment programme from 2015 to 2021. This can be accessed by the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/programme-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-schemes>

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Section 4.4 of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) identifies that Draft Table 2 does not currently include reference to International, European and national plans, policies and programmes. We recommend that the following documents are included in any future list that is compiled as the SA progresses.

- **Water Framework Directive (WFD)**

The WFD seeks to improve the water quality in all our waterbodies (including lakes, rivers and estuaries). In particular, it seeks to ensure that all water bodies achieve 'good status' or 'good ecological potential' by 2021 and 2027. The environmental objectives of the WFD are:

- to prevent deterioration of the status of surface waters and groundwater
- to achieve objectives and standards for protected areas
- to aim to achieve good status for all water bodies or, for heavily modified water bodies and artificial water bodies, good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status
- to reverse any significant and sustained upward trends in pollutant concentrations in groundwater
- the cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of priority hazardous substances into surface waters
- progressively reduce the pollution of groundwater and prevent or limit the entry of pollutants

WFD information is available on Catchment Data Explorer: (<http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/help>).

- **National Planning Policy Framework**
- **Planning Practice Guidance**

We also advise that reference is made to protected areas such as bathing waters, fresh fish and shellfish waters and drinking water protected areas.

It is important to note that guidance on flood risk assessments: climate change allowances was published on 19 February 2016 and last updated on 12 April 2016. This guidance should be referenced within Draft Table 2: Relevant Plans, Policies and Programmes. New climate change allowance figures will impact sites located within flood zones 2 and 3. The guidance is accessible by the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessments-climate-change-allowances>

Consultation Question 2- Have we identified all of the relevant issues? If no, what other issues should be included and what are the objectives needed to tackle them?

We are in support of the sustainability issues identified in Draft Table 3: Sustainability Issues and Problems, in particular, for Sustainable Development: Climate Change and Energy, Environmental Protection and Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

We welcome the reference within sustainability issue 'Protecting and enhancing ecological networks and making space for changes to rivers' that the Environment Agency identify principles of planning for space within which natural processes caused by climate change can occur. We also support the comment that planning should allow space for natural changes to rivers caused by changing climatic conditions.

The sustainability issue ‘High level of contaminated land’ details, in it’s summary, that this mainly arises from Darlington’s industrial past. We suggest that the following additional text (in italics) is included at the end of the summary.

Mainly arising from Darlington’s industrial past *which has the potential to contaminate groundwater.*

Consultation Question 3- Do the objectives adequately address the issues identified? Is the decision making criteria appropriate?

In general, we consider that the SA objectives adequately cover the sustainability issues that have been identified. However, we do suggest the following additions to the decision making criteria detailed in Draft Table 4: Sustainability Framework.

We advise that sustainability objective 2 ‘Increase the borough’s resilience to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions’ include an additional decision making criteria as outlined below:

Does it consider updated climate change allowances?

Sustainability objective 4 ‘Avoid and reduce flood risk’ identifies a number of decision making criteria. However, we would suggest the following criteria is included:

Will it increase flood risk elsewhere?

We recommend that sustainability objective 5 ‘Protect and enhance air and water quality and make efficient use of water’ includes the following an additional question in it’s the decision making criteria:

Will it protect or contribute to improving the ecological quality of rivers?

We also suggest that the question on the risk of contamination to ground waters in sustainability objective 5 is amended to read as follows:

Will it reduce the risk of contamination to ground waters and surface waters?

We would expect that this question considers risks from both historic and future potential contamination of groundwater.

If you would like to further discuss any of the points raised in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

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