

ANNEX 5

LOCAL PLAN 2016 – 2036

Strategic Framework

Building on our Ingenuity, Cherishing our Quality

November 2016

Contents

Introduction

Context

Vision, Aims and Objectives

The Local Plan Strategic Framework

Introduction

Darlington is pursuing a growth agenda which seeks to deliver 10,000 dwellings and 6,000 new jobs over the period 2016 to 2036. The Council is preparing a new Local Plan covering that period. This Strategic Framework sets out the Vision, Aims and Objectives for planning new development in Darlington Borough and will be a key reference point for the development of the Local Plan as it progresses.

Having clear links to other plans, policies and programmes, it will help to realise the ambitions and priorities of 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed'.

It seeks to promote sustainable economic growth and new housing to meet local and regional needs. At the same time, the Plan aims to protect and enhance the things that make Darlington distinctive, such as its abundance of greenery, its wealth of historic buildings and heritage, its vibrant market town character, attractive villages and areas of open countryside.

Context

Darlington Borough is a unitary local authority area that lies at the western end of the Tees Valley, a sub-regional grouping also including the unitary authorities of Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland, Middlesbrough and Stockton-on-Tees. The Borough is regarded as the 'gateway' to the Tees Valley and the wider North East region of England, lying adjacent to the Yorkshire and Humber region, with which it shares a boundary, formed by the River Tees.

The Tees Valley local authorities, and their private and public sector partners, work together to tackle key strategic economic challenges, through the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA). Its two ambitions are **to drive the transition to a high value, low carbon economy**, and **to create a more diversified and inclusive economy**. The Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) details how the ambitions will be delivered over the next 5-10 years and identifies priorities for intervention.

The Borough needs to grow its economic base and deliver more housing, if it is to continue to increase the number of jobs available for its residents across all sectors, increase wage levels and meet the housing aspirations and needs of the current and future population.

Vision, Aims and Objectives

The Vision for the Local Plan (below) reflects comments made during the Strategic Issues and Scoping consultation process. It sets out what the Plan is seeking to achieve.

'In 2036, Darlington Borough will have maintained its identity as a cohesive historic market town situated amongst countryside and villages, whilst developing its reputation for ingenuity and its status as an economic driver in the Tees Valley. Its coherent community, natural and historic environment will continue to be cherished protected and celebrated. The opportunities available in Darlington and its links with other centres will make the Borough an attractive place for both residential and commercial investment, with the Borough's needs for housing, jobs and other development being met, supported by new and improved infrastructure and community facilities. Together with excellent national and regional connectivity and accessibility, these characteristics will mean Darlington continues to thrive and be a great place to live, work and invest.'

The following Aims and Objectives will provide the link between the Vision and the spatial strategy. They represent a translation of the Vision into specific themes and what this will mean for place making in the Darlington context if it is to be successful.

Overarching Aims

- Deliver sustainable development to meet the Borough's needs through a cohesive plan which makes the best use of land and resources
- Protect or enhance the quality of Darlington's built, natural and historic environment, and to use it positively to create great places.
- Deliver new development that is capable of facilitating local or strategic infrastructure
- Contribute to the satisfaction, fulfilment, health and wellbeing of the population of the Borough

Specific Aims and Objectives

- **Facilitating Economic Growth** – facilitate sustainable economic growth of 6,000 new jobs within the borough.

To achieve this Aim, our Objectives are:

- Create the conditions to attract and retain investment, with a range and continuous supply of employment development opportunities in sustainable locations
- Provide a choice and range of sites capable of delivering this growth. These will include established areas of existing economic development but also be flexible enough to be responsive to accommodate growth industries or the changing needs of established sectors.

- Support clusters of economic activity in the context of the Tees valley Strategic Economic Plan and the Council's Economic Strategy.
 - Promote Darlington Town Centre as the main location for shopping, leisure, culture and employment and strengthen its role as a regional centre for such activities;
 - Diversify the rural economy to support businesses and existing communities whilst also protecting the boroughs valued open countryside.
 - Facilitate the delivery of strategic infrastructure that supports economic growth, including the supply of appropriate housing.
- **Meeting Housing Needs** – enable the development of at least 10,000 new homes in order to meet the housing needs and aspirations of those living and working in the borough.

To achieve this Aim, our Objectives are:

- Maintain a supply of land for new housing developments that meets the needs of the growing number of households.
 - Achieve and maintain a 5 year supply of housing land
 - Provide a range of housing products providing types and tenures of homes suitable for all people, including people who are unable to access housing on the open market and for the boroughs aging population.
 - To have a portfolio of sites of different sizes, different housing products and delivery rates for the short, medium and long term.
- **A Well Connected Borough** – to capitalise on Darlington's excellent existing connections to the national strategic transport network and seek improvements to regional connectivity across the borough. New development that supports delivery of key infrastructure and a sustainable pattern for growth will be supported.

In order to deliver this Aim we have the following Objectives:

- Ensure that new development is in places where it will be reasonably accessible by public transport, cycling and walking.
 - Maintain and improve transport links between communities within the borough and further afield.
 - Support development that enhances regionally and nationally important transport links including those offered by Banktop Station, Durham Tees Valley Airport, Teesport and the Strategic Road Network.
 - Delivery of communication infrastructure, including broadband, to enhance business and social interaction.
 - To improve the local highway network by managing out strategic highway demands.
- **Create Cohesive, Proud & Healthy Communities** – create and support cohesive communities through good place-making to achieve lively, well located and distinctive places with an increased sense of civic pride.

To achieve this Aim, our Objectives are;

- Protect, maintain and enhance Darlington's identity as a historic market town, set amongst countryside and surrounding villages with strong links to Railway, Quaker and industrial heritage.
 - Maintain a vibrant, attractive and safe market town centre that embraces its historic character whilst functioning as a modern centre offering retail, culture, leisure, tourism and employment opportunities.
 - Secure provision of necessary infrastructure to support growth including improvements to existing services.
 - Ensure convenient access to local goods and services
 - Ensure residents have reasonable access to education facilities within the borough and where necessary developers should contribute to the provision of education facilities in sustainable locations;
 - Improve access to green spaces for leisure and recreation
 - To build healthier homes and environments that support independence at all stages of life.
 - Tackle unhealthy environments by creating walkable neighbourhoods, delivering improved infrastructure for safe, active travel and more accessible public transport.
 - Create connected neighbourhoods, with local social infrastructure and inclusive public spaces that enable people of all ages and abilities from all backgrounds to develop strong communities.
 - Create healthy workplaces, schools and leisure facilities that make the most of opportunities to encourage physical activity, healthy eating and positive mental health and wellbeing.
- **Protect and Enhance the Countryside and Natural Environment** – maintain and enhance the biodiversity, character and appearance of the countryside and wildlife habitats.

In order to achieve this Aim, our Objectives are;

- Development within and around existing urban areas will be expected to protect, and add to, the boroughs rich and accessible existing Green Infrastructure network.
 - Improve the amount of quality accessible greenspace where deficiencies in provision are identified;
 - Protect and enhance bio-diversity across the Borough
 - Mitigate flood risks through environmental and ecological improvement of the River Skerne and River Tees
- **Responding to Climate Change and Reducing Energy Consumption** – support the continued move towards a low carbon community by encouraging efficient use of resources, good design and well located development, whilst increasing resilience to impacts from climate change..

In order to achieve this Aim, our Objectives are:

- Manage flood risk from all sources;

- Maximise opportunities to generate and use renewable energy in all developments;
- Encourage energy and water efficient design in new development;
- Locate development in areas not susceptible to flooding and encourage flood resilient design where necessary.

The Local Plan Strategic Framework

The Council's Core Strategy, adopted in 2011, set out a locational strategy for the Borough to concentrate development in the main urban area. This meant strategic development would be concentrated on previously developed land, including Central Park and the Town Centre Fringe (Central Growth Zone), and greenfield Growth Zones at the North West and Eastern Urban fringes . If sufficient dwellings were not delivered, it was planned that further sites would be released on the urban fringe and in sustainable village locations.

Since the Core Strategy's adoption, it has become apparent that the strategy it identified will not deliver sufficient dwellings to meet the Borough's need for new homes. This is partly due to under delivery in these locations, but also because the plan period has been extended until 2036 and the number of dwellings required in the Borough each year is higher than was previously being planned for. Nevertheless, it remains a sound strategy for meeting a significant proportion of the Borough's housing need, and the sites included in the Interim Planning Position Statement (IPPS), will form the basis of the housing allocations in the new Local Plan. However, the new strategy will need build on this approach to deliver the additional dwellings.

The Local Plan is about more than housing and employment development; it should be about great place making.

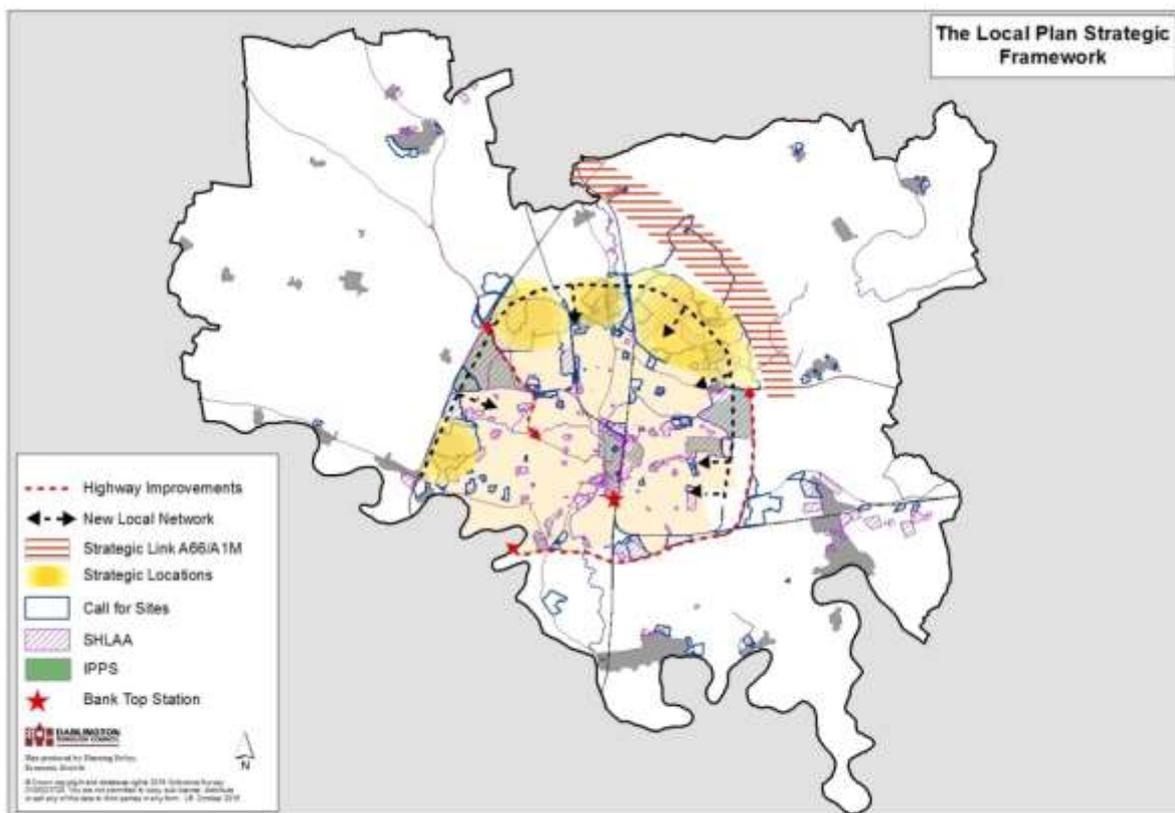
In order to plan effectively, determine which areas and sites will best achieve Darlington's Local Plan Vision, Aims and Objectives, and deliver good planning outcomes, potential areas for strategic scale development have been assessed against various criteria (summarised below) to determine whether they will be taken forward into the Local Plan site allocations process.

- (a) The delivery of a distinctive place – a cohesive market town surrounded by countryside and villages, with a strong sense of community, heritage and an attractive environment.
- (b) Contributing to a sustainable pattern of development (connectivity and relation to the existing urban form, integration and cohesiveness of communities), both Borough wide and within the area itself.

- (c) Potential to deliver a significant number of dwellings between now and 2036 in an appropriately phased and planned fashion, including a mix of tenures, types and price of the type which would allow the borough to attract and also retain the population profile to needed in the area.
- (d) Enabling the local management of the transport network to reduce the impact of congestion as a consequence of growth.
- (e) Facilitating the Tees Valley and Northern Power House wide/sub regional economy including improving east-west connectivity and accessibility.
- (f) Potential to enhance and deliver new infrastructure and amenities on a neighbourhood, local or regional scale infrastructure (including social).

This Framework continues the pattern of compact urban development surrounded by countryside and established rural settlements, set out in the Core Strategy. Development within the main urban area will be focussed on sites with planning permission (commitments) and sites previously identified through the Local Plan Allocations process, now included in the Interim Planning Position Statement. Final decisions on individual site allocations, phasing and delivery, will need to reflect an updated Objectively Assessed Needs Study (OAN), and the revised Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) and evidence of viability.

Map 1: Strategic Framework



Developing brownfield sites remains an important aspiration of the plan and the potential for the Town Centre, Town Centre Fringe and Central Park (Central Growth Zone) to contribute a mix of uses, alongside environmental improvements, will be tested.

The adopted Core Strategy North West Urban Fringe and Eastern Urban Fringe strategic development locations remain an integral part of the locational strategy providing significant residential development opportunities within the wider context of the North West Growth Zone and the Eastern Growth Zone.

To enable a continuous supply of developable sites throughout the plan period, a broad portfolio of sites will be needed. The villages are expected to contribute to the short term/ medium term supply profile of the plan, brought forward through planning applications and potentially Neighbourhood Plans where appropriate.

The Council, as Local Planning Authority, has a duty to plan to meet the housing and employment needs of the Borough. Delivering this growth agenda will increase pressure on already stretched infrastructure. The nature of the existing infrastructure is such that, for example, even without further development the local transport network will become increasingly congested as a result of background traffic growth trends. Similarly, the capacity of community infrastructure to cope with the growing demand for education and health services will also be tested.

The identification of strategic development locations as part of this 20 year plan is, in part, a response to these and other strategic pressures in that the scale of the proposed development should enable the provision of additional infrastructure (social and physical) within well planned new communities. On transport infrastructure in particular, it is anticipated proposals for strategic routes to the north of the town (Northern Relief Road) and around the A66, will improve connections with Teesside / Teesport and the wider regional and national network. This in turn will relieve pressure on traffic hotspots within the urban area.

It is felt the locational strategy set out here provides the best solution to maintain a coherent town and manage both existing infrastructure and support provision of future infrastructure to help achieve the Vision, Aims and Objectives.