

What will Darlington look like in 20 years?

Consultation is underway on the draft Local Plan, a document setting out how and where the new homes and jobs that are needed in the borough over the next 20 years will be located, along with policies to guide development, including the protection of the borough's natural and built environment.

This is YOUR chance to have YOUR say on the proposals and policies that will shape Darlington for the next generation.

The Local Plan has been developed over two and a half years, using population, transport and economic data to give us an idea of what might be needed in the next 20 years.

Darlington's population is growing, with people living for longer and more people living independently. As the economy grows and more jobs are created, more people will be needed to fill these jobs. They will all need homes.

A lot of the focus in the Local Plan is about the housing and employment needs of the borough, and where the council is proposing to allow development over the next 20 years to meet these needs.

The purpose of the Local Plan is to ensure that development takes place in sustainable locations, supported by community facilities and infrastructure, helping the council to restrict building proposals in less suitable locations.

The plan has been developed with input from residents, community groups, external experts and developers.

The aim is to create a framework that will guide planning decisions for the next 20 years and give more certainty, both to residents and the

development industry. It will also be clear to health, education and transport authorities, where development and population growth is expected and what infrastructure is required.

Consultation events

The planning policy team has arranged a series of drop in sessions, at a variety of times and days to give everyone the chance to take part, where they will be available to speak face to face about the Local Plan.

We hope as many people as possible will take the chance to find out more about the Local Plan and find out the facts for themselves, so they can make an informed decision about the plan and its potential impact on the future of Darlington.

**Saturday 14 July, 10am-4pm
Festival of Ingenuity,
Darlington town centre**

**Tuesday 17 July, 2-6pm
Dolphin Centre drop-in**

**Sat 28 July, 11am-3pm
Dolphin Centre drop-in**

**Monday 30 July, 3-7pm
Dolphin Centre drop-in**

There is a website dedicated to the Local Plan, which includes a consultation portal to submit your comments, at www.darlington.gov.uk/localplan

Printed copies of the Local Plan and the policy maps will also be available to view in Crown Street and Cockerton Libraries and at customer services in the Town Hall during the consultation.

Consultation on the Local Plan is open NOW – **have your say before 2 August**

Setting out the facts

David Hand, the council's head of planning policy and economic strategy, answers questions on the Local Plan



The council is consulting on a new Local Plan – what is a Local Plan and why do we need one?

A Local Plan is a legal document that all councils must have. It sets out how much development is likely to be needed in the next 20 years across the borough, identifying areas of land that are considered suitable for development.

It looks at where housing development will – and, just as importantly, won't – be allowed, but it also considers things like roads and public transport, as well as the future demand for facilities such as schools, and green spaces.

Why is the Local Plan important?

At the moment we have to follow national guidelines when a planning application is made and often our hands are tied at a local level because the Government wants to encourage house building. That means there has to be very strong planning reasons to turn down a development because otherwise, if it is taken to appeal, the decision can be overruled by an inspector.

The Local Plan brings the power to turn down a development back to the council – if a developer wants to build on a piece of land we've said is not suitable for development, we'll have much more power to say no.

Where will new houses be built?

Across a mixture of sites and locations. Some of which already have permission including Lingfield Point, Central Park and West Park. New sites are primarily located in and around the main urban area of Darlington and the larger villages. Two large strategic allocations are also identified at

Skerningham and Faverdale. The town, as with most settlements, has periodically expanded over the decades since it was established to accommodate changes in population and as a result of economic growth.

Why are so many sites proposed on green field land and not previously developed brown field land?

Whilst the use of previously developed sites is still encouraged in national policy, there are not the financial incentives that previously existed to clean up sites to make them suitable for residential use. The draft plan contains as many brownfield sites as we consider are likely to be developed in the current economic climate, but this will be kept under review. If suitable schemes are proposed on brownfield sites they will continue to be supported in the plan.

To deliver sufficient housing to match Darlington's growth aspirations it is therefore necessary to look at sites that haven't been previously developed and these are often either agricultural land or green spaces on the edges of existing settlements. Assessment of over 350 sites has narrowed down these sites to those that we consider have the most potential to deliver the plan's aims for the next 20 years.

Green space is valuable for numerous reasons including agriculture, biodiversity and people's health and wellbeing and policies are included within the plan to offer protection to these spaces.

Does Darlington have Green Belt?

No. This is a formal designation, typically only found in larger urban areas to prevent settlements merging.

about the Local Plan

But green space is so important for Darlington

We agree, which is why the sites that have been proposed for development in the plan will be expected to provide green spaces to meet the needs of the new residents and/or employees. In particular Skerningham and Faverdale have specific masterplans. For example, if you look at the area outlined as 'development' for Skerningham, you would imagine a sea of houses but that's not the case. More than 45% of the area outlined will be green space.

There are a number of policies dedicated to the environment, open spaces, flood prevention and future energy needs in the plan.

How will the growth of Darlington benefit its residents?

Continuing to grow Darlington's economy will be key to its future over the next 20 years and this has been a key aim of the plan from the outset. An increased population will provide increased investment to support the town centre and other community facilities such as leisure and culture. Additional development also brings additional investment as a result of money paid by developers to spend on improved infrastructure including education, highways, green spaces etc.

Where can I find out more about the Local Plan and have my say?

The planning policy team will be holding a series of public consultation sessions where you can talk face to face with an officer, who will be able to answer any questions you have (see page 21 for the list of dates and locations).

I would urge people to attend these sessions because it's a great opportunity to discuss the plans with officers and find out how to submit your comments for consideration in the final version of the plan.

There's also a lot more information on our dedicated webpage – www.darlington.gov.uk/localplan – which also contains everything you need to know about the Local Plan and access to the consultation portal where you can leave your comments.



Vision for Darlington

How did we get here?

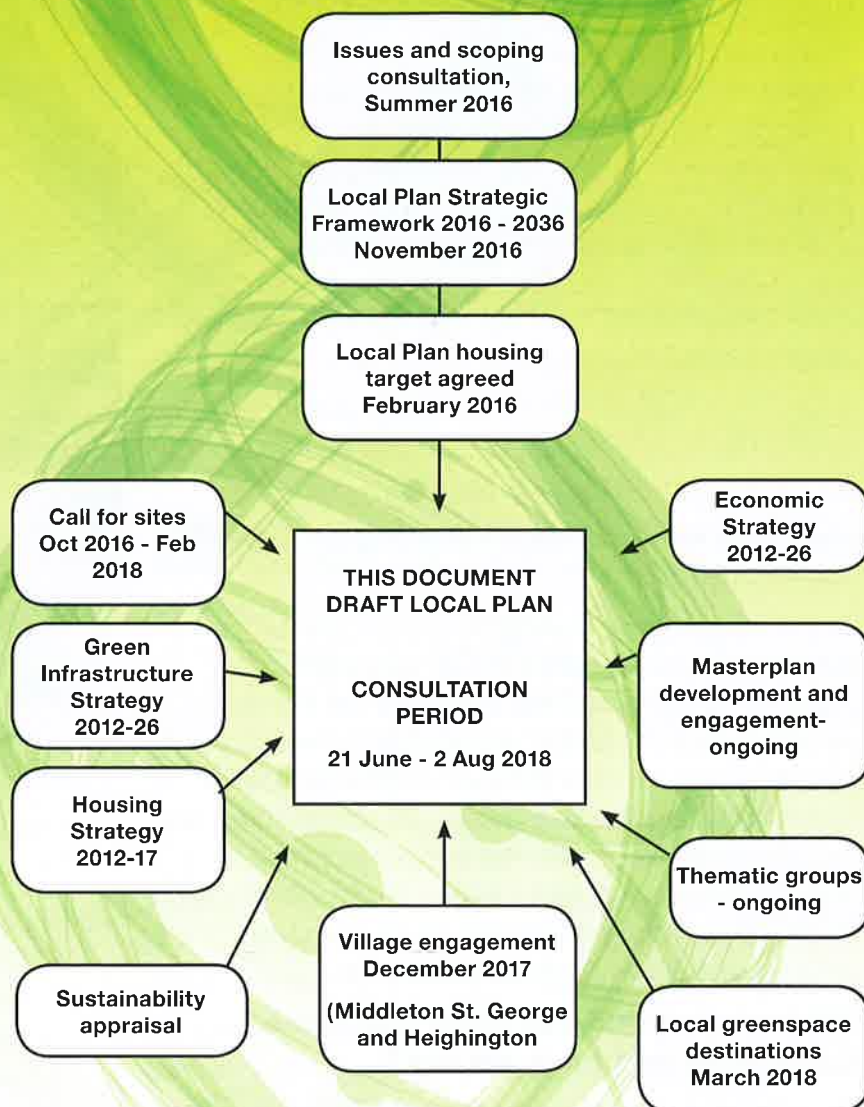
An early stage of the Local Plan development process was to develop a vision for the plan. We held a series of workshops with groups of people who expressed an interest in the Local Plan – individuals, businesses and developers – to talk about the future of Darlington.

Based on the comments received in the summer of 2016, a vision statement was created, which has been used to guide the development of the plan:

“In 2036, Darlington borough will have maintained its identity as a cohesive market town situated amongst countryside and villages, whilst developing its reputation for ingenuity and its status as an economic driver. 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 both for 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 be a really good place to live, work and invest.”



What happens next?

- 2 August – consultation ends
- Revision of the Plan published for further representation to be made – end of 2018
- Submit Local Plan to Government for examination – January/ February 2019
- Public examination of Local Plan – Summer 2019
- Council adopts Local Plan – Autumn/Winter 2019

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