

Comment

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Event Name	Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 (Regulation 19)
Comment by	Alex Swainston (1171373)
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Consultation Point	Policy H 10 Skertingham - Strategic Site Allocation (Strategic Policy) (View)
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Question 1a	
Do you consider that the Local Plan is Legally compliant?	No
Question 1b	
Do you consider that the Local Plan sound?	No
Question 1c	
Do you consider that the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Cooperate?	No
Question 2	
Do you consider that this part of the Local Plan is unsound because it is not: (tick all that apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">. Positively prepared. Effective. Justified. Consistent with national policy
Question 3a	
Your Comments	

Please give details of why you consider that this part of the Local Plan is not legally compliant or unsound or fails to comply with the Duty to Cooperate.

In a time of climate change recognition and the need to protect our environment it would be hugely detrimental to build in such a beautiful area on such a mass scale. CPRE have identified the area as 'significantly tranquil'. In addition, Darlington's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) recognises that it is ONLY the northern part of the town that has "countryside that can provide venues for quiet enjoyment" and "probably the best countryside for quiet recreation". It is also indicated in Section 15 that valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity should be protected and enhanced. This is massively contradictory to what is actually mapped out on this Local Plan. Adding weight to this contradiction Skerningham is also acknowledged by its inclusion in Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy 2013-2026 which seeks to improve "Skerningham Countryside Park" in a number of ways, for example by planting more trees and hedgerows, by constructing a small car park and putting up more signs to improve access for those with limited mobility and people with disabilities, and by extending the rights of way network and permissive REMEMBER THIS QUOTE? "As the Local Planning Authority, we have a statutory duty to take steps to protect trees that we believe make an important contribution to the amenity of the areas."

What makes the woodland even more valued is that it provides a home for the black poplar. Hundreds of saplings were planted in the Tees Forest community woodlands at Skerningham and near South Burdon. This was even admired at the time by Darlington Councillors and described as being an important area for nature and recreation. The North East England Nature Partnership (NEENP), which has devised an action plan for this priority species, discusses its plight: "The black poplar is a tree of wet woodland and stream sides, particularly in the floodplains of lowland rivers. It is now the UK's most endangered and rarest native timber tree and has declined close to extinction with less than 3,000 individuals remaining. Most of these are nearing the end of their natural lifespan and will be lost in the next few years." Skerningham Community Woodland is also recognised as being an important area for biodiversity on both Darlington Borough Council's website, where it is described as a "large nature reserve", and in Section 9 (Environment) of the Local Plan, Figure 9.1 Darlington's Green Infrastructure Network, where it is marked as a "Designated Wildlife Area". In any other area this would be protected and promoted as a wildlife haven perhaps even adopted by the Wildlife Trust or Woodland Trust not given away to developers. REMEMBER THIS? Furthermore, when looking at factors that restrict development on Darlington Borough Council's website, it says: "Designated sites within the natural environment are protected against destruction or gradual erosion. Types of sites include: Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) Great Crested Newt Sites Ancient Woodland Hedgerows" As a resident in the area I spend a lot of my time walking from Brafferton across to Skerningham. If this development was enabled how far will it spread? I've seen proposals to allocate housing on land right up to historic Ketton! Did you know this circular was listed in Britain's Best Walks? I have also seen an abundance of wildlife on my walks and have seen beautiful images captured by a local photographer from these walks. Below are the bird species personally seen by myself many of which are on the red or amber lists needing urgent action to protect them. I've also listed other animals sighted across this farmland. (WHICH IN THE MODT PART IS ACTUAL WORKING FARMLAND) Fieldfare Skylark House sparrow Starling Tree sparrow Song thrush Kingfisher Dipper Kestrel Swift House martin Little Owl Little egret

Badger Bat Fox Deer Hedgehog Butterflies Wild flowers

Question 4

Changes Sought

Please Note your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested change, as there will not normally be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation at publication stage. There is the opportunity to attach Word or PDF files before submitting your comment.

After this stage, further submissions will only be at the request of the Inspector, based on the matters and issues identified for examination.

Please set out what change(s) to the Local Plan you consider necessary to make it legally compliant or sound. You will need to say why this change will make the Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording for any policy or text.

Skerningham and in addition any future build proposals across the Ketton farmland and Brafferton areas MUST be removed from the Local Plan in order to make it sound otherwise the town and its residents will lose the best countryside on offer for quiet recreation. THIS INCLUDES RELIEF ROADS AND BYPASS! I found it very unclear to pick out the right roads additions from the Local Plan so this is a generic comment to include roads as part of the building process across land that should be protected. Wildlife is thriving in Skerningham and the surrounding farmland because it is significantly tranquil. I CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY THIS AREA IS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF NATURAL VALUE! As a mother myself I'm begging the council to please think of our children, let children explore this area, perhaps even consider a forest school? Make something of our local heritage e.g. depicting the start of the 1901 journey of the Durham Ox, get residents learning about and appreciating the natural world and its history. So much has already been destroyed to houses in Middleton St George, Hurworth, Blackwell, Heighington the list goes on! Our rural areas are being lost to urban sprawl. It is therefore unsound, not in the Boroughs interest (REMEMBER THIS IS A BOROUGH!) It does not meet the housing need or demographic. Look to flats, apartments affordable housing within the town. The plan far exceeds the Gov guidelines on housing requirements and therefore CANNOT BE JUSTIFIABLE.

Question 5

Attendance at Examination Hearings

If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate in the examination hearings? Yes, I wish to participate at the examination hearings

Question 6

Do you request to be notified that the Local Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination under section 22(3) of the regulations and to be notified of the adoption of the Local Plan? Yes, I request to be notified