

Comment

Consultee	Councillor Stephen Harker (1164374)
Email Address	[REDACTED]
Company / Organisation	Pierremont Councillor
Address	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Event Name	Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 (Regulation 19)
Comment by	Pierremont Councillor (Councillor Stephen Harker - 1164374)
Comment ID	DBLPPS315
Response Date	17/09/20 09:50
Consultation Point	Policy H 10 Skerningham - Strategic Site Allocation (Strategic Policy) (View)
Status	Processed
Submission Type	Web
Version	0.4
Question 1b	
Do you consider that the Local Plan sound?	No
Question 2	
Do you consider that this part of the Local Plan is unsound because it is not: (tick all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Positively prepared <input type="checkbox"/> Justified
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.

Skerningham is included as a strategic site within the Local Plan. The strategic vision, and consultation with the public, is based on the delivery of a "garden village" incorporating exemplary standards in green spaces, ecology and community infrastructure such as schools, local shopping, leisure facilities and public transport. It envisaged as a place of quality meeting the long-term housing need of the Borough providing a mix of accommodation in an attractive setting. In other words, good planning in accordance with the national objectives set out in the NPPF.

Whilst the wording of the policy has not fundamentally changed the current Conservative administration has introduced changes to the access arrangements to the strategic site – specifically to exclude Springfield Park as a potential access route - and the boundary of the proposed Master Plan. These changes raise significant concerns about the availability, deliverability and viability of the Skerningham Master Plan in terms of meeting and delivering the original vision shared with the public and developers. There is therefore a significant concern that the plan as presented will not deliver the place it claims it will be and the Healthy New Town and “garden village” principles will be empty words.

The local plan examination is a pivotal moment to ensure that the key elements are put in place for good long-term planning and the Labour Group are not convinced those elements are in place to secure good planning outcomes. It is therefore a significant risk that without convincing evidence of viability and deliverability that the Skerningham proposals are now unsound.

The Local Plan is to be accompanied by an Infrastructure and Delivery Plan and an assessment of plan and strategic site viability. That evidence is not available at the time of making this representation and in the absence of that evidence the Labour Group object to the inclusion of Skerningham within the Local Plan.

The inclusion of Skerningham in the Local Plan was controversial with the public. If the Local Plan is unable to deliver the strategic vision in full, public confidence in the Local Plan will diminish considerably further.

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.

The draft Local Plan needs further work to fully understand the wider implications to the Skerningham site of removing Springfield Park as an access point. That work needs to ascertain whether the Skerningham Master Plan vision can still be delivered; and secondly fully consult with the public over proposed access routes into Skerningham.

Until that assessment is complete, either Skerningham should be removed from the draft Local Plan, or the Local Plan process should be paused whilst that assessment takes place.

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 5a

Participation at Examination Hearings

Please note the inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the examination hearings.

If you wish to participate at the examination hearings, please outline why you consider it to be necessary?

Participation at the hearing, in comparison to a written submission, provides a better medium to articulate ones views, and for the inspector to clarify his/her understanding of those views.

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

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Event Name	Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 (Regulation 19)
Comment by	Pierremont Councillor (Councillor Stephen Harker - 1164374)
Comment ID	DBLPPS336
Response Date	17/09/20 12:03
Consultation Point	Local Plan Vision (View)
Status	Processed
Submission Type	Web
Version	0.3
Question 1b	

Do you consider that the Local Plan sound? No

Question 2

Do you consider that this part of the Local Plan is unsound because it is not: (tick all that apply) Positively prepared

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.

Covid-19 has created an opportunity for societal change, to improve our lives for the better. During lockdown there has been reflection of the world around us; reflection by national and local Government, by professional bodies, and by the wider public. In particular, 4 keys aspects are of relevance:

- 1 the built environment – how we use it, and how we could create a better built environment, and in particular housing allocations (policy H1, and others)
- 2 town centres – these are already facing change through the rise of online shopping, and post-Covid this change is likely to accelerate (policies TC1-6)

- 3 open spaces – that open spaces have not been fully appreciated for their contribution to our physical and mental wellbeing (policies ENV4-9)
- 4 and fourthly, transport – that we are so reliant on the car, and whether change can be made to reduce that dependency, in a way that enhances our lives (policy IN1)

The draft Local Plan has been entirely formulated prior to Covid-19. Given that societal change does not happen easily, given there has been a period of national reflection, and given that this Local Plan sets a direction for the next 20 years, it would be a missed opportunity if we simply restarted the Local Plan determination, without any consideration of that period of reflection.

In addition to this, the pressing need to address Climate Change continues to grow.

Question 4

Changes Sought

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Local Authorities can, and do, create change for the wider good. Such change can only happen if the wider public consent to that change. We have an opportunity before us – a society that has paused to think and asked the question of itself “is there something better?”, and a Local Plan that is on the point of approval. Before the Local Plan passes this stage we should pause the process, and consider, in consultation, whether in the light of our collective introspection it still reflects what we want for our Borough.

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