

**Whinfield Residents Association
Representor Ref: 1164496**

Written Statement in response to the following:

M1. Legal and Procedural Requirements and other General Matters

Q1.2. Is there any substantive evidence to demonstrate that the public consultation carried out during the plan-making process failed to comply with the Council's *Statement of Community Involvement* or legal requirements?

- The Skerningham Strategic Development was allocated Garden Village status in June 2019, after the initial Draft Local Plan consultation. Despite section 2 of the Statement of Community Involvement and para 4.3 (a) Whinfield Residents Association, or indeed the community were not communicated with or offered the opportunity to be involved and provide feedback with regards to this proposal, which ultimately has had an impact on the Local Plan. Therefore this failed to comply with the Statement of Community Involvement.
- With regards to para 2.1 (d) Whinfield Residents Association had applied to the Council to designate Springfield Park as a Local Green Space in 2018 and were refused. On appeal we were also refused. As such it was not designated as a Local Green Space in the Draft Local Plan. It then appeared as a Local Green Space in the Local Plan Reg 19 consultation – however, Whinfield Residents Association were not notified of this change despite making the original application.
- We were made aware that a transport study had been conducted around Oct/Nov 2019 in relation to Skerningham which was not for public consumption. Cllr Heather Scott said the reasons for not sharing this information were because of the General Election. We would consider that this does not comply with para 2.1(d) and 4.3(a).
- We would also suggest that the removal of an access road through Springfield Park failed to comply with the Statement of Community involvement in relation to Para 5.4 (b). No consultation with the public took place with regards to this fundamental change and Council Officers and Councillors have confirmed that there was no consultation process for this. The removal of this road from the Draft Local Plan was as a result of a poorly responded to questionnaire which the community were categorically told was not part of the Local Plan process (hence the poor participation). The results of this questionnaire did however change the Local Plan.
- Whinfield Residents Association have expressed their concerns to the Council with regards to para 2.1 (b) in relation to our community and its ability to fully respond to the Reg 19 consultation given that digital exclusion is a problem within Darlington, as confirmed by our local MP Peter Gibson.

Q1.3. Was the Plan shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement with communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators, and statutory consultees?

- We feel that although the Council did engage with our Association it was more of a 'token gesture' and our views with regards to the impact of the Skerningham Development on our community were not taken into account when shaping the plan. Indeed our comments resulted in minimal changes to the Local Plan. Both Council Officers and Councillors who attended our meetings said that our concerns would be sorted out in the planning application stage not in the Local Plan. By not addressing our concerns and continually referring us to the planning application stage process is not effective engagement with the community and actually questions the sustainability of the Local Plan itself.