

**EXAMINATION OF DARLINGTON LOCAL PLAN**  
**BANKS PROPERTY RESPONSES TO INSPECTOR'S NOTE 4:**  
**MATTER 3. VISION, AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND SPATIAL STRATEGY**

**FILE NOTE**  
LP/NE/3915/PL-2

**1 Matter 3. Vision, aims, objectives and spatial strategy**

*Settlement hierarchy (policy SH1) and the distribution of housing and employment development allocations*

*Q.3.2. Is the settlement hierarchy set out in policy SH1 based on evidence that is relevant, up to date, adequate and proportionate? Is the hierarchy and associated broad distribution of development reasonable, having regard to alternatives that were considered during the preparation of the Plan and the findings of the sustainability appraisal?*

Banks Property do not believe that the settlement hierarchy set out in policy SH1 is based on evidence that is relevant, up to date, adequate and proportionate. The approach taken appears to replicate the settlement hierarchy from the 1997 Local Plan with no consideration to changes to settlements over the past 20+ years. Since 1997 two housing developments at School Aycliffe have been completed and there has been significant housing and employment growth at the adjacent settlement of Newton Aycliffe which lies within County Durham.

School Aycliffe is an established residential area and benefits from its close proximity to Newton Aycliffe, a town which contains a wide range of retail facilities, primary and secondary schools, services and employment destinations. As set out in our representations to the Proposed Submission Local Plan (core document 01), School Aycliffe is not classified as a settlement and does not have any associated defined Development Limits. Other settlements that do not have defined development limits in the Borough are mainly hamlets with few residential buildings and are very different in character to School Aycliffe. Whilst part of School Aycliffe is located within Durham County Council, the settlement across the two authority boundaries is clearly of a scale that should be defined within the settlement hierarchy.

Banks Property consider that due to being an established residential area (which has further developed since the 1997 settlement hierarchy was established), the number of facilities and amenities in the local area and its close proximity to Newton Aycliffe, School Aycliffe should be classified as a service village with defined development limits also added to the proposals map.

*Q.3.3. Is the broad distribution of housing and employment development proposed through commitments and allocations in the Plan consistent with the settlement hierarchy set out in policy SH1?*

Banks Property support the spatial distribution of new housing which focuses on sites within the main urban area and strategic urban extensions. Paragraph 6.2.9 acknowledges that some of the strategic urban extensions will take time to deliver housing due to infrastructure requirements and therefore suitable sites in service villages that could be delivered in the short and medium term have also been included.

Banks Property consider that the inclusion of a small number of additional sites within the service villages would provide greater certainty on the Borough meeting its housing targets whilst not undermining the spatial distribution of housing set out within the Local Plan for example, the site at School Aycliffe Lane, School Aycliffe promoted by Banks Property.

*Development Limits*

*Q.3.4. Are the development limits to the Darlington urban area, three service villages, and eight rural villages defined on the policies map based on evidence that is relevant, up to date, adequate and proportionate?*

As set out in our response to question 3.2. we believe School Aycliffe should be classed as a service village and have development limits defined around the settlement on the policies map.

J Seabury  
26 April 2021