Skerningham Strategic Allocation
Statement of Common Ground

Darlington Local Plan Examination in Public
As agreed between Darlington Borough Council and Skerningham Estates Ltd
May 2021
1.0 **Introduction**

1.1 This Statement of Common Ground ("SoCG") is prepared jointly by Darlington Borough Council ("the Council") and Skerningham Estates Ltd (hereinafter referred to as "the Parties") in respect of Skerningham Strategic Allocation ("the Site") which is proposed for a strategic allocation within the Darlington Borough Local Plan Proposed Submission Local Plan ("the Plan"). Appendix 1 sets out the boundary of the strategic allocation and the promoter interests across the Site.

2.0 **Role and Purpose**

2.1 The purpose of the SoCG is to set out those matters which are agreed between the Parties for the purpose of the Darlington Borough Local Plan Examination in Public.

3.0 **Structure**

3.1 The SoCG is comprised as follows:

- Written statement (this document);
- Appendix 1 – Allocation Boundary Plan;
- Appendix 2 – Indicative Masterplan.

4.0 **Policy Context**

4.1 The Draft Local Plan sets out the settlement hierarchy in draft Policy SH 1, which identifies Darlington Urban Area as the main focus of future development within the Borough. It is agreed between the Parties that the development of the Site aligns with the Council's settlement hierarchy and the aims of Policy SH 1.

4.2 The proposed housing allocation of the Site is defined by the following draft policies of the Plan:

- Policy H 1 – Housing Requirement (Strategic Policy);
- Policy H 2 – Housing Allocations (Strategic Policy);
- Policy H 10 – Skerningham – Strategic Site Allocation (Strategic Allocation).

4.3 Draft Policy H 1 identifies a minimum housing requirement of 422 net additional dwellings per annum over the plan period from 2016 to 2036, which results in a total of 8,440 dwellings. It also sets a housing target of 492 net additional dwellings per annum, resulting in a total net target of 9,840 dwellings over the plan period. This higher figure makes an allowance for economic growth and 7,000 full time equivalent additional jobs over the plan period.

4.4 Draft Policy H 2 proposes to allocate 492.19 hectares of land to provide an estimated yield of 1,650 dwellings on the Site over the plan period to 2036 and a further 2,850 dwellings on site beyond the plan period.

4.5 Draft Policy H 10 identifies that the site is expected to deliver up to 4,500, with 1,650 dwellings expected to be delivered during the plan period. The draft policy requires submission of a comprehensive masterplan to inform the mix of uses, layout, scale, design and phasing of the proposed development. The draft policy states that the masterplan should adopt the Healthy
New Town approach to site design and that only applications that deliver the necessary local and strategic infrastructure to support the development will be approved. Draft Policy H 10 proposes nine criteria (a to i) against which future planning application(s) for the Site will be assessed. The Council’s suggested Main Modifications [DBC2] includes an additional criterion which would follow criterion i as below:

*Retains the openness and separation of the rural gaps between Darlington and the villages of Great Burdon and Barmpton (see Policy ENV3)*

4.6 It is agreed between the Parties that this additional criterion can be added at the Inspector’s discretion.

4.7 It is agreed between the Parties that the proposed allocation of the Site performs a key strategic role in the achievement of the Local Plan Vision and a number of the specific aims and objectives of the Plan.

**5.0 Masterplan**

5.1 Provided at Appendix 2 is an Indicative Masterplan for the Site which is agreed between the Parties and is the comprehensive masterplan as required by Policy H 10. The Indicative Masterplan demonstrates how a high quality, sustainable community at the Site can be achieved and will continue to evolve as planning applications for Skerningham are brought forward.

5.2 It is agreed between the Parties that a Design Code will be prepared in consultation with the local community and other interested stakeholders.

**6.0 Dwelling Capacity**

6.1 Draft Policy H 10 identifies an estimated yield of approximately 4,500 dwellings at the Site. It is agreed that this is an estimated yield and the precise development quantum will be determined at planning application stage.

6.2 It is agreed between the Parties that the site is capable of delivering at least 1,650 dwellings within the plan period in line with the trajectory in Table 1. This would leave a balance of approximately 2,850 to be delivered beyond the plan period.

6.3 It is agreed between the parties that the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (‘NPPF’) at paragraph 72 and footnote 35 acknowledges that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development and also that the delivery of large scale developments may need to extend beyond an individual plan period. Lead-in and Commencement of Housing Delivery.

6.4 Assuming that the Plan is adopted in Autumn 2021, it is agreed between the Parties that the following initial build out rates are realistic and achievable:

- 2023/24 – 30 units
- 2024/25 – 60 units
- 2025/26 – 90 units
- 2026/27 – 120 units
- 2027/28 – 150 units
6.5 It is agreed that the Site could be built out at a rate of at least 150 dwellings per annum from 2027/28 onwards. This represents circa four outlets each delivering simultaneously at a rate of approximately 38 dwellings per annum. This is considered realistic and achievable throughout the construction phase of the development.

6.6 It is acknowledged by the Parties that the site could deliver an increased amount within the plan period under an accelerated delivery from 2028/2029 onwards. In the event that delivery is accelerated, it is agreed between the Parties that consideration will be given to the timing of infrastructure delivery.

**Table 1 Housing Trajectories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Local Plan Trajectory (dwellings per annum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021-22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022-23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023-24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024-25</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025-26</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026-27</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>2027-28</td>
<td>150</td>
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<td>2028-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>2034-35</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>2035-36</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,650</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.7 Skerningham Estates Ltd have held discussions with a number of regional and national housebuilders, all of whom have expressed a strong interest in being part of the delivery of Skerningham Strategic Allocation. These discussions have helped inform the housing delivery rate and approach to the release of development parcels and phasing.

6.8 Based on the above lead-in times and delivery rates, it is agreed between the Parties that at least 1,650 dwellings are capable of being delivered within the plan period.

7.0 **Highway Access, Connectivity and Movement**

7.1 The Site can be served by a local distributor road between the A167 and A1150. A new vehicle bridge crossing will be provided across the East Coast Mainline Railway to connect the western and eastern extents of the site.

7.2 It is agreed between the Parties that the detailed access points to the Site will be considered in the planning application process. Notwithstanding this, initial work has identified five vehicle access points to the Site from the existing road network as follows:
• A167: A new junction in the form of a four-arm roundabout would be located at the northern end of the western boundary of the Site. This would form the north/west end of the local distributor road;

• A167: A new junction in the form of a priority junction would be provided at the southern end of the western boundary of the Site;

• Barnton Lane: Upgrade and continuation of the existing road into the Site;

• Bishopton Lane: Upgrade and continuation of the existing road into the Site;

• A1150 Stockton Road: A new junction in the form of a three-arm roundabout would be located close to the Little Burdon roundabout. This would form the south/east end of the local distributor road.

7.3 It is agreed that the above points of highway access, subject to detailed design, are capable of providing safe and suitable access for the development.

7.4 It is agreed that the Site will include appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of development on the local road network.

7.5 It is agreed that the existing capacity constraints on the network can be improved and development can be satisfactorily accommodated on the local highway network. This will be considered in detail as part of the planning application process although the initial work indicates that the development could be mitigated through the delivery of the following highway improvement schemes:

• Reconfiguration of the B6279 DETC / Haughton Road / Barton Street roundabout;

• Reconfiguration of the B6279 DETC / McMullen Road traffic signal-controlled junction;

• Provision of an additional traffic lane travelling westbound from the A66 / B6279 DETC roundabout;

• Reconfiguration of the western arm of the A167 North Road / Bonomi Way / Albert Road traffic signal-controlled junction;

• Phasing and staging improvements at the following traffic signal-controlled junctions:
  (a) A167 North Road / Thompson Street East / Thompson Street West;
  (b) A167 North Road / Bonomi Way / Albert Road;
  (c) B6297 DETC / McMullen Road;
  (d) Haughton Road / McMullen Road.

7.6 It is agreed that the extra capacity in the network achieved through the delivery of the highway improvement schemes can assist in the delivery of the development beyond the Plan period including a further 2,100 homes and 100,000 sqm of employment land. It is however agreed as part of the delivery of the development quantum beyond the Plan period, further phased mitigation schemes may need to be identified along the key corridors in north Darlington.

7.7 It is agreed that the Site will provide an integrated transport network, providing new and/or extended bus networks through the site. It is agreed that the Site will also incorporate other sustainable transport modes including walking and cycling connections to adjoining communities, employment locations and towards Darlington Town Centre.

7.8 It is agreed that the development at the Site is not dependent on the provision of a northern link road.
8.0 Green and Blue Infrastructure

8.1 It is agreed between the Parties that the Site will incorporate a network of green and blue infrastructure in order to:

- Retain and enhance footpath and cycle routes across the site
- Enhance the River Skerne valley and the green corridor adjacent to the East Coast Mainline
- Provide green infrastructure needs of the local community, including wildlife friendly natural spaces and sports and recreation facilities
- Retain and enhance hedgerows and trees where possible which contribute to landscape character
- Provide for the relocation of Darlington Golf Club
- Mitigate the impact and provide net gains for biodiversity
- Appropriately manage surface water

9.0 Delivery

9.1 It is agreed between the Parties that the landowners of the Site are willing landowners and that the site will deliver the number of dwellings as set out above (Section 7.0).

9.2 A Delivery Framework was submitted as part of the representations to the draft Local Plan in 2020 which considered how the site could be delivered with consideration given to the infrastructure requirements.

9.3 Skerningham Estates Ltd is finalising an Infrastructure Delivery Plan which provides an assessment of the infrastructure required to support the Site and specific costs associated with the build. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will be submitted as part of the responses to the Inspector’s Matters, Issues and Questions (Q4.5).

9.4 Subsequent to this, the Parties are in agreement that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan will be kept under constant review and inform any future planning application(s).

10.0 Viability

10.1 Viability appraisal exercises for Skerningham Garden Community have been carried out at several stages prior to this point which demonstrate that the scheme is viable. This includes indicative viability appraisal work feeding into the Garden Community submission which has been reviewed by Government and in turn the scheme was granted Garden Community status. Additionally, a high level viability appraisal was included as part of the Skerningham Delivery Framework submitted to the previous iteration of Local Plan representations. This concluded that the scheme was viable.

10.2 The Parties have each undertaken viability appraisals and agree that the development can be delivered viably.

11.0 Conclusion

11.1 The Parties agree that the allocation of the Site for strategic housing development is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with National Policy and is therefore sound. The
Parties are agreed that a high quality, sustainable community is deliverable and will make a significant contribution to the necessary infrastructure.

11.2

This SoCG may be updated ahead of the EiP to reflect further progress:

Signed on behalf of the Parties:

[Signature]

On behalf of Darlington Borough Council.

Ian Williams: Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services  29/04/21

[Signature]

On behalf of Skerningham Estates Ltd.

Christopher Harrison: Managing Director, Skerningham Estates Ltd  06/05/21
Appendix 1  – Allocation Boundary Plan
Figure 6.1 Skerningham Masterplan Framework

Indicative Local Green Infrastructure
Potential Neighbourhood Centre
Potential Location of Community Facilities
Indicative Strategic Green Infrastructure
Indicative Development Area
Potential Link Road Connection
Potential Local Distributor Road Route
Potential Secondary School Location
Potential Primary School Location
Proposed Northern Link Road Route
Masterplan Framework Boundary
Existing Public Access
Proposed Pedestrian Routes
Indicative Golf Club Location
Railways
Rivers

Darlington Borough Council

Darlington Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 Proposed Submission Local Plan August 2020

HOUSING 6
Appendix 2 – Indicative Masterplan