

Appendix A – Revised Version of Policy H10 – Skerningham Strategic Site Allocation

Please note that the proposed changes incorporate the proposed Main Modifications originally set out in the main modifications schedule (DBC2) and those now proposed in response to the Inspectors action points (IN11) in light of the discussions that took place at the examination hearings and are informed by further discussions with the site promoters.

Policy H 10

Skerningham - Strategic Site Allocation (Strategic Policy)

A strategic allocation is identified on the North side of Darlington at Skerningham (Site Reference: 251) to secure the delivery of up to 4,500 dwellings. During the plan period to 2036 this site is expected to deliver approximately ~~1,650-1,800~~ dwellings **of which 600 dwellings are to be delivered on land adjacent to the A167 and west of the East Coast Mainline; and 1,050 dwellings to be delivered on land to the east of the allocation boundary with initial phases located on land adjoining Barmpton Lane.**

Development at Skerningham will be permitted in accordance with the principles set out below and other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

A comprehensive masterplan **including an infrastructure phasing plan shall be prepared in consultation with the community prior to the submission of** must be submitted to accompany any planning application relating to this site, that informs the mix of uses, layout, scale, design, **provision of local and strategic infrastructure** and phasing of the proposed development. The masterplan **shall be led by the applicant(s) and** should be based on **the design approach and principles established in the Council's Design Code**, a strong understanding of the characteristics of the site and its surrounds **and incorporate the key principles for the development as set out in points a to j below.** ~~and encourage adopt the Healthy New Town approach to site design set out in Figure 1.3.~~ To ensure that a cohesive development is delivered at Skerningham, the Council will only approve planning applications that adhere with the **comprehensive masterplan and the Council's design code** and deliver the necessary local and strategic infrastructure **at the appropriate phase of the development identified in the infrastructure phasing plan** to support the **coordinated provision of infrastructure and housing** development.

The key principles for development of the Skerningham site are shown on the illustrative Masterplan Framework (Figure 6.1), including broad locations for land uses and facilities. The site will provide:

- a A mix of housing types, tenures and sizes, including **20%** affordable **housing** and self/custom build housing, informed by up-to-date evidence of the housing needs of the Borough and Policies H 4 and H 5, with higher densities being incorporated close to public transport routes and neighbourhood centres;
- b A centrally located and well connected neighbourhood centre providing local community facilities including a health hub **for GPs and Dentists**, clustered with other facilities and services to meet the day to day needs of residents, education, employment opportunities, ~~and~~ retail **and food and drink (excluding hot food takeaways)** facilities. These facilities should be of a scale and type proportionate to the nature of the development. **Policies TC1 and TC5 will not apply to proposals in accordance with these requirements;**
- c Other local community facilities to serve residential areas as required, closely related to public transport, walking and cycling facilities;

- d ~~Space for t~~Two primary schools, associated nursery provision (a total of 5.6 hectares) and a reserved space for a secondary school (5 hectares), **with the first primary school being delivered on land to the east of the East Coast Mainline before the occupation of the 450th dwelling on land to the east of the East Coast Mainline subject to available capacity within existing or other newly created local schools (see Policy IN 10) and the phasing requirements established in the infrastructure phasing plan. The timescales for the delivery of the additional primary school and secondary school would be identified in the infrastructure phasing plan and/or through the review of infrastructure requirements prior to the occupation of the 1,650th dwelling where the education requirements and capacity levels will be considered;**
- e An integrated transport network focused on sustainable transport modes, including public transport, walking and cycling with strong links to adjoining communities, employment locations and Darlington town centre;
- f Principal vehicular access points from the A167, A1150 and Barmpton Lane and include appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of development on the local road network. **The phased implementation of the highways works and improvements will be linked to appropriate phases of development within the plan period. This shall include, but not be limited to, the following schemes from the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, exact details to be identified as part of the comprehensive masterplan, infrastructure phasing plan and any future planning applications for the site;**
- i **A66/Little Burdon Circulatory Upgrade**
 - ii **A1150/ Thompson Street East Roundabout Improvements**
 - iii **A167/Burtree Lane Junction Improvements**
- g A local distributor road between the A167 and A1150, close to the Little Burdon roundabout, which is to include a crossing of the East Coast Mainline **and roundabout junction on the A1150. This will be achieved through the following;**
- i **Prior to the occupation of the first dwelling on land to the west of the allocation boundary (between the A167 and the East Coast Mainline) the section of the local distributor road between the A167 and the primary development access point shall be delivered.**
 - ii **Prior to the completion of the development to the west of the allocation boundary (between the A167 and East Coast Mainline) the remaining section of the local distributor road to the East Coast Mainline shall be delivered.**
 - iii **Development of the initial phases of development at the eastern side of the allocation boundary will be accessed via Barmpton Lane and/or Bishopton Lane. Prior to the occupation of between the 200th and 450th dwelling on land to the east of the allocation boundary the section of the local distributor road between Barmpton Lane and Bishopton Lane shall be delivered.**
 - iv **Prior to the occupation of between the 900th and 1500th dwelling the local distributor road between the A167 and the A1150 (including the bridge crossing of the East Coast Mainline) shall be completed in its entirety.**
- Precise details of the road and development access points, together with a timetable for its implementation, shall be agreed with the Council as part of the comprehensive masterplan, infrastructure phasing plan and any future planning applications for the site; and a corridor to enable the provision of a connection across the River Skerne to the Northern Relief Road route;**
- h Other necessary infrastructure as required by the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and identified at the time of submitting a planning application;

- i **Retains the openness and separation of the rural gaps between Darlington and the villages of Great Burdon and Barmpton (see Policy ENV3);**
- j A network of green and blue infrastructure, **the phasing of which is to be agreed with the Council as part of the Infrastructure phasing plan, that:**
 - i retains and enhances the network of safe, attractive and accessible public rights of way, footpaths and cycle routes across the site;
 - ii protects and enhances the River Skerne, its valley setting (see Policy ENV 7), and the **strategic and local green corridors (see Policy ENV3). Where infrastructure crosses these corridors mitigation measures should be provided** along the railway line;
 - iii delivers a net gain in the area of **publicly accessible** community woodland on the site;
 - iv provides a pattern of well-integrated and inter-connected green spaces **(along with provision for their long term maintenance)** across the site providing for the green infrastructure needs of the local community, including wildlife friendly natural spaces, sport and recreation facilities **and allotments** in accordance with Policies ENV 4, ENV 5 and ENV 9;
 - v protects the amenity of existing residential properties (see Policy DC 3);
 - vi wherever possible retains and enhances hedgerows and trees that contribute to landscape character;
 - vii provides for the **potential** relocation of Darlington Golf Club to a suitable location within the allocation boundary; ~~and~~
 - viii mitigates the impact on biodiversity (see Policy ENV 7); **and**
 - ix incorporates sustainable drainage systems.

Proposals will be required to conserve, and where appropriate enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets within and in the vicinity of the site including their setting in accordance with policy ENV1. The design and layout should be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Darlington Local Plan Heritage Impact Assessment (2019) to avoid and minimise harm and provide opportunities for enhancement where appropriate. The site design and layout will be required to conserve and enhance the designated heritage assets on and adjacent to the site, together with their settings, in accordance with Policy ENV 1.

Development should be located outside of areas of flood risk, and should be planned sequentially (Policy DC2), placing the most vulnerable development in the lowest areas of flood risk, and proposals should be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment.

Prior to the occupation of the 1,650th dwelling, the Council and the developers shall undertake a review of all associated infrastructure requirements for the subsequent phases of the development up to 4,500 dwellings. Those identified infrastructure requirements shall be incorporated into an updated infrastructure phasing plan and delivered as part of subsequent phases of the development.

- 6.10.1** The Skerningham strategic allocation is a 487 hectare site bordered by the Skerne River and Barmpton village to the north, the A167 to the west, Darlington's urban edge and the A66 to the south and agricultural land to the east, and is bisected by the East Coast mainline. Most of the site is situated within the Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward, with the remainder located in the wards of Harrogate Hill and Whinfield. The majority of the site is currently in agricultural use, but the site also includes Darlington Golf Club, areas of recreational open space, Skerningham Community Woodland and a network of formal and permissive Public Rights of Way.
- 6.10.2** The Skerningham area to the North East of Darlington, was identified as having potential for housing development as part of the Local Plan Issues and Scoping consultation held in August 2016. In November 2016, the Council's Cabinet agreed to engage with the Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS), now part of Homes England, to investigate how this part of the Borough could contribute to meeting the Borough's housing needs in a planned, sustainable way.
- 6.10.3** Working with the Council, the sites promoters and major landowners started a masterplanning exercise for the site in 2017. The emerging masterplan is being prepared with a focus on the landscape and biodiversity context of the site, its heritage assets, and its relationship with existing communities, adopting the Healthy New Town principles to its layout and design (see Policy DC 3). The masterplanning process has been informed by a number of studies to identify the opportunities and constraints of the area including landscape, ecology, ground conditions, historic assets, transportation and accessibility as well as establishing the infrastructure and community facilities that will be required to support a sustainable community, integrated with the existing urban area. A draft masterplan was also the subject of public consultation organised by the sites promoters during the Autumn of 2017. This work, along with the feedback from consultation, has in turn informed the illustrative Masterplan Framework and draft policy requirements for the strategic allocation. The finalised comprehensive masterplan including infrastructure phasing plan is to be prepared by the applicant(s) in consultation with the community and is to be agreed with the Council in advance of any planning application being submitted for the Skerningham strategic allocation site, either as a whole or in part. A design code will be developed for the site in consultation with the community that the Council will adopt and expect the comprehensive masterplan and planning applications to reflect and adhere to.
- 6.10.4** The following Masterplan Framework illustrates the key principles for development of the Skerningham site emerging from the masterplan process and reflected in the policy.
- 6.10.5** The Skerningham site will deliver a high quality, sustainable development of up to 4,500 new homes on the north side of Darlington. Due to the scale and complexity of this site, and the level of supporting community and physical infrastructure required to support the development, in the order of ~~1,800~~ 1,650 homes are expected to be delivered on this site during the plan period (as set out in the Housing Trajectory at APPENDIX A). This is not regarded as the maximum number of homes that the site could deliver during the plan period, additional homes could be provided subject to a review being undertaken by the Council and developers of all associated infrastructure requirements to ensure the delivery and appropriate phasing of required supporting infrastructure (see Policy H 2). The site has been allocated as a whole to ensure that it is planned as a single cohesive sustainable development, fully supported by necessary infrastructure provision and with appropriate mitigation measures, as required, delivered in a coordinated phased manner alongside development. It is expected that 600 homes delivered during the plan period will be located on the land adjacent to the A167 and west of the East Coast Mainline with the remaining 1,050 homes delivered during the plan period located on the land to the east of the allocation boundary with initial phases located on land adjoining Barmpton Lane.
- 6.10.6** The Masterplan Framework shows the potential location of a new neighbourhood centre to serve both new and existing communities in the area through the co-location of community services,

local scale retail, food and drink (excluding hot food takeaways) and employment facilities, schools and a health hub for GPs and Dentists. The neighbourhood centre is to be located to coincide with sustainable transport routes and the green infrastructure network. A number of smaller centres providing local community facilities to meet the needs of residential areas will also be provided where required, located along walking, cycling and public transport routes.

- 6.10.7** An assessment of the likely education requirements for this site by the Council has indicated that the site should make provision for land to accommodate two 525 place primary schools, each with a 52 place nursery school, a combined total land requirement of 5.6 hectares. This level of provision would allow sufficient flexibility for future demand. It will also be necessary to reserve 5 hectares of land for a 600 place secondary school. The first primary school is expected to be delivered on land to the east of the East Coast Mainline before the occupation of the 450th dwelling on land to the east of the East Coast Mainline subject to available capacity within existing or other newly created local schools and any further phasing requirements established through the infrastructure phasing plan at the comprehensive masterplanning stage. The timescales for the phasing of the remaining education provision will be established through the infrastructure phasing plan and/or the review of infrastructure requirements prior to the occupation of the 1,650th dwelling.
- 6.10.8** The site promoters have indicated that the site has the potential to provide between 15-30 hectares of employment land on the south eastern corner of the site close to the A66 Little Burdon roundabout. However, this land was not assessed as part of the most recent Employment Land Review process and the Plan already makes sufficient provision for the employment needs of the District over the Plan period on existing employment sites and new allocations, such as Central Park, Ingenium Parc and Greater Faverdale. The need to release this part of the Skerningham site for employment uses will be considered when the Local Plan is next reviewed, and as part of any future update/review of the Council's employment land evidence base.
- 6.10.9** Development should seek to reduce the use of car based travel through thoughtful layout, including the provision of a network of convenient, safe and attractive walking and cycling routes, integrated into and aligned with the green infrastructure network and existing Public Rights of Way, with links to adjacent residential areas and community facilities both on and off the site. The development should also fully explore the potential to extend existing bus services into the site, or provide a new service to serve the site, routed through the proposed neighbourhood centre. Appropriate primary and secondary vehicular access points and routes should be provided that are suitable to accommodate evidence based traffic flows to, from and through the site.
- 6.10.10** The site will require the delivery of a new ~~internal~~ local distributor road between the A167 north of Beaumont Hill and the A1150 close to the Little Burdon roundabout. The specification of this road will be determined by the Transport Assessment submitted with a planning application for the site. Whilst the precise details and timetable for implementation of the local distributor road are to be agreed with the Council through the comprehensive masterplan, infrastructure phasing plan and planning applications stages it is expected, based on the modelling undertaken to date that the internal distributor road will need to be fully operational prior to the occupation of between the 900th and 1500th dwelling. As set out in the Transport and Infrastructure section and illustrated on the Key Diagram (Figure 4.1), there are aspirations to improve the strategic road network across the Tees Valley including the potential for a new Northern Link Road improving the connectivity between the A1(M) and the A66. A business case, and detailed alignment and specification, for the Northern Link Road are being explored by the Tees Valley Combined Authority in conjunction with Highways England and Transport for the North, with a view to delivering the link road over the next 10 years. It is anticipated that the Northern Link Road will include a connection into the centre of the Skerningham Strategic Allocation site across the River Skerne. It is therefore important that the proposals for the Skerningham site do not compromise

~~the delivery of the Northern Link Road, and make suitable provision for it in the masterplan for the site.~~

- 6.10.11** The masterplan must deliver a high quality, landscape led design that responds to, respects, and enhances its landscape and biodiversity context and builds upon the existing local green infrastructure assets in the area providing an attractive green edge to the town. Around 45% of the site area is expected to be retained and enhanced as accessible green infrastructure, managed agricultural land and the relocated golf club, as part of a wide green corridor on the south side of the River Skerne forming the river valley, and along the East Coast Mainline. In addition, further green space will be provided within the remainder of the site, creating an extensive network of green infrastructure connecting residential areas and community facilities, delivered in line with Policy ENV 4.
- 6.10.12** The River Skerne that runs along the northern boundary of the Skerningham site is identified in Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy as part of an existing and proposed strategic green corridor. Development will be expected to improve the value and ecological mix of the River Skerne corridor in line with the measures set out in Policy ENV 7, and must follow the sequence of actions laid out in Policy ENV 8 to identify how impacts of development on biodiversity can be avoided, or failing that adequately mitigated. The River Skerne must be protected and enhanced, with the provision of habitat buffers as part of any development alongside the river to the north east and west. The site is expected to deliver an increase in the area of woodland adjacent to the river, to offset any loss resulting from the potential relocation of Darlington Golf Course, and to help meet the sites wider green infrastructure needs. This will take the form of non-farmed areas incorporating habitat creation measures at least 50 metres in depth in order to create viable ecological corridors, providing movement corridors for wildlife within the landscape.
- 6.10.13** The site contains the Grade II Listed Skerningham Farmhouse, which was the home of the noted cattle breeder Charles Colling, and Low Skerningham cottage and stable. The site is adjacent to the Ketton Bridge Scheduled Monument, and close to heritage assets in and around the villages of Great Burdon and Barmpton. It is therefore necessary that the design and layout of development on the site conserves and enhances the significance of these assets and the contribution their rural settings makes to their significance in line with Policy ENV 1 and national policy. Also present on the site is the potential location of the deserted medieval village of Skerningham (indicated on Figure C.1: Area of High Archaeological Potential) and a burial site. Historic field boundaries should also, wherever possible, be maintained.
- 6.10.14** Development should retain and incorporate the World War II pillbox in the southwest area of the site, as well as preserve some, if not all, of its original intended views within the landscape. Improving interpretation and accessibility to this historic asset could increase its overall communal value and significance.
- 6.10.15** Under the provisions of Policy ENV 1, development proposals on the Skerningham Strategic Allocation must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report. Development proposals will need to consider an appropriate programme of targeted archaeological evaluation and mitigation, in particular around the site of the posited Skerningham Deserted Medieval Village, previously demolished historic buildings, and other earthworks as identified in the Historic Environment Record.