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Ref No:

Date Received:

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DARLINGTON LOCAL PLAN – LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATIONS

Submission Form

1. GENERAL INFORMATION		
1.1 Organisation proposing site for designation:		
Whinfield Residents Association		
1.2 Contact name:	1.3 Telephone:	1.4 Email:
Alan Hutchinson (Secretary)	0742-1307995	alan.b.hutchinson@gmail.com
1.5 Name and address or grid reference of site		
The site should lie within the parish boundary or area of interest and it must be of significance to some or all of the residents within your parish/ community		
Skerningham Countryside Park:		
Eastern end NZ315176, Western end NZ299185, Northern end bounded by the River Skerne		
1.6 Have you enclosed a location plan with the proposal form?		
The boundaries of the site must be clearly identified and must show the location of the site.		
Yes, location map and aerial view attached.		
1.7 Ownership of site (if known)		
Unknown.		
1.8 Have you enclosed photographs of the site with the proposal form?		
Yes. 4 pictures and aerial view are attached, plus photographs are contained within some documents attached as evidence and on webpages whose links have been provided.		

2. EVIDENCE TO SHOW THE SITE IS DEMONSTRABLY SPECIAL TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY	Tick if relevant evidence submitted
2.1 How was this site identified as being special?	
Was it raised at a meeting or through a survey?	
Is it used regularly?	
Has it been subject to discussion or planning processes before?	
During discussions about the Local Plan and proposed Bypass, many Whinfield Residents and others have come forward to reveal their use of the site. It is used extensively for informal recreation on foot and is the only accessible woodland to the north of Darlington.	

<p>2.2 Is there evidence of support from other local community groups or individuals? Please submit letters of support, petitions, surveys etc.</p>	
<p>There is a Barmpton & Skerningham Preservation Group which is dedicated to protection of the area claimed. See their Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/groups/1907106166276998/ for details</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">√ link</p>

<p>3. EVIDENCE TO SHOW THE SITE IS LOCAL IN CHARACTER</p>	<p>Tick if relevant evidence submitted</p>
<p>3.1 Who would the Local Green Space serve? Does the site serve the whole village/ town, a particular geographical area or group of people?</p>	
<p>The site serves all of the people in Whinfield Ward who wish to use it. It is also used by the residents of Harrowgate Hill area, and people even travel from elsewhere to walk there.</p>	
<p>3.2 How far is the site from the community it serves? A map showing the nearest and furthest distances could evidence this.</p>	
<p>The eastern entrance to the site on Barmpton Lane is approximately 150 metres from the Whinfield Ward boundary. The access at Hutton Plantation from the south is a walk of approximately 875 metres via the public footpath which runs across Darlington Golf Course and along field edges.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">√ map attached</p>
<p>3.3 Are there any barriers to the local community accessing the site from their homes? Is the site open to public access? Is access to the site necessary to benefit from the site? Are there any physical barriers such as a main road or railway line and if so, how are these overcome?</p>	
<p>The whole site is open to public access, mainly via an extensive network of waymarked permissive paths, which link up very well indeed to the public rights of way network. The bulk of the site is existing Community Forest and there are no barriers of any kind. Where paths cross boundaries within the site, kissing gates have been provided or gaps left.</p>	
<p>3.4 How does the site relate to the local area? Does the site feel part of the local area? Why? How does it connect physically, visually and socially to the area? What is your evidence?</p>	
<p>The site is very much viewed as a part of the local area. Whinfield residents regard it as having great amenity value because of having the only accessible woodland immediately to the north of Darlington ‘on their doorstep’. They can reach it in minutes and take a variety of walks. This is evidenced by the fact that many locals use at least part of it, every day.</p>	
<p>3.5 Is the site an extensive tract of land? How large is the site in comparison to the community it serves and areas of land in the vicinity? Does the site feel extensive? Does the site surround all or part of village/ town/local area?</p>	
<p>The site feels a reasonable size because it is spread out over an area extending between Barmpton Lane and the ancient Salters Lane Packhorse track, and it has an irregular shape. The choice this offers to users for a variety of walking routes is one of its main attractions. It does not surround any habitation but runs close to the houses at Low Skerningham.</p>	

<p>3.6 How has the size of the site been decided? Does the site follow natural features or existing constraints? Does the whole site justify designation or could a section of the site be designated?</p>	
<p>The main part of the site consists of the original Community Woodland of Skerningham Plantation and Skerningham Woods, designated during the Tees Forest project. Hutton Plantation and the more recent infant woodland descending east to Barmpton Lane all join up and are natural extensions of the woodland, justifying designation of the whole site.</p>	
<p>3.7 Is there a need for Local Green Space in this location? Is there a shortage of accessible green space in the area? Is there evidence of a need?</p>	
<p>There is no other accessible woodland or equivalent green space so close to the north side of Darlington. There is absolutely a vital need for this green space for residents to enjoy, as they have done for many years now, and they value it highly. Without the site as defined, people would have to travel to be able enjoy walking in an area of comparable character. All of the many paths within the site are very well used and well defined through usage.</p>	

<p>4. PLANNING HISTORY</p>	<p>Tick if relevant evidence submitted</p>
<p>4.1 Is there currently a planning application for this site? Could part of the site still be used as a Local Green Space? To check if a planning application has been made visit https://publicaccess.darlington.gov.uk/online-applications/</p>	
<p>No, but the site is being considered for inclusion in the Local Plan for re-location of Darlington Golf Course and an extensive housing development known as “Skerningham Garden Village”. It could also be affected by the proposed Northen Link Road.</p>	
<p>4.2 Was the site considered as part of the Darlington Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) 2017 – 2018? If yes, could part of the site still be used as a Local Green Space? Please visit our assessment map for further information</p>	
<p>Yes, all of the site was considered. Even if only part of the site were designated, the whole character of the site would be adversely affected by development such as described. Indeed, a golf course in Skerningham Woods would effectively destroy much of the woodland and prevent access to the area, but it might be possible to design housing development in the area which does not intrude into the wooded part of the site at all.</p>	

<p>5. DOES THE SITE HOLD PARTICULAR LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE OF ITS BEAUTY? If “no”, continue to section 6</p>	<p>Tick if relevant evidence submitted</p>
<p>5.1 Describe why the community feels that the site has a particular local significance for its beauty.</p>	
<p>The site is predominantly mixed woodland and is a quiet haven away from the urban area. The woodland is very attractive with a variety of species of trees and wildlife, and the River Skerne is nearby. The views from points within the site of the secluded Skerne Valley and the unspoiled, undulating Ketton Country are particularly pleasing on the eye.</p>	

5.2 Site visibility Is the site visible from a public place? Are there views of the site from any key locations?	
The site is totally secluded from all public roads. It is visible from the extensive public rights of way network on all sides of the site. A small car park has been provided for some years at Hutton Plantation to allow public vehicular access from Barmpton Lane for visitors who drive to enjoy the site.	
5.3 Is the site covered by any landscape or similar designations? Conservation Areas, Special Landscape Area etc.	
No, but it is highlighted, though, in “Darlington's Green Infrastructure Guide 2013-2026” as an important green corridor and an area of community woodland to be developed as a green resource. See	√ link
5.4 Is the site (or type of landscape) specifically mentioned in any relevant landscape character assessments or similar documents? Landscape character assessments and conservation area appraisals can be viewed at the landscape character assessment webpage	
The area is covered in detail in the Darlington Landscape Character Assessment, Character Area 5: Upper Skerne Valley. See http://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/1082706/Darlington-Landscape-Character-Assessment.pdf .	√ link
5.5 Does the site bring interest from further afield to the local area? Is the site used in tourism brochures? Does it feature in well-known paintings or poems?	
People do travel to walk in the woods. It is featured in several publications, an example being “Walk The Darlington Way” walk 6 “Skerningham”. Other leaflets use part of the site e.g. “Whinfield Loop” and “Walks Around the Borough Of Darlington, 4 Barmpton & The Skerne Valley” (published by Darlington Borough Council & Ramblers’ Association).	√ 3 walk leaflets attached

6. DOES THE SITE HOLD PARTICULAR LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE OF ITS HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE? If “no”, continue to section 7	Tick if relevant evidence submitted
6.1 Are there any historic buildings, features or remains on the site? For example, listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, war memorials etc.	
No buildings remain, but there was a Medieval Village at Skerningham Manor, just outside of, but close to the site – see http://www.keystothepast.info/article/10339/Site-Details?PRN=D306 .	√ link
6.2 Are there any historic landscape features on the site? For example, old hedgerows, ancient trees, historic ponds, historic garden features	
Nothing remains of the Medieval Village. The western fringe of the site is bordered by the historic Salters Lane Packhorse Track which carried ponies laden with salt inland from Greatham on the coast. It leads to the listed Ketton Bridge, which is visible from the site.	
6.3 Did the site play an important role in the historic development of the village or town? For example, part of the grounds for the manor house, site of an old railway station, village green	

Not to our knowledge. The modern woodland may have formed part of the original Skerningham Manor.	
6.4 Did any important historic events take place on the site?	
Not to our knowledge.	
6.5 Is there a long-standing event which takes place on the site? For example, well-dressing, maypole dancing, pace egg plays, market	
Not to our knowledge.	

7. DOES THE SITE HOLD PARTICULAR LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE OF ITS RECREATIONAL VALUE? If “no”, continue to section 8	Tick if relevant evidence submitted
7.1 Is the site used for playing sport? Which sport? Is this sports provision free or is club membership required?	
No.	
7.2 Is the site used for informal recreation? For example dog-walking and sledging. If so, since when?	
The site is used extensively for informal recreation, primarily on foot. Dog walkers use it constantly. Walking in the original part of the site has been encouraged since the Tees Forest project. The eastern end extension is also conducive to cycling and horse riding. Cycling leaflet “4 Whinfield” is attached.	√ leaflet attached

8. DOES THE SITE HOLD PARTICULAR LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE OF ITS TRANQUILLITY? If “no”, continue to section 9	Tick if relevant evidence submitted
8.1 Is the site within a recognised tranquil area? CPRE have produced a tranquillity map which can be accessed at www.cpre.org.uk	
Probably not, it is difficult to tell from the CPRE tranquillity map.	
8.2 Why is the site considered to be tranquil? What features make it feel tranquil? Does it enhance the feeling of tranquillity within the local area? Does it provide an area of tranquillity within a busy setting?	
Skerningham and the adjacent Ketton Country have not been invaded by any surfaced public road throughout their centuries-old history. The woodland is a peaceful haven where much wildlife can be seen and birdsong abounds, despite the urban area not too far away.	

9. DOES THE SITE HOLD PARTICULAR LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE OF ITS RICHNESS OF WILDLIFE? If “no”, continue to section 10	Tick if relevant evidence submitted
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9.1 Is the site formally designated for its wildlife value?	
Internationally and Nationally designated sites: Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Areas or Sites of Special Scientific Interest Local designation sites: Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Nature Reserves etc. To see if your site is designated visit www.magic.gov.uk	
Not to our knowledge.	
9.2 Are any important habitats or species found on the site?	
These include all species of bats, breeding birds, barn owls, great crested newts, water voles, otters, white clawed crayfish and badgers. For further information on priority habitats and species please see the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan at http://teesvalleynaturepartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Tees-Valley-priority-habitats-and-species-updated-5-jan-2012-pdf.pdf	
Otters, herons and kingfishers have been seen on the Skerne, which borders the site to the north. The presence of a badger sett has been reported.	
9.3 What other wildlife of interest has been found on the site?	
Often seen in the woodland are deer, hares, owls, foxes, voles and a large variety of birds.	

10. DOES THE SITE HOLD PARTICULAR LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR ANY OTHER REASON?	Tick if relevant evidence submitted
If “no”, you have completed the submission form	
10.1 What are the other reasons which make the site significant for the local community?	
Is the site a focal point or stopping place? Does it provide key views across or looking out of the local area?	
The main focal point of the site is a clearing which is the location of the burial site of environmentalist David Green – article attached. 7 rare black poplars were planted to mark the spot , and such trees also thrive elsewhere in the wood. There is a bench seat. The view north from here across the Skerne Valley and Ketton Country is special and highly valued.	√ news article attached
10.2 What features make this site important?	
It is a safe haven away from traffic and pollution, yet easily accessible to the residents of Whinfield and Harrowgate Hill. It is a defined, largely woodland area with a multitude of paths, providing numerous opportunities for healthy walking in a tranquil environment. A very positive description of the site by Councillor Nick Wallis in 2008 is very illuminating.	√ Wallis Blog attached

11. Additional Questions	Tick if required
11.1 If you have supplied an e-mail address, are you happy for it to be the main way that the Council contacts you about future consultations on planning policy documents?	√
11.2 Do you wish to be kept informed of progress on the preparation of the Darlington Local Plan?	√

Please return your form and attachments by email to planning.policy@darlington.gov.uk or by post to:

Planning Policy, Room 401, Level 4,
Darlington Borough Council
Town Hall, Feethams
Darlington, DL1 5QT

If you would like to discuss the Local Green Space Designation process or anything relating to Planning Policy and the Draft Darlington Local Plan please contact us at the above email address or 01325 406724.

