

Comment

Consultee	MRS Angela Rajf-Green (1173434)
Email Address	[REDACTED]
Address	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Event Name	Local Plan 2016-2036 Proposed Modifications
Comment by	MRS Angela Rajf-Green (1173434)
Comment ID	DBLPMod192
Response Date	23/11/21 23:04
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Files	FOE Response to Local Plan
Question 1	
Which document/modification does this representation relate to?	Main Modification Schedule *
* Please provide the reference number (where applicable), for example MM1, PM1, MIN1	MM191
Question 2	
What best describes the nature of your representation?	Object
Question 3 Legally Compliant and Sound	
Do you consider the Plan, incorporating the proposed Modification is Sound?	No
Question 4	

Please give details of why you consider the Darlington Local Plan, incorporating the proposed Modifications to which your representation relates, is not legally compliant or is unsound. Please be as precise as possible. If you wish to support the Plan or comment on the Sustainability Appraisal Report Addendum/Habitats Regulations Screening please also use this box to set out your comments.

My response is to one part of Main Modification 191 on page 41 of MMs. It is (c) below and the removal/crossing out of this section:

1 ~~The site is designated a Local Wildlife site contains biodiversity habitat and any development should provide mitigation.~~

I am a member of National Friends of the Earth. My objection is based on the National Friends of the Earth policy on wildlife, its connection with climate and public health:

My understanding of biodiversity and the biodiversity of the Blackwell Parkland, the triangle of land (403) and the lost Meadows 010: is summed up in the National FOE description:

National Friends of the Earth

"1.Diversity and abundance of wild species—fungi, plants, insects, animals. 2.The natural or semi-natural habitats species need from hedgerows, woodlands and forests to peat-lands, rivers, wetlands, estuaries and oceans. 3.The underlying natural ecosystems we rely on to regulate our weather systems, temperatures and rainfall, to help hold back floodwaters, and to keep us supplied with fresh air, food, water and materials."

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

The latest version of the NPPF has moved an emphasis towards the environment and has to be considered for this Local Plan and MM191

. *Para120b "Planning policies and decisions should recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage..."*

Darlington Council Local Plan ENV3

. *"Development likely to result in significant harm to any of the Borough's Local Nature Reserves or Local Wildlife Sites should be avoided by being relocated to an alternative site of less harmful impacts." (Darlington Local Plan p 121)*

Local Friends of the Earth and Interest Groups

The Darlington Local FOE has made a submission and I support the points raised in this submission. I have attached the main body of the FoE paper on Biodiversity and Wildlife Site 403

This paper also gives detail of the Local Wildlife Site status of 403 and the loss of the site 010 as a Local Wildlife site after its loss to developers in 2018.

Its loss is irreversible and a concern for members of the Darlington and Teesdale Naturalist Field Club who carried out a botany survey on the Parkland in June/July 2021.

In 2018 amphibian specialist David Race explained in the press the value of habitat for the Great Crested newt and other amphibians. The area around a wildlife pond is the habitat and vital for the wellbeing of these amphibians. The pond is only the habitat for 2 months or so for breeding.

Local Plan Hearings June 2021 (DBC YOUTUBE)

During the 2021 hearings concerning 403 I was surprised to see a low level of importance placed on the loss of 010 and the potential loss of 403 by the Council's Planning representatives by simply desiring to remove their status. I was also surprised that Natural England or the Tees Valley Nature Partnership had not expressed an opinion. and that no clarification was given about the Tees Valley

Nature Partnership and Local Councils, as most Local Councils covered by the Partnership have representatives on the Nature Partnership.

The Darlington and Tees Valley Naturalists Field Club who have made a great contribution to the 2021 Botanic Survey of Blackwell Parkland are members of this Nature Partnership.

Local Plan Housing Commitment.

Since 2012 and the "*Statement of Significance Blackwell Grange* publication", there has always been an understanding that this area of the Parkland is the "*least sensitive to change*".

However it is now 2021 and much has changed in the way we view our bio-diverse spaces. Climate change, National Planning Policy change and the world view of safeguarding the green spaces which remain, woodland and natural environment.

In view of all the points I raise I cannot support the removal of (c) in MM191. I would ask the Council to review, and take note of current world and National Policy, and have regard for this special biodiverse site and its value along with the natural spaces of the Borough

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Question 5

Please set out what changes you consider necessary to make the Plan legally compliant or sound and why, thinking about what you identified in Question 4. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording or any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

Simply remove the 'striking out' of the sentence relating to Local Wildlife Site and Biodiverse area. Replacing the sentence protecting the natural wildlife and biodiversity of the Triangle (403) in a response to the Council's own Policy:

"Development likely to result in significant harm to any of the Borough's Local Nature Reserves or Local Wildlife Sites should be avoided by being relocated to an alternative site of less harmful impacts."
(Darlington Local Plan p 121)

Add document

If you wish to attach supporting files please do so [FOE Response to Local Plan](#) here.

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Event Name	Local Plan 2016-2036 Proposed Modifications
Comment by	MRS Angela Rajf-Green (1173434)
Comment ID	DBLPMod460
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Question 1	

Which document/modification does this representation relate to?	Policies Map Modification Schedule *
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* Please provide the reference number (where applicable), for example MM1, PM1, MIN1	Modification Ref PM2
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Question 2

What best describes the nature of your representation?	Support
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Question 3 Legally Compliant and Sound

Do you consider the Plan, incorporating the proposed Modification is Sound?	No
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Question 4

Please give details of why you consider the Darlington Local Plan, incorporating the proposed Modifications to which your representation relates, is not legally compliant or is unsound. Please be as precise as possible. If you wish to support the Plan or comment on the Sustainability Appraisal Report Addendum/Habitats Regulations Screening please also use this box to set out your comments.

Modification Ref PM2

The following Green Infrastructure Designations described in Policy ENV 3 I fully support:

- . Historic Routes
- . Rural Gaps
- . Parklands

The Historic Routes are more difficult to see clearly, but the Parkland and the Rural Gaps are very clear.

I support the policies of : POLICY ENV3 C) "**Retaining and improving** the special landscape, heritage and ecological qualities of urban and rural parklands"

I would have liked to have seen more clarification within the above wording in particular the word "**Retaining**" in relation to any requests which may be made for future development within these Urban and Rural Parklands either at the end of this Local Plan or during the Reviews of the Local Plan.

All of the Parklands listed are of huge value to our Borough: *South Park, North Lodge Park, West Cemetery, Blackwell Grange, Rockcliffe Park, Middleton Hall, Walworth Castle, Redworth Hall, Hall Garth, Newbus Grange and Neasham.*

Their safeguarding should extend beyond the life of this Local Plan and any future Local Plan

Question 5

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Some clarification about the 'safety' of the boundaries of these Parklands with the exception of those already registered Nationally with a high level of protection: eg The South Park

For this reason although I support the these Parklands being recorded on the Policies Maps including a policy regarding protection, I do believe PM2 to be unsound without reference to a specific level of "*retaining and improving*".

Comment

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Event Name	Local Plan 2016-2036 Proposed Modifications
Comment by	MRS Angela Rajf-Green (1173434)
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Question 1	

Which document/modification does this representation relate to?	Policies Map Modification Schedule *
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* Please provide the reference number (where applicable), for example MM1, PM1, MIN1	Modification Ref: PM 15.
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Question 2

What best describes the nature of your representation?	Support
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Question 3 Legally Compliant and Sound

Do you consider the Plan, incorporating the proposed Modification is Sound?	No
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Question 4

Please give details of why you consider the Darlington Local Plan, incorporating the proposed Modifications to which your representation relates, is not legally compliant or is unsound. Please be as precise as possible. If you wish to support the Plan or comment on the Sustainability Appraisal Report Addendum/Habitats Regulations Screening please also use this box to set out your comments.

I support and understand the narrative in ENV3 as outlined below and support the Green Wedges being available/shown on the Policies Maps, but hesitate with the soundness which I outline in this response.

POLICY ENV3 A) *"Retaining the openness and green infrastructure functions of the green wedges makes an important contribution as a buffer zone as outlined in the Local Plan along with rural gaps, green corridors, historic routes and parklands."*

- . **3.2** All perform an important role in helping to keep the permanence of the landscape over the plan period particularly by protecting:
- . settlement pattern
- . maintaining the openness between different neighbourhoods,
- . each keeping their unique identity.
- . helping safeguard the identity of communities.

The Green Wedge of Blackwell/Skerne Park was extended to the North and the West as part of the Hearings discussions.

In addition one section of the Green Wedge removed (referred to as Site 403.)

The Action Point for the changes was AP 20:

AP20. *"Council to amend the policies map to remove housing site 403 from the Green Wedge designation, and to extend the Green Wedge designation on the land to the north of site 403 so that it corresponds to the boundary of the Parkland with the built up area to the west and north."*

Permanence of the landscape over the plan period? : From viewing the DBC YOUTUBE videos of the Hearings, the Inspector made it clear to the Council's representative that housing and Green Wedges are not compatible.

However, there was not clear opinion on this.

(i) In his presentation/remarks, the Council's representative appeared to believe that there was some flexibility with this.

(ii) Also confirmed by another Council Representative/Officer was that the Green wedge allocation may not have the same length of life as the Local Plan.

This seems contrary to 3.2:

"helping to keep the permanence of the landscape over the plan period"

A confirmation of this risk to the Green Wedges of the Borough came with a Green Wedge removal from a proposed housing allocation ie Site 403 in June 2021

Support and Difficulty: My support is wholehearted for the principle of Green Wedges, and ENV3 Policy and a Policies Map recording the Green Wedges along with the other green infrastructures and buffer zones

The difficulty I have is the ambiguity of Council's interpretation and the Policy itself regarding the ***"permanence over the plan period"*** during the discussion of the Hearings.

Housing Allocation within a Green Wedge: Returning to the alterations to *Blackwell/Skerne Park and Haughton/Red Hall Green Wedge* boundaries in PM15, one alteration seems to remove a Green Wedge because of a 'double allocation'. (Site 403)

This is a housing and a Green Wedge designation in within the Green Wedge of Blackwell/Skerne Park. The question we must ask is:

'If the Green Wedge is so protective, why did the Council ever think of placing a housing allocation there in the first place?'

Housing allocation within a Wildlife Site: It is also worth noting that the Green Wedge in question is also a Local Wildlife Site which is recorded in the *Tees Valley Nature Partnership* Grid of Local Wildlife Sites and other Special Sites of environmental Interest.

I have commented on this in detail in my response to MM191. along with my support for the Botany Survey by members of the Darlington and Teesdale Naturalists' Field Club 2021, and the Darlington FOE response which was circulated to FOE group members. Both of these covered the Blackwell Green Wedge

Again the same question may be asked of 403:

"If a Local Wildlife Site is also so protective, why did the Council ever place a housing allocation there in the first place?"

The NPPF Revised July 2021 does now give a clear directive about land use and undeveloped land:

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

In this latest version the NPPF has moved an emphasis towards the environment and has to be considered for this Local Plan and PM15

. **Para120b** *"Planning policies and decisions should recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage..."*

This area of Green Wedge is undeveloped land.

It is performing these many functions:

1.wildlife site. 2. recreation 3. cooling/shading 3. carbon storage.

The planning policy in this Local Plan should be recognising this as NPPF Revised 2021.

Question 5

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Changes Required to PM15/Policy/Interpretation

A clearer statement of permanence in **3.2: *"helping to the keep the permanence of the landscape over the plan period"***

This would make it clear to the Interest Groups within the Community, and to those developers who may be tempted to put in submissions and challenge the Policy as it stands.

A clearer statement saying that the Green Wedges of the Borough are safe/not safe and a valued Green Infrastructure and buffer as deccribed in the Local Plan.

To clarify in the wording "alterations" in PM15 as to why the alterations were made in the case of 403 ie 'a double booking/allocation.'

Letting the Community know housing issues have overridden the value of a Green Wedge and a Local WildlifeSite .

Site 403 (Known as the “Bland’s Corner Triangle”)

Darlington Friends of the Earth identify with the National Friends of the Earth policy on wildlife, its connection with climate and public health, seeing a clear overlap between climate, nature and public health, and viewing Wildlife and Nature as:

- The diversity and abundance of wild species—fungi, plants, insects, animals.
- The natural or semi-natural habitats species need from hedgerows, woodlands and forests to peat-lands, rivers, wetlands, estuaries and oceans.
- The underlying natural ecosystems we rely on to regulate our weather systems, temperatures and rainfall, to help hold back floodwaters, and to keep us supplied with fresh air, food, water and materials.

Policies Map 9. DBC: Prior to the Hearings June 2021 (Green Hatching represents Local Wildlife Site)



Site 010: Policies Map 9. DBC: June 2021

- Darlington Friends of the Earth has an interest in all parts of the Borough.
- FoE involvement with the safeguarding of the wildlife of the Parish of Blackwell began in 2018, when on the Meadows (*now site 010*), over

200 trees were felled, ponds badly damaged and a habitat for the Great Crested Newt destroyed.

- The site 010 was one of 27 Local Wildlife Sites in the Borough designated and listed on the *Tees Valley Nature Partnership* web-site along with 4 others of Special Scientific Interest, and 7 Local Nature Reserves.
- This site 010 is now a housing development. It may no longer be regarded as a Local Wildlife Site: (***Local Plan Hearing Wednesday 16 June 2021 M4. Housing development: Blackwell Grange housing allocation (ref Site 403)***)



Chestnut fencing and sides of the ponds damaged and dredged on 010 : February 2018

Site 403 (Known as the “Bland’s Corner Triangle”)

- Along with 010, the Triangle 403 is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site in the *Tees Valley partnership*. It is recorded on the *Priority Habitats and Species* Great Crested Newt, and *“Natural Environment Designations” Local Wildlife Sites Map* for the Tees Valley.)
- Site 403 is central between the two remaining ponds on 010 and the Parkland Pond, which lies to the North of Northern boundary of 403 : former Mill Lane). These 3 ponds serve the meta-populations of the Great Crested Newt.

Metapopulations: Darlington Local Plan - ‘Sustainability Appraisal ‘

- Local Wildlife Site: *“Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity”* Site 9:Blackwell Grange East. Site 403:Blackwell Grange East Appendix G p:512 p:527/8 (points 13) CD03 Darlington Borough Local Plan 2016-2036:Sustainability Appraisal
- Recorded in the Council *Sustainability Appraisal CDO3* as Wildlife Site with *“high interest with regards to Great Crested Newts; Strengthen and expand known meta-populations by carrying out pond creation and management work through the “Tees Valley Pondscape Project”* (Sustainability Appraisal p128 Appendix B)

Role of Site 403 in the diversity of wild species plants, insects, animals.

- The role of Site 403 in the biodiversity of the area, is to allow the Great Crested Newts to move between designated spaces for feeding, mating and migrating, so helping to ensure biodiversity remains viable in the long term.”(p 119 *Darlington Local Plan* & **ENVIRONMENT Para D: Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife**)



Ponds on 010 and to the north of site 403 and Mill supporting the meta-populations of GCN. (“Heritage Impact Assessment” “Statement of Significance” SD65)

Connection between 430, 010 and the Wildlife Site to the North of 403-Blackwell Parkland

The loss of 403 as a Wildlife site will disrupt this movement of meta-populations, feeding and migration habits of the Great Crested Newt, causing disruption and harm to the overlap described earlier in FoE National Policy. This population movement itself contributes to the present biodiverse balance. Loss of 403 is not consistent with the Council’s own ENV 3 policy :

- *“Development likely to result in significant harm to any of the Borough's Local Nature Reserves or Local Wildlife Sites should be avoided by being relocated to an alternative site of less harmful impacts.” (Darlington Local Plan p 121)*

ENVIRONMENT: Para D: Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites

- *“Local Wildlife Sites are identified and selected for their local nature conservation value. They protect threatened species and habitats acting as buffers, stepping stones and corridors between nationally-designated wildlife sites.” (P122 Local Plan)*
- *“They allow wildlife, including protected Water Voles and **Great Crested Newts to move between designated spaces for feeding, mating and migrating**, so helping to ensure biodiversity remains viable in the long term.” (p 119 Local Plan.)*

Summary

- The removal of 403 as a Local Wildlife Site is inconsistent with the Council's Local Plan Policy **ENVIRONMENT** p 121 Para D: *Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites*.
- Site 403 is central to the thriving and survival of meta-populations and a stepping stone for feeding and migration of Great Crested Newt population.
- Site 403 It is listed with the other wildlife site in the Borough in the *Tees Valley Nature Partnership*.
- Site 403 is acknowledged in the DBC Sustainability Appraisal Document.
- Development of 403 is inconsistent with National Planning Policy Framework (*NPPF Revised July 2021*)
- It is a biodiverse site and cannot be "*de-biodiversed*"

- Biodiversity refers to the "*variety of plant and animal life in a particular habitat, a high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable.*" (*Detailed in the 2021 Botany Survey of Blackwell Parkland Darlington and Teesdale Naturalist's Field Club*)
- The removal of 403 sets a precedent for the other Local Wildlife sites in the Borough including the adjacent Wildlife Sites on the Blackwell Parkland and former Orchard area to the rear of the Grange.
- Darlington Friends of the Earth has interest in all of the Local Wildlife Sites of the Borough. The loss of this Local Wildlife Site is viewed as unacceptable and unsound.