

Comment

Consultee Mr Peter Evans (1174160)
Email Address [REDACTED]
Address [REDACTED]
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Comment by Mr Peter Evans (1174160)
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Question 1

Which document/modification does this representation relate to? Main Modification Schedule *

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 Legally Compliant? No

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.

I wish to submit my objection to the Darlington Local Plan, in particular the proposed development of The Skerningham Garden Village. My objection to this particular proposed development is based upon two main areas of concern;-

1. The existing road infrastructure and the lack of clear proposals to improve this issue.
2. The loss of valuable prime working agricultural land, community woodlands, and quiet natural spaces for walking and recreation will be detrimental to the local community.

Point 1). For the proposed Skerningham Village Development, the Darlington Local Plan document makes reference to 'mitigation' of the existing Barmpton Lane to provide an access to the estimated 4500 home development, plus schools and retail outlets. This is just straightforward nonsense – there is simply 'no mitigation works feasible' that would render Barmpton Lane a suitable access for such a large development and a significant increase in traffic numbers.

The town of Darlington has suffered from over 60 years of poor road structure planning and still suffers to this day. An inner ring road built in the early 1960's – only 4/5th's completed and therefore never able to provide the transport network it was designed to. We are also the proud owners of a 1/3 complete cross town route that will never fully materialise due to a change of heart and priorities – again, unless 100% complete - a cross town route does not and will not provide the traffic system flow as designed. I mention these past two extremely poor planning decisions as an example of how local residents are left to live with the result of misjudged planning decisions for many, many years.

Please, I implore you not to let the 'mitigation' proposal for Barmpton Lane to access a 4500 home development be the next infamous road planning decision to blight Darlington. You do not even need the benefit of hindsight to know this is simply never going to work. The mention of 'mitigation' to this problem is pure folly to say the least – no amount of changes to Barmpton Lane will ever make it suitable for such a daily increase in traffic volume.

As for the mention of other access points, unfortunately the A1150 and the A167 roads are both at full capacity now (certainly just prior to Covid 2020). So an additional 6,000 vehicles per day on either of these roads is also unworkable. Even the mention of a new dedicated road as noted in the document is not the answer – as this new road will simply merge onto the already full to capacity A1150 or A167 roads.

I am a big believer in looking back at history to see if we can learn from past mistakes (as noted in point 1 above reference the past road planning decisions). As for the Skerningham Development and its access problems I am reminded of the Ingleby Barwick development at Stockton-on-Tees. This 1980's development (the largest private housing estate in Europe at one time) started out with one access road in and out of the development. It was a nightmare scenario – and has taken some 30 years to rectify. Again, I mention this to highlight how poor and misjudged road planning can blight the lives of local people for years and years. The Skerningham Development as it is proposed in the Local Plan appears to fall into this same category of misguided planning. There is nothing of substance within the Local Plan that suggests sufficient thought has been put forward with respect to the very real access problems of the Skerningham Development.

- 2).** The loss of valuable prime working agricultural land, the community woodlands, and quiet natural spaces for walking and recreation will be unforgivable.

Darlington likes to portrait itself as a 'New Healthy Town' or be seen to follow the 'Garden Communities' principles – but then puts forward a plan to decimate an area of natural beauty instead of harnessing this wonderful asset. Once again the Local Plan Document makes a passing reference to 'protect' and 'improve' the Skerne Valley – soothing words in principle – but again total nonsense in its practicality.

Darlington Borough Councils decision to allow the destruction of the ancient woodland trees local to Blands Corner for the recent 'Willows' exclusive development should be an example of what developers actually mean when they suggest 'enhancing' and 'improving' the nature of local areas – it would be shameful and unforgivable if this scene were to be repeated at Skerningham.

Darlington used to market itself as an 'ingenious' town, well let's put that to the test with a Local Plan that that shows some ingenuity and develops / redevelops from the heart of the town centre and radiates outwards. Redevelop some of the neglected wards – Bank Top Ward, Central Ward, Whessoe Ward, North Road Ward, etc. It is pointless to simply continue developing on the outskirts of Darlington if the heart of the town is allowed to 'decay and die'.

Recent history shows that some of the best redevelopment in Darlington has been on old redundant work sites, (The Whessoe Site in Brinkburn Road, The Cleveland Bridge Site in Neasham Road, Phoenix Tubeman in Wylam Avenue, etc.). All prime examples of what can be done without the need for 'greenfield' sites.

In my view, the massive proposed development of Skerningham will do nothing to enhance Darlington and shows very little ingenuity, it simply increases the footprint of the town. Whereas, the 3 examples of redevelopment quoted above are developments that do show some ingenuity and do enhance and benefit the local communities.

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.

Based upon the above two points noted, I would therefore propose that the Skerningham Development be removed from the Local Plan.