
DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE FRINGE MASTERPLAN

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris McEwan,
Economy and Regeneration Portfolio
Councillor David Lyonette, Transport Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Richard Alty, Director of Place

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report is in support of the attached Town Centre Fringe Masterplan document referred to as **Appendix 1** that is proposed to be adopted as the strategy for the area. The report outlines the results of the consultation in March and April of 2012 and the subsequent changes made to the final document in response to this.

Summary

2. The Town Centre Fringe is identified in the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy as a sustainable strategic location where development and regeneration activity will be concentrated over the next 15 years. Providing about 650 new homes and around 250,000 square feet of commercial space, the redevelopment of this area will provide an accessible and vibrant addition to the housing, employment and commercial offer of the town. It will also provide the opportunity to extend and enhance the urban green infrastructure network, which is so distinctive to Darlington, and develop low carbon energy generation and distribution networks. In the Core Strategy, the Town Centre Fringe is a key regeneration priority, sequentially following the development and regeneration of the Town Centre and Central Park.
3. Situated between Darlington Town Centre and Central Park, the Town Centre Fringe is a key opportunity to improve linkages between these locations and improve access to and from some of the most deprived wards in the Borough to jobs, services and leisure opportunities. It will also contribute to a walkable, liveable and attractive environment in what is currently an underused area of the town.
4. A number of key issues were known at the beginning of the Masterplan process such as flood risk, issues around poor quality housing stock, viability and low land values and the impact that the development of the area would have on traffic movement. These issues have been explored and considered through a number of technical reports. These reports are available as separate documents and have

been used to inform the final Masterplan resolution. The Conservation Management Plan for the area is also proposed to be adopted alongside the Masterplan to further inform the development of the area.

5. An extensive and wide ranging public participation process with residents, businesses and stakeholders identified further issues and opportunities for consideration including the value of the built and natural heritage, connectivity into and through the area and the image of Darlington when arriving at Bank Top Station.
6. Based on the public participation, technical reports and analysis a series of 'Core Values' were developed to drive the design process and arrive at the draft Masterplan.
7. The Town Centre Fringe Masterplan is intended to show the key connectivity, development sites and specific actions required to bring forward the sustainable regeneration of the area over the next fifteen to twenty years.
8. The preferred options relating to flood risk, traffic, the natural and built heritage, housing and connectivity have been combined to meet the challenges and opportunities in the area. One of the proposals is a new linear park alongside the river creating a river valley rich in habitats and allowing safe walking and cycling routes.
9. The development of the area over time will be guided by the Masterplan, gradually working towards the achievement of the long-term vision for the area. This change is anticipated to be over the next twenty years.
10. The Masterplan is intended to provide certainty to the private sector that will stimulate the development of the area in a managed way. It will also provide a framework for long-term public investment decisions, to unlock further development opportunities and economic growth.
11. Setting out a long-term framework and vision for the future the Masterplan will help to coordinate the development of the area ensuring that developments positively contribute to the required infrastructure and sense of place.
12. Cabinet considered the Masterplan on the 12th January 2012 and it was agreed that it would be consulted on prior to adoption. This consultation took place between March and May 2012. The results of the consultation are described in this report and the Masterplan was redrafted in response to this. The finalised Masterplan is attached in Appendix 1.
13. The Masterplan will help to unlock development opportunities in the area because it provides a way of dealing with issues that would otherwise render development uneconomic, such as flood risk.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that Cabinet agree to adopt the Town Centre Masterplan as in Appendix 1 and the associated Conservation Management Plan.

Reasons

15. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) The master planning of the area is a part of the ongoing plan making process and is a continuation of work already undertaken.
- (b) The adopted Masterplan will stimulate, promote and help to manage the development of the area in line with the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy, facilitating growth, economic development and the creation of jobs.

Richard Alty, Director of Place

Background Papers

- (i) Darlington Local Development Framework, Core Strategy 2011
- (ii) Connections Study 2009

Technical Reports

- (iii) Conservation Management Plan
- (iv) JBA Flood Risk Report
- (v) Environmental Risk Assessment
- (vi) Habitats Risk Assessment
- (vii) Colin Buchannan Highways Report
- (viii) A report identifying opportunities to refurbish the existing housing stock

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S17 Crime and Disorder	Safety and security has been a key consideration in developing the Masterplan options.
Health and Well Being	The Masterplan has been designed to ensure the creation of a walkable and liveable environment, with walking and cycling provision designed in.
Carbon Impact	The Masterplan will be subject to sustainability appraisal, integral to which is reducing carbon emissions. All policies are tested and amended to ensure the most sustainable outcomes, including keeping carbon emission to a minimum, including promotion of the use of renewable energy in new developments. Specific work has been integrated in to the Masterplan to promote the use of low carbon technologies and energy efficiency.
Diversity	Equalities Impact Assessment (EqA) and Disability EqA are integrated into the preparation of the Masterplan.
Wards Affected	Central, Northgate, Park East

Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	The Masterplan has been developed within existing resources with the support of Single Programme funding and the Homes and Communities Agency
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The LDF Local Plan is the spatial expression of 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed'. The regeneration of the Town Centre Fringe is a key deliverable in One Darlington Perfectly Placed
Efficiency	The workload proposed assumes resources at existing level in Strategy and Commissioning, no additional requirements being placed on the team, and the availability of staff time from key officers across the Council whose service requirements need to be reflected in the LDF in a co-ordinated way.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Background

16. This report outlines the context and work to date on the Draft Town Centre Fringe Masterplan and the consultation process that was undertaken in 2012.
17. There are a number of complex issues that need to be addressed through the Masterplan for the area and these have had a significant influence on the options and preferred option proposed. The Masterplan has been revised in line with the consultation responses broadly in accordance with the preferred options outlined in the report to Cabinet of the 12th January 2012.

Relationship to the Adopted Local Plan

18. The Town Centre Fringe is identified in the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy as being a key area of growth throughout the next 15 years and is sequentially preferable to more peripheral allocated sites and those that fall outside these allocations. In the Core Strategy, the Town Centre Fringe is identified as needing to accommodate about 650 new homes and around 250,000 sq ft of commercial space.
19. The Masterplan provides more detail to this, outlining a framework for the development of the area. This framework will inform detailed site-specific briefs, other actions such as the potential designation of conservation areas, and provide certainty for the existing community and developer partners, stimulating and streamlining development in a managed way.

20. The Town Centre Fringe is identified as a strategic location in the adopted Local Plan, to accommodate about 650 new houses and about 17 hectares of mixed-use employment land. Specific deliverable detailed allocations/policies still need to be identified in the development plan, and this will be done through the Making and growing Places DPD, work on which is underway. If it cannot be demonstrated that there is a realistic prospect of the levels of development indicated in the Core Strategy being achievable by 2026, alternative land in less sustainable locations will need to be identified in the development plan to ensure that all the Borough's development needs are met.
21. The Local Plan Core Strategy is the spatial expression of 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed'. The regeneration of the Town Centre Fringe is a key deliverable in One Darlington Perfectly Placed.

Wider Regeneration Framework

22. The Town Centre Fringe is a development location that complements other planned strategic provision in the town centre, Central Park, North West Urban Fringe and Eastern Urban Fringe. Taking Forward the Darlington Gateway (2006) identifies the Town Centre Fringe as pivotal to:-
 - (a) Promoting Darlington's gateway role in the Tees Valley City Region.
 - (b) At a local level improving the economic, social and environmental prospects of the area and those to the north and the east.
23. The Town Centre Fringe is included in the regeneration framework for Darlington. To be delivered sequentially following the Town Centre and Central Park the Town Centre Fringe will create the connection between these two areas and capitalise on the prosperity and success created.
24. Within and adjoining the area are some of Darlington's most deprived wards. Unemployment lies at around (8.5 %) with 11.5 % of people of working age claiming disability benefits. 34.5% of people in the area work full time and for around two thirds of the population the household income after deductions is less than £300 per week.
25. Access to jobs, leisure and services is currently poor in the Town Centre Fringe. The area suffers from poor connectivity and a degraded public realm, discouraging movement to, from and through the area. There are significant social, economic and environmental challenges that need to be addressed through the Masterplan.

Key Issues in the Area

26. The technical reports and draft Masterplan were funded through the Single Programme via OneNE and received the support of the Homes and Communities Agency.
27. Before work commenced on the Masterplan research showed that there were a number of key issues that would need to be addressed to allow the development of the area. These issues were presented at an early stage in the various informal

engagement documents produced and in briefings to Members and stakeholders.

28. After the Town Centre Fringe was identified as a key area for growth the Environment Agency updated the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the area. Taking in a much greater area than first envisaged the zones changed with the potential to prevent or curtail development opportunities without significant works. The accessible location and proximity to the Town Centre meant that the challenge was to find a means of viably mitigating flood risk, rather than leaving the area underdeveloped.
29. As the proposed development of the area together with development proposals for the Borough in the Local Plan would increase traffic in the medium to long term a strategy was required to deal with this increase. It was clear from early work that some remodelling of the inner ring road to accommodate this growth would be required. As the Town Centre Fringe is an accessible location the Highways Agency has indicated that they would not object to the regeneration of the area.
30. The River Skerne runs north to south through the area and although in recent years it has become a valuable habitat with some amenity value it is nonetheless undervalued. The Masterplan area begins in the north at Rockwell Park and ends at South Park. In common with many urban rivers many developments have failed to include the river. The need to improve the river for both its access, amenity and biodiversity value was recognised.
31. The Town Centre Fringe has a number of key historic assets. To the north, North Road Railway Station, now the Head of Steam Museum, is an internationally important heritage asset. Alongside this the Scheduled Skerne Bridge (the £5 note bridge) defines the northern edge of the Masterplan area and is the oldest working railway bridge in the world. Pease's House on Northgate and a number of other important Listed Buildings are scattered across the area. In addition a large number locally distinctive historic buildings are in the Town Centre Fringe and their importance is recognised.
32. Within the Town Centre Fringe is some of the town's poorest quality housing. Overall standards of repair, thermal performance and access are poor. There is a predominance of smaller terraced units with problems caused by anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping in the back lanes, a degraded public realm and poor levels of outside amenity space. Overall there is a lack of high quality open space in the area. There is some higher quality housing in the area, with attractive features, in need of updating in some cases.
33. The Town Centre Fringe suffers from poor access to both the town centre and the inner suburbs to the east. The area feels cut off from the rest of the town and has economically suffered since the building of the inner ring road. Streets such as Parkgate, Northgate and Victoria Road have become detached from the Town Centre. Overall poor pedestrian and cycle access disadvantages residents, limits economic activity, depresses values and discourages activity throughout the day. The Town Centre Fringe offers a great opportunity to improve access to Central Park from the Town Centre, both along Parkgate and Haughton Road, and potentially directly across the East Coast Mainline, as well as along the River

Skerne corridor for pedestrians and cyclists.

Public Participation to Date

34. A comprehensive programme of public participation was undertaken between February and October 2010 with various residents and community groups. This took the form of walkabouts, 'planning for real' events and individual discussions with landowners, agents and residents as required:-
 - (a) Over 700 individual responses were gathered from residents and businesses in the area.
 - (b) Two walkabouts with residents were undertaken and video evidence of the issues and views of residents were taken.
 - (c) A web page was set up and comments were invited on the baseline position and ideas for the area.
 - (d) A series of 'Planning for Real' events were held in and around the area, focussing on hard to reach groups.
 - (e) Public events were held at the YMCA and Forum Music Centre.
 - (f) A specific Town Centre Fringe Darlington Assembly was held.
 - (g) Key stakeholders were contacted and their views recorded.
35. All of the events focussed on the issues and potential opportunities in the area with a view to gaining a deeper understanding of views to inform the Masterplan and the actions required.
36. The Key Issues were used to set the scene and were presented. Draft outline solutions to the issues were tested throughout the process, for example the creation of a linear park to address flood risk, the signalisation of junctions on the inner ring road and specific consultation around building conservation and the wider historic environment.
37. The Town Centre Fringe was discussed at a special Darlington Assembly on the 21st June 2010. In a workshop environment, various options were considered and all views and opinions were recorded.
38. A consultation database was set up to record the ideas, options and opinions and to inform the Masterplanning process. These are also being used to draft the Issues and Options for the Area Action Plan.
39. Themes that came from this process were:-
 - (a) The need for **improved connectivity** between the town centre and Bank Top railway station, possibly in the form of a shuttle bus.
 - (b) A desire for **access alongside the River Skerne** and improvements to its amenity value.
 - (c) **Improvements** required to the **amenity of the under bridge areas** on Parkgate.
 - (d) The need for **activities for younger people** in the area.
 - (e) The opportunity to create a **residential area close to the town centre** by the river.

- (f) A desire for **cultural activities** and opportunities in the area.
- (g) The need for **better access to services** such as schools and doctors surgeries, etc.
- (h) A desire for small scale business accommodation and **live-work units**.
- (i) **Improvements** needed at **points of arrival** in Darlington.
- (j) The need to **develop empty and derelict** sites in the area.
- (k) The value of the River Skerne as a **habitat**.
- (l) A desire for **more greenspace** in the area.
- (m) The need for **more trees** for amenity and to improve the skyline.
- (n) Tourism potential, celebrating **Darlington's heritage**.
- (o) Fears over **land contamination** and the need to address this.

40. The above priorities were used, together with the technical work to develop the Core Values (see section below) to develop the Masterplan.

41. In addition to this, further work was undertaken by members of the Communities team extending the programme of 'Planning for Real' events with hard to reach groups and specific communities.

42. There has been a continuous dialogue throughout the Masterplan design process and it has been undertaken in an open and collaborative way.

Core Values Developed from Existing Policy, Best Practice and Public Participation

43. From the public participation undertaken and reflecting best practice a series of 'Core Values' were developed to drive the Masterplanning process and monitor the success of options appraisal and design resolution.

44. The seven 'Core Values' for the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan are:-

- (a) The creation of a **walkable network of connected streets**.
- (b) **Sustainability** built-in to the area.
- (c) Creating the conditions for **economic diversity** and resilience.
- (d) The creation of a **multifunctional bio-diverse** river valley.
- (e) Cherishing and **protecting heritage**.
- (f) Bringing forward true **mixed-use** development.
- (g) The promotion of **arts and culture** for the benefit of all.

45. These Core Values were used to draft the Masterplan in response to the key issues in the area and these issues and options, leading to a number of preferred options that were consulted on between March and May 2012.

Masterplan Resolution

46. The finalised Masterplan is in the attached **Appendix 1**, the Masterplan proposes a number of key changes in the area that could be achieved in the long term.

47. The Town Centre Fringe Masterplan is intended to show the key connectivity, development sites and specific actions required to bring forward the sustainable

regeneration of the area over the next fifteen to twenty years. The many complex issues that have been identified have been combined into a proposal that addresses most of the issues and opportunities in the area.

48. The preferred options relating to flood risk, traffic, the natural and built heritage, housing and connectivity have been combined to meet the challenges and opportunities in the area. The preferred options taken forward were:-
- (a) Mitigate flood risk along the whole of the river corridor by maximising the effect and reducing the burden on individual developments.
 - (b) The remodelling of the inner ring road, creating signalised junctions and bringing the carriageway together, with supporting measures to reduce demand on the network.
 - (c) The creation of a significant new linear park alongside the river creating a river valley rich in habitats and facilitating access and movement.
 - (d) The conservation of historic buildings in the area, with an emphasis on creating opportunities for the celebration of Darlington's Heritage to form the basis for regeneration.
 - (e) The retention and improvement of the existing housing in the area, preserving the historic street pattern and minimising harm to existing communities.
 - (f) Improvements in connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport into and through the area to allow access to jobs, leisure and business opportunities to flourish.
49. The solutions proposed in the consultation Masterplan have been developed in response to the public participation process of last year and have been based upon a large number of technical reports that support the draft conclusions.

Development

50. The Masterplan provides certainty around the Council's intentions for the development of the area. This certainty will stimulate development by setting the scene for the area in terms of neighbouring uses, the quality of the public realm and its connection to other key areas of development in Darlington.
51. By describing the outcomes that are desired for the area and describing the mechanisms for dealing with the current barriers to development, the Masterplan allows development to happen over time that will take full advantage of the opportunities. By offering a clear framework new development can be coordinated and funding identified to deliver the necessary infrastructure for the area, unlocking further development opportunities.
52. By dealing with the big issues and challenges in the area the opportunity for development can be realised. Without a Masterplan, developments coming forward would be piecemeal and unable to generate the required value to pay for the work that needs to be done in the area to make it attractive and functional.

Phasing and Delivery

53. There will be the costs of acquisitions where no development will take place, such as to the north of the Masterplan area where additional flood capacity is required, these are unknown at present.
54. Currently, the projected costs for the infrastructure required to support the full Masterplan are estimated at a minimum of £51.8 million before any allowance for inflation or similar issues. Whilst much of this money is expected to come from land receipts, the sums are such that there will probably need to be a commitment from Department for Transport major schemes funds (or successor arrangements) and the Local Transport Plan.
55. A number of funding options are being explored, in the context of changing national frameworks and mechanisms. The options being considered that could help to fund the required infrastructure are as follows:-
- (a) Community Infrastructure Levy
 - (b) Section 106
 - (c) Prudential Borrowing
 - (d) Enterprise Zones
 - (e) Public Land Initiative
 - (f) Local Asset Backed Vehicle for Investment
 - (g) Tax Incremental Finance
 - (h) European Regional Development Fund
 - (i) Regional Growth Fund
 - (j) New Homes Bonus
56. Whilst it is accepted that some of these mechanisms may not be appropriate for all aspects of the works required there are still a number of options available that could be used in the medium to long term to facilitate development.
57. The Council has been in discussion with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) regarding funding the delivery of the Town Centre Fringe masterplan. HCA have indicated that the project is eligible for funding support under its Economic Assets Programme and have advised that £20m has been provisionally highlighted in their business plan under their Stewardship Model. Furthermore; TVU are developing investment plans for the 2014-2020 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Operational Programme as well as developing plans under the Government's City Deal. The ERDF investment plan highlights the need for investment in town centres, flood mitigation, adaption of housing and supporting the development of strategic employment sites. This is evidence not just of investor confidence in the masterplan but that further opportunities are likely to arise in future to support delivery key elements.
58. Phasing to address the flood risk in the area has been developed. Within the life of the Masterplan the proposed phasing is assumed to be:-
- (a) In the short term the Feethams Area, the former garage on St Cuthbert's Way, and land to the north of Eastmount Road.
 - (b) In the short to medium term the Cattle Mart site, and land around Garden Street is expected to come forward.

(c) And finally in the long term the Borough Road area, Valley Street, Oxford Street, the Gas Holder and John Street.

59. Outside the flood risk zone other development opportunities are assumed to minimal or no impact.
60. To coordinate development in such a way as to address issues of phasing in terms of flooding and highway network an interim solution is proposed that delivers some early wins in terms of connectivity and green infrastructure.

Financial Implications

61. There are negotiations that are ongoing with the Homes and Communities Agency towards a joint venture alluded to in paragraph 57. These negotiations lie outside the scope of the masterplan and this report and are being undertaken with the advice of Estates and Resources officers. There is no requirement for further Council funding directly related this report.

Legal Implications

62. There are no specific legal considerations, however it should be noted that the masterplan may lead to Compulsory Purchase Orders, however this is a separate process requiring more detailed work and justification allied to the detailed planning of specific projects.

Corporate Landlord Advice

63. The masterplan has been developed in partnership with officers representing the Corporate Landlord.

Equalities Considerations

64. An initial scoping workshop was undertaken that took into account protected characteristics. A small number of groups were identified and specific consultation activities were undertaken both prior to and during the consultation process. The high level and strategic nature of the masterplan means there are limited impacts on any groups affected and these would need to be understood further through the detailed design of projects.

Consultation

65. The consultation process commenced with a presentation to Place Scrutiny where the plans were considered and discussed. A number of recommendations were made and specifically that Place Scrutiny is kept up to date with the consultation and the subsequent amendments to the masterplan. In addition a number of transport related recommendations were made including:
- (a) The exploration of possibilities to integrate the Masterplan into the LTP3 implementation
 - (b) The need for further information on car parking

- (c) The need for more information regarding the highways infrastructure.
66. These recommendations have been acted upon and the masterplan is currently informing the emerging Car Parking Strategy and designs to improve bus movements on and across the inner ring road.
67. The Masterplan was consulted on widely over the late spring and summer of 2012. In response to local concerns and interest in the Masterplan there were specific targeted events in Northgate, Central and Park East Wards.
68. In addition to this every resident and business in the masterplan area was written to, comments were invited based on both press coverage and articles in Darlington Together Magazine and one to one sessions were undertaken with businesses that may be affected over time by the masterplan.
69. The stakeholder, agents and industry contacts that are held to be consultees on the Local Plan were also consulted and this included statutory bodies such as English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency.
70. Specific events were held with developers and agents in parallel with the consultation on the Economic Strategy. Specific meetings were held with key landowners.
71. A programme of events was undertaken in schools and colleges both in the masterplan area and where students are from the wider Borough.
72. In detail, the consultation process was as follows:-
- (a) Overall over 2000 letters were sent out
 - (b) Each included the Regeneration Fact Sheet and links to the DBC website
 - (c) One to one sessions were offered facilitated by a named officer
 - (d) Written representations were invited
 - (e) All residents and businesses in the area were contacted
 - (f) Specific ward consultations were organised
 - (g) Specific sessions were undertaken with developers and agents
 - (h) Government Agencies were consulted
 - (i) Presentations were made to business groups, the Town Centre Board and Prosperous Darlington

Outcome of the Consultation

73. Overall written representations from the public were limited; however a lot of feedback was gained from targeted groups. Ward level sessions and workshops highlighted local issues as well as comments at a strategic level.
74. Local concerns regarding flood risk were a common response, explaining the masterplan allayed these and every concerned resident was replied to. Other matters such as traffic congestion were also allayed after further explanation of the Masterplan and supporting technical work.

75. In Northgate Ward the workshops revealed;
- (a) There was support for the wider masterplan with specific support for the improved connectivity into and from the area.
 - (b) An emphasis on the heritage of the area and its value was identified as important.
 - (c) The linear park was supported.
 - (d) The importance of knitting new and old developments together was also seen as important.
76. A specific issue came out the Central Ward consultation regarding Eastmount Park. Local residents were concerned over plans to develop the park, particularly after the recent planning consent for housing on an adjacent site. These concerns have been recognised and considered when the Masterplan was redrafted for adoption.
77. In Park East Ward the workshop revealed:-
- (a) There were specific concerns over the Residents Parking zone.
 - (b) This is being considered through the emerging Car Parking Strategy.
 - (c) The flood mitigation works were welcomed.
 - (d) There was overall support for the revised road network, the linear park and the improved connectivity.
 - (e) Other opportunities were identified that have been fed into other strategies such as the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy.
78. Two workshops were held with Corporation Road Primary School. The key issues that came out of this were;
- (a) A desire and support for more parks and greenspace in the area as described in the draft Masterplan.
 - (b) A desire for more leisure activities in the area and in the Town Centre.
 - (c) Support for the improved connectivity to gain access to the Town Centre.
 - (d) The importance of nature in the area.
79. A session was held at Carmel School. The main issues that came out of this were;
- (a) The need for more leisure opportunities.
 - (b) Better facilities for younger and older people.
 - (c) The importance and support for more greenspaces.
 - (d) The distinctive character of Darlington.
 - (e) Better bus facilities.
 - (f) The importance of cultural activities such as live music.
 - (g) Support for improvements to the River Skerne.
80. A workshop was held at Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College. The key issues that came out of this were:-
- (a) The need for more leisure uses in the area and the town in general.
 - (b) Support for the flood mitigation strategy allied to the river restoration.

- (c) The importance of Darlington's character and distinctiveness and that this should be reflected in the development of the Town Centre Fringe.
 - (d) Support for better pedestrian and cycle connectivity in the masterplan.
81. A number of landowners responded and were consulted with. In addition key landowners were approached. Some responses are commercially sensitive but some key themes can be reported:-
- (a) Landowners occupying buildings to be retained were warm to changes of use in line with the masterplan as these are likely to increase values.
 - (b) Where there was potential acquisition or demolition there was often a willingness to move.
 - (c) The price to be paid for any acquired site or building was a key consideration.
 - (d) The location of the Town Centre Fringe is seen as a key asset for innovation and creative industries replacing the current employment uses
82. Discussions with agents and developers at a specific workshop session revealed;
- (a) The Council's commitment to the area was broadly welcomed.
 - (b) The delivery of the key infrastructure is seen as an important component in achieving development.
 - (c) The current poor image of the area was seen as a disadvantage but the River restoration might be the means to changing these perceptions.
83. There was broad support from the following Agencies:-
- (a) The Environment Agency particularly in relation to flood risk and as partners in developing the Flood Mitigation Strategy,
 - (b) Natural England due to the proposed improved green infrastructure,
 - (c) Highways Agency due to the strategic location and improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity;
 - (d) English Heritage due on account of the Conservation Management Plan for the area,
 - (e) Durham Constabulary emphasising the importance of Secured by Design.
84. Overall there was general support for the ambitions of the Masterplan. Where concerns were expressed these were replied to directly to further understand these. In most circumstances this extra information and explanation allayed these concerns.
85. Overall, based on the consultation there are very few changes proposed to the Masterplan that was presented to Cabinet to agree to the consultation. The redrafted plans from part of **Appendix 1** attached.
86. As a result of the publicity and the supporting work that was undertaken regarding the historic environment in the area the Railway Heritage Enquiry Group was inaugurated. This Group is working as a partnership of the community, Council, industry experts and specialists groups to capitalise on and celebrate Darlington's Railway Heritage.

Next Steps

87. The masterplan will inform current and future projects as described in the latter sections of **Appendix 1**. The Council is currently developing site specific briefs and concept statements alongside detailed work on land contamination, further flood mitigation strategies and road infrastructure design work and projects, such as Northgate roundabout the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement funded junction at Parkgate and Stonebridge.
88. The Local Plan Making and Growing Places DPD is being consulted on from May 2013 that will further identify land allocations and safeguardings that will help to deliver the masterplan and embed many of the Masterplan ambitions on a statutory footing.