

THEME 6: A Vibrant Town Centre and Accessible Local Shops and Services

THEME 6: A Vibrant Town Centre and Accessible Local Shops and Services (General Theme)

CSIO Reference	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 052	English Heritage	English Heritage welcomes reference to the view that the town centre is an important historic asset, crucial to the civic pride of the Borough.
CSIO 020	Tees Valley Rural Community Council	Did not to address the cultural provision so there was no regard to museums, theatres, arts centre and art galleries which are supported well by the council and are part of the Boroughs provision and infrastructure.

ISSUE 30 – The Town Centre

ISSUE 30 The Town Centre (General Theme)

CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 006	GOLD	Need more green, quiet, relaxing areas in the town centre e.g. Abbot's Place which could be landscaped instead of being used as a car park.
CSIO 011	27th Darlington Brownies	Provide more, different shops
CSIO 011	27th Darlington Brownies	Keep the market
CSIO 011	27th Darlington Brownies	Provide different facilities for young people in leisure centres
CSIO 011	27th Darlington Brownies	Provide more leisure facilities in the town centre like a bowling alley, ice rink
CSIO 024	Highways Agency	The Agency supports the provision of adequate accessible facilities and services, to enhance the vitality and viability of the centre, but also in helping to reduce the need to travel further afield to other centres. Also supports locating retail, leisure and other services and facilities towards the main centres, whilst ensuring an appropriate level is maintained within district and local centres.
CSIO 025	Environment Group, Government Office for the North East	The supporting text clearly describes the recent changes and opportunities within Darlington in relation to town centre uses. Are there plans to update the Darlington Retail Study 2004 as this is a key part of the evidence base?
CSIO 034	DPP, for Tesco	National planning guidance identifies the need to promote the vitality and viability of town centres and to plan for their growth and development by focusing development within them. PPS6 requires Local Authorities to actively plan for growth and manage change within the existing centres. It is therefore essential for the evidence base of the LDF process that an assessment is undertaken within Darlington in order to establish the current health of the town and also the Strategy for the Town Centre for the future. The physical constraints of the town centre which hinder the growth should also be considered. Where the

		growth cannot be met, consideration should be given to the extension of the town centre and particularly development of edge of centre sites as advocated in PPS6.
CSIO 080	Helen Steel	I agree with supporting the town centre but local shops are VITAL.
CSIO 092	J Wheeler	Argues that Morrison's at Morton Park has local significance, as it is readily accessible by public transport from Middleton St George and much of the east side of the town, and can be reached by bike. The fact that it does not have houses immediately round it does not mean that it is only accessible by car.
CSIO 092	J Wheeler	The Commercial Street development is a high risk strategy. A church has had to give way to a loading bay. It would be tragic if the development then led to Binns vacating their shop and leaving that important central site vacant and then re-developed. The town is losing too much period character, one of the few differentiated selling points it really had.
OPTION 30A – Darlington should safeguard and promote the vitality and viability of the town centre by adopting a rigorous and pro-active approach to promoting the vitality and viability of the town centre		
CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 019	Central Ward Partnership	Need to lower rents in market hall, or provide incentives for shops/shoppers to use town centre
CSIO 027	Turley Associates for Sainsbury's Supermarket	Support option 30A.
CSIO 027	Turley Associates for Sainsbury's Supermarket	Many people, not only Sainsbury's customers, are using the Sainsbury's car park and walking into the town centre to do their shopping. The site is in a very convenient location and is well linked to both the bus station and train station and there are good links to cycle routes, and is therefore clearly in a sustainable location. In light of guidance within PPS6 and the Issues and Options paper, we request that the town centre boundary is redrawn to incorporate the Sainsbury's supermarket site, and we request that this be included in the 'Town Centre' section of the DPD. Including the Sainsbury's store within the town centre would highlight the positive impacts in terms of the vitality and viability of the immediate area and strengthen the existing town centre. Sainsbury's is trading as a main town centre use and by extending this boundary there is the opportunity to formalise the relationship between the Sainsbury's store and other retailers in the town centre.
CSIO 032	The Theatres Trust	Pleased that the document recognises that town centres are about more than just shops and retailing. They are the heart of communities and an expression of their culture and identity. Leisure, recreation and culture centered on restaurants, pubs, clubs, theatres, cinemas, libraries and museums all play an active role in creating vibrant town centres and a stimulating night-time economy.
CSIO 032	The Theatres Trust	Facilities for major leisure and entertainment use should be concentrated in the city centre. A balanced leisure scene will enliven the area in the evening, and provide regular custom for local bars and restaurants outside normal working and shopping hours.
CSIO 037	Tom Robinson	A new bus station, please. The fumes from all the buses travelling through the Pedestrian Heart is extremely unpleasant and obviously unhealthy. A negative safety aspect, too. The old Bus Station site

		and the car parks opposite would seem to be a reasonable area - near to the Town Centre and the buses could be routed out of the Pedestrian Heart. Please investigate.
CSIO 052	English Heritage	Supports Option 30A as it complements others that seek to focus on the vitality and viability of the town centre in a proactive way.
CSIO 053	Councillor Copeland (Haughton North)	The town centre needs to be attractive to people outside of Darlington who come and visit and spend their money here.
CSIO 072	Peter Wellings	The Borough is not big enough to have "town centre" developments elsewhere.
CSIO 075	Frank Haylett	You have already done much to destroy Darlington town centre. I rarely visit it now whereas I once had a business there and decided to sell it after decline due to your 'improvements' in the Market Square. What a terrible waste of money!
CSIO 093	N J S Ellis	Remove a lot of the parking restrictions - presently it is cheaper to shop in Northallerton or Yarm!
OPTION 30B – Darlington should safeguard and promote the vitality and viability of the town centre by adopting a less rigorous approach recognizing the potential benefits of some ‘town centre-type’ development elsewhere in the Borough		
CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 020	Tees Valley Rural Community Council	Need to recognise that appropriate consideration is given to local vitality and viability in respect of rural communities
CSIO 044	North East Assembly	RPG1 policies TS1 and RD1, and RSS further proposed changes policy 25 recognise the importance of ensuring that the preferred location for the development of town centre uses is existing centres. This is particularly important given Darlington's identified role as a sub regional centre in terms of retail and leisure. Maintaining the vitality and viability of these centres is identified as a priority in TC2 and therefore policy 30B is supported.
CSIO 048	Savills for Nottinghamshire County Council Pension Fund	Support Option 30B as it will better deliver improvements to areas where people already shop and encourage new retailers into the Borough. However, it may also result in leakage to competing centres. Will the No Frills unit be designated within the North Road District Centre and will the latter keep this status? This is addressed under issue 31.
CSIO 095	King Sturge for Marchday Group, owners of Lingfield Point, Darlington	Policy should recognise the importance of protecting the town centre, but equally, there may also be quantitative and qualitative reasons to support appropriately scaled retail development within key suburban locations. This will create a more sustainable approach to townscape and inclusive vital mixed communities.

ISSUE 30 - SUMMARY	Out of 101 Respondents, 36 chose one of the following options
30A – Adopt a rigorous and pro-active approach to promoting the vitality and viability of the town centre?	28 respondents chose this option.
30B – Adopt a less rigorous approach recognizing the potential benefits of some ‘town centre-type’ development elsewhere in the Borough?	8 respondents chose this option.

OFFICER COMMENTS - Most respondents felt that a rigorous and pro-active approach to promoting the vitality and viability of the town centre is needed, though not at the expense of retaining local shops and services. Officers can clarify that any the preferred option for safeguarding and promoting the vitality and viability of town centre would be complementary to the provision of accessible of local facilities and not detrimental to them - see Issue 32. The 'wish lists' of attractions that people suggest the town centre should contain is noted and will be considered when more detailed policies and proposals for the central area are brought forward. The retail needs assessment will be updated.

ISSUE 31 – The Hierarchy of Centres

ISSUE 31 - The Hierarchy of Centres (General Theme)		
CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 006	GOLD	Local shops and district local centres are an important resource for the community, particularly for the less mobile or those who do not have access to a car. Centres may benefit from non A1 uses if it helps maintain the vitality of the centre by reducing vacancy
CSIO 024	Highways Agency	Supports focusing development towards main centres and providing accessible services and facilities, as it enhances the vitality and viability of centres, and by providing for local needs, helps to reduce the need to travel further afield to other centres or outside the authority (possibly via the SRN) for such provisions.
CSIO 034	DPP, for Tesco	The most recent Retail Study for the Borough was conducted in 2004 and is dated. PPS6 requires Local Authorities to identify the need for additional retail, leisure and town centre uses floorspace taking into account quantitative and qualitative considerations in all centres. To consider the change which has occurred in Darlington over the past 4 years and adequately plan for growth, an up to date retail assessment needs to be considered.
CSIO 043	Sadberge Parish Council	With the closure of Sadberge Post Office and Shop (scheduled for April 2008), Sadberge will effectively have no local services. Sadberge residents will need to travel to Middleton St George or Darlington to access services. This makes it even more important to have effective public transport serving Sadberge. Defining The Square in Middleton St George as a Local Centre may have some advantages for Sadberge, but many residents will still need to travel to Darlington Town Centre to access a full range of shops and services.
CSIO 044	North East Assembly	Issue 31 establishes a series of options for the hierarchy of centres in Darlington. Whilst RPG1 policies TC2 and TC3 recognise the importance of establishing a hierarchy of centres which should be reviewed over time, the local centres to be included/excluded is a detailed matter for the council to determine.
CSIO 052	English Heritage	The current number of district and local centres is such that the hierarchy is too flat at the expense of focussing on the town centre. I believe it possible to downgrade the status of some local centres by improving the provision of local shops.
CSIO 092	J Wheeler	I fail to see the value of all this classification of centres. The recommendations are only loosely linked to the policy points and have no justification for their assertions. Option B is useful in that it would support

		providing shops in large developments, a very necessary provision. In practical terms, planners do not generate commercial interest, they can only react to what is proposed. Darlington cannot attract interest like it used to.
OPTION 31A – The current hierarchy should be retained		
CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 048	Savills for Nottinghamshire County Council Pension Fund	We strongly support Option 31A which aims to keep the current hierarchy as stated: Town Centre - District Centres: North Road and Cockerton - Local Centres: Yarm Road, Whinfield, Neasham Road and Mowden. We consider that the North Road District Centre plays a strong contribution to the economy of Darlington as a whole. Removing the status of the North Road District Centre would affect the type and scale of future development. Page 66 of the Core Strategy: Issues and Options sets out the retail provision on the North Road District Centre. It is noted that most of the non-food floorspace is provided within the B&Q retail warehouse. It would therefore seem sensible to include the No Frills DIY unit retail provision within the North Road District Centre as it physically already sits within it. We also note that the map on page 67 shows an indicative boundary of the designated town centre, district centre and local centres. We hereby request the Council to show the precise boundaries of the town centre, district centre and local centres and to include the No Frills DIY unit site within the North Road District Centre boundary. Request a breakdown of the retail floorspace in the North Road District Centre on p66.
CSIO 072	Peter Wellings	The hierarchy of centres will be market driven and not be controllable by the Council.
CSIO 096	Heighington Parish Council	More accessible to rural areas
OPTION 31B – Further local centre(s) should be added to the current hierarchy		
CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 086	CPRE, Darlington District Committee	Local facilities are more convenient for residents and are more sustainable as the need for transport is reduced.
CSIO 015	Councillor G G Lee (Heighington & Coniscliffe)	Provides local facility with local job opportunities. Reduces car usage.
CSIO 022	Peacock and Smith, for Bussey and Armstrong Ltd	Seek the designation of West Park as a local centre, within the context of a strategy that is geared towards the sustainable long term planning of the Borough, and for the proper planning of the area. Designation would act as a catalyst for the expansion of its current role and the ongoing improvement of its ability to serve both existing and future residents in the northwest sector of Darlington.
CSIO 034	DPP, for Tesco	Option 31B maintains the existing status quo and expands the number and geographic spread, designating further local centres at West Park and/or Middleton St George (The Square); and/or elsewhere. This option is supported with further growth concentrated in existing centres and within newly designated areas considered appropriate. Accordingly this will allow the development of mixed-use communities with easily accessible centres meeting the local need. Further benefits may result from this

		option including increased employment opportunities and access to additional community facilities.
CSIO 034	DPP, for Tesco	Of the potential new centres, West Park would be the most suitable location for a new centre to be designated, and this should be a district centre rather than a local centre. In drawing any potential boundary around a local centre so tightly, further development of the existing facilities will not be encouraged and the potential growth will be restricted, preventing the centre from fulfilling its intended role and function. The West Park area is growing and therefore requires a wider range of facilities and services to support the local community, to reduce the need to travel to other centres for day to day needs, and to create a sustainable community.
CSIO 036	GL Hearn & Partners for Tesco Stores Ltd	A new local centre should be designated at North Road within the Harrowgate Hill area of Darlington, encompassing the existing retail and commercial uses fronting onto North Road between Salters Lane North and Thompson Street East/West. Area already meets definition of a local centre contained within PPS6. Designation of a new local centre at this location will strengthen the local shopping provision within this part of the Borough, help to secure satisfactory provision for local residents in the future and would encourage positive economic, social and environmental impacts for the local area.
CSIO 067	Darlington & Sedgefield Liberal Democrats Constituency Association	We support the increase in the number of centres on the grounds of sustaining communities and on environmental grounds (less travel into the centre)
CSIO 080	Arnold and Judith Parker	Would contribute to ensuring sustainability - reduce unnecessary work, strengthen local communities.
CSIO 080	Helen Steel	I agree with supporting the town centre but local shops are VITAL.
CSIO 094	Middleton-St-George Parish Council	The Square, MSG should be part of the hierarchy of centres. The neglected open space next to the chemist shop should be considered for compulsory purchase and converted into a car park to assist/alleviate the congestion of car parking. The over-sized traffic island should be made into a small roundabout to help with the flow of the through traffic in the village. All this would make shopping safer and improve the safety of the route to the primary school.
CSIO 095	King Sturge for Marchday Group, owners of Lingfield Point, Darlington	Regeneration, such as that proposed across Lingfield Point, may offer the potential to establish much needed local centres. This will lead to strong inclusive local mixed communities and a more effective implementation of sustainable policy objectives.
OPTION 31C – The current hierarchy should be amended to more strictly reflect current national planning policy (PPS6)		
CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 053	Councillor Copeland (Houghton North)	Protect the town centre.

OPTION 31D – The current hierarchy should be amended less severely

One respondent agreed with this option – see summary table below.

OPTION 31E – The hierarchy should be changed in a different way, as suggested.

CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 057	Indigo Planning Ltd for Focus Fund	The current hierarchy should be retained, but should also include established retail destinations as suitable sites for new retail development. PPS6 recognises that out of centre locations can be an appropriate location for retail development where there is an identified need if there are no suitable, available and viable sequentially preferable locations. The Core Strategy should recognise the role that existing out of centre retail facilities play in the retail hierarchy, in meeting retail needs and sustaining existing retail destinations such as the retail park on Haughton Road, which is an established retail destination. The Netto store serves the residents in the local area and the Wickes DIY store attracts customers from a wider catchment. The site is easily accessible by public transport. Further retail development on established retail parks is complimentary to the existing uses and would further encourage linked trips.

ISSUE 31 - SUMMARY	Out of 101 Respondents, 35 chose one of the following options
31A – Keep the current hierarchy?	11 respondents chose this option.
31B – Designate further local centre(s)?	17 respondents chose this option.
31C – Amend the hierarchy to more strictly reflect current national planning policy (PPS6)?	4 respondents chose this option.
31D – Amend the hierarchy less severely?	1 respondent chose this option.
31E – Change the hierarchy in a different way?	2 respondents chose this option.

Officer Comments - The option (31B) to designate further local centres attracted the most support, with various locations being suggested in addition to those put forward in the Issues & Options report itself. It is noted that a number of the suggestions came from respondents with a commercial interest (and thus understandable bias) in a particular site. The Council will consider in more detail the benefits of designating further local centres and how these could be justified in the context of national planning policy (PPS6).

ISSUE 32 – Access to Local Facilities

ISSUE 32 – Access to Local Facilities (General Theme)		
CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 011	27th Darlington Brownies	Keep and put more small shops and doctor's near where people live
CSIO 011	27th Darlington Brownies	Keep community facilities like church halls, community centres so people can easily get to Brownies, dance classes etc
CSIO 024	Highways Agency	Support maintaining an adequate and sustainable provision of accessible local facilities, as it can promote and sustain the local economy, enhance the vitality and viability of centres, and help to reduce the need to travel further afield to other centres or outside the authority (possibly via the SRN) for such provisions. Also welcome the approach for locating local facilities within an integrated sustainable transport network, reducing the impact on the SRN.
CSIO 044	North East Assembly	In terms of maintaining access to local shops (issue 32), the NEA would support a combination of measures to protect existing local services, and require new facilities to be required in association with new development.
CSIO 072	Peter Wellings	The hierarchy of centres will be market driven and not be controllable by the Council.
CSIO 092	J Wheeler	Provision of shops in new developments needs to be balanced with demand for units - boarded up and vacant units are dispiriting. At Middleton St George, we value highly our local post office (and general store), the chemist within walking distance of the doctors and the dentist, but it is getting more difficult to park near the shops, so some people drive on. Parking is an important feature of local shopping areas for that reason short-stay. Also, the document needs to make it clear what powers planners have regarding competition in the retail sector.
OPTION 32A – Darlington can provide good access to local shops, services and facilities by keeping these local facilities which serve the needs of nearby residential areas and require sites to be set aside in new development areas		
CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 086	CPRE, Darlington District Committee	Local facilities are important for residents and are more sustainable as the need for transport is reduced.
CSIO 048	Savills for Nottinghamshire County Council Pension Fund	We strongly support option 32A which aims to keep local shops, services and facilities which serve the needs of nearby residential areas and require sites to be set aside in new development areas. The No Frills DIY units add to retail provision at the North Road District Centre and is easily accessible by foot from nearby residential areas.
CSIO 068	Harry Brian Leonard	Keep large supermarkets away from town centres.

OPTION 32B – Darlington can provide good access to local shops, services and facilities by protecting existing facilities from proposals elsewhere which would undermine their vitality and viability or from redevelopment

CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 086	CPRE, Darlington District Committee	Local facilities are important for residents and are more sustainable as the need for transport is reduced.
CSIO 020	Tees Valley Rural Community Council	Particularly in the rural communities subject to the viability of the facilities and local consultation.
CSIO 041	Mr S Howarth	32B needs to be balanced by "commercial viability", protection for protection's sake doesn't work.
CSIO 094	Middleton-St-George Parish Council	MSG as The Hierarchy of Centres.

OPTION 32C – Darlington can provide good access to local shops, services and facilities by a combination of the two options above

CSIO REF	Respondent	Comments
CSIO 034	DPP, for Tesco	It is acknowledged that there is a need to retain local shops, services and facilities which serve the needs of the local residents as well as allocating sites in new development areas, but consideration should be given to the costs and benefits which may arise from the wholesale protection of local facilities. Any policy therefore needs to be flexible in order to respond to any significant changes which occur within the Borough with reference to new development and housing growth.
CSIO 037	Tom Robinson	A combination of the above - as stated in the Core Strategy document!
CSIO 052	English Heritage	English Heritage supports a combination of Options 32A and 32B.
CSIO 080	Helen Steel	I agree with supporting the town centre but local shops are VITAL.
CSIO 095	King Sturge for Marchday Group, owners of Lingfield Point, Darlington	Regeneration, such as that proposed across Lingfield Point, may offer the potential to establish much needed local centres. This will lead to strong inclusive local mixed communities and a more effective implementation of sustainable policy objectives.

ISSUE 32 - SUMMARY	Out of 101 Respondents, 32 chose one or more of the following options
32A – Keep local shops, services and facilities which serve the needs of nearby residential areas and require sites to be set aside in new development areas?	50% of the 32 respondents chose this option.
32B – Protect existing facilities from proposals elsewhere which would undermine their vitality and viability or from redevelopment?	43% of respondents chose this option.
32C – Combination of the above options?	40% of respondents chose this option.

OFFICER COMMENTS - No clear preference between the options emerged in these responses. It is again noted that some of the comments were made from an understandably partial viewpoint by commercial respondents with site-specific interests. The question of commercial viability that was raised by some people is accepted: officers can clarify that any measures to protect and promote local facilities through the Core Strategy could only be those within its powers as local planning authority.