

# **Darlington Local Development Framework: Publication Draft Core Strategy**

## **Sustainability Appraisal Non Technical Summary**

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## Overview

This document is the non-technical summary of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy: Publication Draft Development Plan Document (DPD). This non-technical summary sets out the background and the approach used to undertake the SA, along with the conclusions and recommendations emerging from this process.

## Background to Darlington's Publication Draft Core Strategy DPD

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) came into force in September 2004 and introduced significant changes to the planning system. The Act introduced the concept of Local Development Frameworks (LDF's) to replace the previous Local Plan system. LDF's consist of a series of local development documents that set out the spatial planning policies for a defined area. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 also set out for the first time the formal requirement that the LDF will need to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development

As part of the requirement to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development the LDF will need to be closely aligned with, and deliver the spatial elements of, Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy: 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed'.

Darlington Borough Council's Local Development Documents will comprise:

- Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD)
- Accommodating Growth DPD
- Town Centre Fringe Area Action Plan DPD
- Design of New Development SPD
- Planning Obligations SPD
- Tees Valley Minerals and Waste Core Strategy DPD
- Tees Valley Minerals and Waste Site Allocations DPD

The Core Strategy is the most important document in the LDF, as it sets out the strategic framework for planning policy and future development in the Borough. Work began on the preparation of the Core Strategy in **2005** when Darlington Borough Council produced the **Core Strategy: Issues and Options Report** for preliminary community and stakeholder consultation. It set out the initial policy options for the emerging Core Strategy.

The results of this consultation fed into the preparation of the **Core Strategy: Preferred Options 2005** report, which was consulted upon between October-December 2005. A Sustainability Report, setting out the outcomes of the sustainability appraisal of the Core Strategy: Preferred Options 2005 was published for consultation at the same time.

On account of changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy, other significant changes in national policy including new Government statements (particularly on housing and climate change) and changes to other local strategies, Darlington Borough Council took the important decision to comprehensively review and revise the Core Strategy. This led to the production of the **Core Strategy: Issues and Options 2008** which was based on these new and emerging plans and strategies and took into account the comments made by the public and stakeholders on the original Core Strategy documents.

The Core Strategy: Issues and Options 2008 were consulted upon in January 2008 and the results of this consultation, along with the recommendations of the sustainability appraisal which was undertaken to assess the sustainability of the Issues and Options, fed into the preparation of the **Core Strategy Preferred Options 2008** which was consulted upon in October 2008.

Following consultation responses and the publication of further supporting studies and evidence the Core Strategy Preferred Options 2008 and some of the supporting Issues and Options were revised into the **Core Strategy: Revised Preferred Options 2010**. Another sustainability appraisal was prepared to accompany this document. These documents were consulted on in January and February 2010. On the basis of that consultation (and new evidence), the current Core Strategy Publication Draft was prepared, along with a revised sustainability appraisal- of which this is the summary.

The Core Strategy contains the following vision:

*'By 2026 Darlington will be a more sustainable community, where a real step change has been achieved in enhancing the quality of life and local environment, and expanding local opportunities for work and for sustainable travel. Those who live in, work in or visit the Borough will enjoy the opportunities and vibrant life of an ambitious city, but within the fabric of a friendly, historic market town with a distinctive atmosphere and against the backcloth of surrounding attractive countryside and villages'*

### **What Does Sustainability Appraisal Involve?**

The first stage of the SA involved a review of other plans and policies of relevance to the Core Strategy, the collection of baseline information, the identification of key issues and the development of the SA framework. The outcome of this process was summarised in a Scoping Report which sets out 18 SA objectives to be used in assessing the Core Strategy. This SA framework has been agreed with the statutory bodies (Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency) following five weeks of consultation.

The second stage of the SA involved an appraisal of the Core Strategy objectives and options using the agreed SA framework. Initially, an appraisal of the strategic options detailed within the Issues and Options report and arising from new supporting evidence was undertaken. SA recommended which options should be taken forward and developed into preferred options.

Appraisal of the revised preferred options against the SA framework then followed. This allowed the identification of negative and positive effects. As a result of SA mitigation measures were recommended as were changes to some of the policies to bring them more into line with the goals of sustainable development.

Changes to the Core Strategy document following the Revised Preferred Options consultation meant the Sustainability Appraisal had to be updated for July 2010, with the effects of the changes assessed.

The SA was undertaken with regard to guidance produced by the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on undertaking SA combined with Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

### What were the outcomes of the Sustainability Appraisal?

Generally the Core Strategy DPD policies are considered to contribute positively towards creating a more sustainable Borough. Policies are supportive of; reducing the need to travel through the prioritisation of sustainable locations ensuring design of developments contributes to the character of the Borough and reduces operational impact on climate change and other environmental receptors, meeting the needs of residents whilst strengthening the Borough's economic role and contribution to the sub region and beyond.

Collectively, the policies scored particularly positively in terms of:

- Attracting new residents to the Borough whilst making provision for existing residents
- Reducing inequalities
- Enhancing community identity and engagement
- Providing a safer and healthier Borough
- Reducing the ecological footprint
- Preparing the Borough for climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Making the best use of land and soil resources
- Increasing employment levels and access to sustainable and high quality employment opportunities

Where negative effects have been identified, a combination of mitigation measures that included compliance with other policies in the Core Strategy has been recommended. The SA also recommended changes to a number of the policies to mitigate for negative effects or increase the positive effects of the revised policies. The suggested changes to policy wording have been incorporated into the publication draft version of the DPD.

The recommendations arising from the SA of the Core Strategy are summarised in the following table, amended to reflect changes to the Sustainability Appraisal prior to the Publication Draft.

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Appraisal Outcome</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
CS1: Darlington's Sub-regional and Locational Strategy	CS1 was assessed as having a number of positive effects, particularly in relation to achieving economic growth and increasing employment levels in the Borough. By encouraging new development in the Borough it will help to strengthen Darlington's role as a sub-regional centre and key location in the Tees Valley City Region. By protecting strategic gaps it will help maintain the identity of individual settlements in the	To mitigate against high levels of in-commuting by car, sub regional and regional public transport schemes such as the Tees Metro will need to be developed. The frequency of bus service may also need to be increased.

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	<p>Borough.</p> <p>However, Policy CS1 also gave rise to potential for negative effects. Attraction of residents from outside the Borough would increase competition for affordable housing and increased in commuting from the region and sub region could impact on road related safety. Increased in commuting would also impact on greenhouse gas emissions and could lead to a decline in air quality if mitigation measures are not put in place.</p>	
CS2: Achieving High Quality, Sustainable Design	<p>This policy scored positively against the majority of sustainability objectives. Negative effects pertained to: Incorporating safety, security and environmental measures into new development may increase the costs of new housing and impact on overall affordability and the level of design assessments required may discourage smaller developers from investing in the town.</p>	<p>To help ensure that developers are not put off by the quality of design that this policy is advocating pre-application and planning application discussions should be positively encouraged</p>
CS3 Promoting Renewable Energy	<p>This policy was found to have a mixture of positive, uncertain, no significant effects and effects that could be positive or negative depending on implementation. Positive effects were broadly in relation to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing fuel costs and providing opportunities for potential growth of the green technologies sector within the Borough.</p> <p>The effects that are dependent on implementation related to whether:</p> <p>communities would be consulted and engaged regarding the location of renewable energy schemes</p> <p>Air quality controls would be incorporated into biomass schemes</p> <p>Whether the additional cost of installation of renewable energy to the developer would be passed on to the house buyer</p> <p>The proximity of schemes to residents and the potential health implications of noise, vibration etc</p>	<p>The health impacts of any renewable energy scheme should be fully assessed prior to installation.</p> <p>Biomass heating schemes should include appropriate emissions controls.</p> <p>CHP schemes should not lead to increased consumption of natural gas.</p>
CS4 Developer Contributions	<p>On appraisal this policy scored positively against the majority of sustainability</p>	<p>No changes or mitigation measures are recommended</p>

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	<p>objectives. Where the policy did not score positively it was scored as having no significant effects. The policy scored particularly positively against sustainability objectives relating to education, housing and transport.</p>	
CS5 Supporting the Local Economy	<p>The policy scored particularly positively against the sustainability objective relating to education. Additional employment in the Borough is likely to lead to more opportunities for apprenticeships and access to qualifications and skills.</p> <p>The policy scored negatively in relation to enhancing community identity as this policy does not address employment in the villages and countryside so may hinder proposals for diversification which could result in an out-migration from rural areas</p>	<p>New employment sites to be designed to ‘secured by design’ principles and impact on roads to be understood and potentially mitigated through highways improvements. Businesses to be encouraged to adopt travel plans</p> <p>Design of new development to be energy efficient and to contribute to the landscape and potential industrial heritage settings. In some cases landscaping and screening may be required</p> <p>Expansion of industrial sector and airport to incorporate the appropriate air quality emission controls</p>
CS6 Vibrant Cultural and Tourism Offer	<p>On appraisal this policy was found to have very positive effects and some negative effects against the sustainability objectives. Key positive effects related to:</p> <p>attracting new residents to the Borough and enhancing facilities for existing residents</p> <p>Improving access to and understanding of heritage assets</p> <p>Improving engagement in cultural activities and;</p> <p>Supporting growth in the tourism and cultural sectors, especially in areas accessible by sustainable transport.</p> <p>Key negative effects pertained to:</p> <p>Increased pressure on the housing market making housing less affordable.</p> <p>Increased in commuting and volumes of traffic in the countryside. This will increase greenhouse gas emissions and impact on air quality</p> <p>Deletion of a ‘strategic tourism opportunity’ site at the A68/A1(M) junction from this policy very much improved its sustainability rating.</p>	<p>The LDF will need to set a target number for the numbers of affordable housing units that should be provided/year</p> <p>An increase in traffic to the Borough will need to be mitigated through strong promotion and marketing of public transport options. In some cases it may be required to enhance the frequency of bus services to more rural locations</p> <p>Tourism related attractions and hotels will need to incorporate water conservation measures and pollution control measures in their design</p> <p>Local nature reserves will need to be well managed with well defined paths to reduce disturbance to species and damage to habitats from visitors</p> <p>Tourism attractions and hotels should incorporate recycled materials in construction and put site waste management plans into practice</p>
CS7 The Town Centre	<p>Key positive effects related to:</p> <p>Attracting new residents to the Borough through new jobs, services, leisure and retail opportunities in the town centre</p>	<p>Physical housing or contribution towards new housing in the town centre could be requested as part of any major retail scheme</p>

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	<p>Providing for existing residents by making the most of the town centre and address its weaknesses ensuring that current residents are better provided for.</p> <p>Promoting traffic reduction - Locating retail, office, leisure, entertainment and other main town centre uses within the town centre will reduce the distance that the majority of the Borough's population have to travel to access these facilities. This should help to encourage walking and cycling modes. Furthermore the town is well served by public transport.</p> <p>Effects that are dependent on how the policy is implemented relate to:</p> <p>Waste and minerals - Effect depends on whether reclaimed materials will be used in the construction of town centre and town centre fringe development schemes and whether existing buildings will be utilised in new developments. Effect also depends on whether new retailers in the town sign up to trade waste recycling contracts which is beyond the control of planning.</p> <p>Economic growth - In the short to medium term prioritising development in the town centre location only could potentially discourage some investors as town centre sites may not allow their needs to be met</p>	<p>Developers should be encouraged to set out in their proposals what element of the construction will be from reclaimed materials and how any construction waste will be dealt with</p> <p>New comparison and convenience retail should be designed in accordance with the Local Character and Distinctiveness policy and the Achieving High Quality, Sustainable Design Policy to ensure that retail will not detract from but will aim to enhance the qualities of the Town Centre Conservation Area.</p> <p>Developers will need to follow planning policy in terms of a 'town centre first' approach. However investment opportunities that are not suitable for the town centre should not be discouraged but should be directed towards alternative sustainable locations</p>
<p>CS8 Additional Retail Provision</p>	<p>On a whole this policy scored positively against the sustainability objectives. However, it was not possible in some cases to determine the long term effects of this policy as additional retail provision beyond 2016 is not quantified</p> <p>Waste and minerals - Effect depends on whether reclaimed materials will be used in the construction of town centre and town centre fringe development schemes and whether existing buildings will be utilised in new developments</p> <p>Development within or adjoining the town centre is likely to fall within or adjoin the Town Centre Conservation Area. When making proposals developers should ensure that they preserve and enhance the setting of the Town Centre Conservation Area</p>	<p>Mitigation measures as for CS7</p>
<p>CS9 District and Local Centres and Local Shops and Services</p>	<p>On appraisal this policy was found to have either positive or no significant effects against the sustainability objectives. Particularly key positive effects related to:</p>	<p>To maximise the positive effects of this policy Darlington Borough Council will need to ensure that appropriate litter and on street recycling facilities are in place to minimise</p>



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	<p>Attracting and retaining existing residents - Upgrading Cockerton's status to a district centre and provision of additional local centres at West Park and Middleton St. George will enable continued and possibly enhanced provision of day-to day amenities in these areas</p> <p>Enhancing community identity- Retention of local services is important to community identity in neighbourhoods and villages.</p> <p>Promoting traffic reduction – traffic reduction will be promoted by; safeguarding local centres; limiting the size of retail in local centres so as not to encourage out of town shopping; through provision of individual shops and services to address deficiencies</p>	<p>litter in and around local centres and individual shops</p>
<p>CS10 New Housing Development</p>	<p>On the whole this policy scored positively in relation to social and economic objectives. However, negative effects and potential for negative effects were identified. The key positive effects related to:</p> <p>Provision of affordable housing Attraction of new residents - due to the transformation of the town centre fringe and good location to existing facilities, local shops, workplaces, services and the strategic road network for the North Western Urban Fringe and Eastern Urban Fringe locations</p> <p>The key negative effects related to:</p> <p>Biodiversity and geodiversity – One location is within an area of relatively high biodiversity value and one other location would result in the loss of urban habitat to housing. The potential for negative effects on a range of factors if the main strategy should fail to deliver and urban extensions be allowed, as proposed as a 'back-up'.</p>	<p>Where new housing will result in the permanent or temporary damage of habitats, directly or indirectly, on or off site, developers should be required to contribute to a net biodiversity gain in the Borough. This could be achieved as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Site mitigation measures should be put in place to protect protected species</li> <li>- Create habits on site by encouraging soft landscaping in design, green roofs etc</li> <li>-New habitats should use local native species and should be accompanied by a management plan</li> <li>- Ensure that any habitat/specie loss is compensated for in the locality</li> <li>- Create and improve the connectivity and quality of wildlife corridors</li> </ul>
<p>CS11 Meeting Housing Needs</p>	<p>The key positive effects relate to:</p> <p>Attraction and retention of residents Provision of a mix of identified housing types based on up to date evidence will help to meet the needs of current residents and will further help to attract new residents to the Borough. The needs of an ageing population are taken into account in this policy through purpose built housing</p>	<p>Biodiversity – measures as for CS10</p>

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	<p>and adaptable homes</p> <p>Provision of affordable housing – Sets out ambitious targets based on level of need</p> <p>Economic growth - Providing housing attractive to people coming to live and work in the Borough will help to support the Borough's economy both in terms of day to day local spending and from input of skills to key economic sectors.</p> <p>Potential for negative effects depending on policy implementation pertain to: Water quality and capacity of water supply and sewage systems</p> <p>Direct and indirect loss of biodiversity through habitat removal and increased disturbance</p>	
<p>CS12 Existing Housing</p>	<p>This policy should have long-term positive effects on several social indicators such as health, community safety and quality housing provision.</p> <p>However, SA identified the following short and medium term negative effects:</p> <p>Decline in sense of community identity, particularly if communities are not engaged in local decisions as to where demolition takes place</p> <p>Process of demolition will increase housing vacancy rates which could have a knock on effect on crime and anti-social behaviour</p> <p>In the short term the effects of select demolition could have a negative effect on the character and landscape of a neighbourhood.</p> <p>These potential negative effects were much reduced, but not eliminated, by changes to the policy tightening the conditions in which demolition and redevelopment would be allowed.</p>	<p>Communities will need to be involved in decision making about how their neighbourhood's should be re-developed</p> <p>Crime - it will be necessary to ensure that plans for demolition are released at the appropriate time and that a good partnership between the Council, police and communities affected is formed</p> <p>Adaptation of old housing to be sensitive to historic features to prevent their loss.</p>
<p>CS13 Accommodating Travelling Groups</p>	<p>Where this policy was found to have an effect against the sustainability objectives this effect was very largely positive. However, some negative effects were identified through the SA process and these relate to:</p> <p>Extension of existing sites and allocation of additional sites in the short term may cause unrest amongst residents, despite</p>	<p>To mitigate for potential short tem negative effects caused by the extension of existing sites or provision of new sites, both residents and travelling groups will need to be consulted and well informed about the proposals. Any issues arising from the proposals can be aired and discussed thoroughly in order to allay concerns or misunderstandings.</p> <p>The Planning Department will need to work</p>

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	<p>requirements for sites not to unacceptably impact on existing residential amenity</p> <p>An increase in numbers of gypsies/travellers in the Borough will increase demand on utilities.</p>	<p>closely with the Environment Department to ensure that additional sites can be provided with waste and recycling facilities including all relevant communications about the service.</p>
CS14 Local Character and Distinctiveness	<p>On appraisal this policy scored positively with the majority of sustainability objectives. Key positive effects related to enhancing community identity and preserving and enhancing the Borough's historic environment, landscape character and settlements. Only one objective could have positive or negative effects depending on implementation and this relates to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency measures and renewable energy schemes, some of which could have a negative impact on landscape or townscape.</p>	<p>Where conflicts arise these should be mitigated through other application of energy efficiency standards <i>i.e.</i> increase insulation.</p>
CS15 Biodiversity and Geodiversity	<p>On appraisal, this policy scored positively against all sustainability objectives with the exception of those pertaining to housing and economic growth which could have positive or negative effects depending on implementation.</p> <p>Developers may wish to pass on the cost of incorporating biodiversity into new housing onto the house buyer making homes in the Borough less affordable. Protection of biodiversity could also constrain the location of new economic developments required to support economic growth</p>	<p>Developers to observe targets set for affordable housing and pre-application and planning application discussions should be positively encouraged.</p> <p>Developers will be required to submit an Ecological Masterplan and management plan which will show how the developers could put measures in place to maintain and enhance biodiversity on site</p>
CS16 Protecting Environmental Resources, Human Health and Safety	<p>On appraisal this policy scored positively against all sustainability objectives</p>	<p>No changes or mitigation measures are recommended</p>
CS17 Delivering a Multifunctional Green Infrastructure Network	<p>On appraisal this policy scored positively against the majority of sustainability indicators. However, for positive effects to be long lasting it is essential that green infrastructure is maintained and properly managed according to its purpose</p>	<p>No mitigation measures are recommended</p>
CS18 Promoting Quality, Accessible Sport and Recreation Facilities	<p>On appraisal this policy was found to have a mixture of positive effects and no significant effects (given the specific nature of the policy) against the sustainability objectives. The key positive effects relate to positive impacts on health and wellbeing due to enhanced quality, access to and provision of sport facilities. This policy will also go some way to addressing health inequalities in the Borough which is a significant issue.</p>	<p>No changes or mitigation measures are recommended</p>
CS19 Improving Transport	<p>Key positive effects pertain to:</p>	<p>No changes or mitigation measures are recommended</p>

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<p>Infrastructure and Creating a Sustainable Transport Network</p>	<p>Attracting and retaining residents - Reducing congestion, improving integration of modes and improving access to services and facilities by walking cycling and public transport will make the Borough a very attractive place for people to live in terms of the Borough's ease of internal travel and access to other parts of the region. Improving accessibility to health and leisure services will be particularly key for an ageing population</p> <p>Improving health and wellbeing - Improving public rights of way, cycle ways and general accessibility to employment, education, health, recreation, leisure and shopping facilities by walking and cycling. Further improvements to air quality as a result of a potential reduction in car use will help to reduce the cause of respiratory problems.</p> <p>Economic growth - The policy will help to support Darlington's accessibility by rail and road which will contribute to improving existing resilience of business and will help to attract new business to the Borough, particularly those who are reliant on good transport networks and connections to the rest of the region</p> <p>The policy also whilst it recognises the need to reduce the contribution of transport to climate change does not consider what measures to put in place to ensure that infrastructure can withstand impacts of severe weather events, flooding of roads and structural damage to bridges etc.</p>	
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### What are the cumulative effects of the revised policies?

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires consideration of cumulative effects. The table overleaf identifies the main cumulative effects of the Publication Draft Core Strategy DPD and suggested mitigation measures.

Cumulative Effect	Affected Receptor	Causes	Possible Mitigation Measures
Affordability of housing	New and existing residents	The enhanced desirability of the Borough as a place to live and work as a result of the policies could drive local house prices up reducing affordability of existing housing. Coupled with this the requirements for developers to incorporate safety and environmental measures in to new housing could be passed back to the house buyer reducing overall affordability	Compliance with CS11 in terms of Affordable housing targets.  Developers to be positively encouraged to engage in pre application and planning application discussions regarding the level of safety/environmental standards to be incorporated
Decline in water quality	Rivers and streams flowing into and out of the Borough and groundwater sources	Increased run off from roads and hard standing associated with new development (e.g. car parks). Increased sewage output from new housing and economic developments	Compliance with CS15, 17 and CS4  Ensure SuDS are incorporated into new developments and infrastructure. (will reduce run off of pollutants and will assist with groundwater recharge)  Work with Northumbrian Water and Developers to ensure that sewage capacity can respond to increased growth in a timely manner.
Habitat and species loss	Wildlife habitats	Removal of habitat due to new Development. Increased disturbance from renewable energy schemes and recreational pressure on sites	Compliance with CS15 in terms of ensuring that biodiversity is designed into new developments and no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough occurs.  Impact of increased visits to local nature reserves, SSSI's etc to be assessed and mitigated for in line with the conservation objectives of the site.
Waste arisings	Resources	Increased waste from construction process and use of mineral resources. Increased waste levels from an increase in households and employment sites	Compliance with CS2 in terms of reuse of recycled materials in construction.  All major developments to have a site waste management plan in place  Work with partners to ensure that increased households and employment sites can be provided with domestic and trade waste recycling facilities and services