

## **ENVIRONMENT**

The Borough consists of distinctive landscape areas that together create its particular character and provide the setting for the built environment of the various towns and villages.

Most of the towns and villages in the Borough developed rapidly in response to growth in industry and coal mining over the last 100 years and contain relics of the industrial past; some show evidence of their agricultural origins. Parts of twelve towns and villages are designated conservation areas. There are over 170 listed buildings of architectural or historic interest. The built environment provides the background to where people live, work and spend much of their leisure time and helps to create the identity of different places.

The natural environment consists primarily of the countryside between and around settlements but also areas of open space within towns and villages. The countryside is mainly in agricultural use but is also a valuable resource for recreation, leisure and wildlife. The open spaces within settlements are of value for a variety of uses and provide an attractive setting to built development.

Within the countryside there are areas recognised for their special quality and interest. There are four areas of historic landscape, three of which are designated as conservation areas, seven Sites of Special Scientific Interest and four scheduled ancient monuments. The landscape is varied and is divided into four characteristic areas: the Magnesian Limestone escarpment, the River Wear Valley Shelf, and River Wear Valley Area of Landscape Value, and the Southern and Eastern Lowlands.

The Borough is fortunate in that there is little derelict land remaining from its industrial past. There are, however, areas of housing and industry that appear dated because of the monotonous style, lack of greenery and unsatisfactory road layouts.

### **The Environment Strategy**

The Government's White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (1990) emphasises the need to take environmental considerations comprehensively and consistently into account in development plans. The Government seeks to achieve sustainable development through the planning system. Good environmental quality is an important element in helping to create the right conditions for economic and social development. There are limits to the extent that the environment's resources can be exploited. This means that decisions made about development should not deny future generations the best of today's environment. The Government's advice contained in planning policy guidance is to give greater emphasis to the issue of sustainable development, for example, through the regeneration of towns, a reduction in the need to travel, making greater use of renewable resources and conserving the natural and built heritage.

The Structure Plan's environmental aims seek to improve the appearance of the County and protect the countryside from unnecessary developments. This approach has three separate elements: to conserve the attractive features; to increase the rate of improvement of degraded areas; and to ensure that all new development leads to an improvement in the appearance of the County. The Structure Plan also seeks to safeguard better quality agricultural land, protect sites of ecological interest and limit the effects of pollution.

### **The Environment Policies of the Plan**

The environment policies of the Plan are aimed at achieving an attractive environment through the conservation and enhancement of the area's appearance. The Plan seeks to encourage improvements and developments that help to:

- balance conservation with development;
- achieve good design in new development and encourage the arts;

- enhance and revitalise downgraded areas;
- protect and enhance areas of special interest;
- sustain the diversity of landscape character;
- encourage energy conservation;

The environment strategy proposed in the Local Plan addresses these issues. Policies are included concerning the conservation and enhancement of both the natural and built environment. Emphasis is given to balancing the need for development land for housing, industry and other uses and the important of maintaining and enhancing the natural environment. Policies for the environment are therefore applicable to each of the topics of the Local Plan; and the Local Plan will form the policy background for future environmental programmes and strategies.

## **Plan 1 - Landscape Areas**

## **Landscape Protection And Enhancement**

### **POLICY E1 THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO ENCOURAGE THE MAINTENANCE OF DISTINCTIVE LANDSCAPE AREAS BY:**

- (A) NORMALLY RESISTING PROPOSALS OR WORKS WHICH WOULD DAMAGE THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE RIVER WEAR VALLEY AREA OF LANDSCAPE VALUE; AND**
  
- (B) NORMALLY REQUIRING THAT LANDSCAPE FEATURES, SUCH AS HEDGEROWS, WOODS, STREAMS AND BUILDINGS, FIT INTO THE LANDSCAPE SCHEME FOR ANY DEVELOPMENT IN THE LANDSCAPE AREA OF:**
  - THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN LOWLANDS;**
  - THE MAGNESIAN LIMESTONE ESCARPMENT; AND**
  - THE RIVER WEAR VALLEY SHELF.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

The Borough has four separate areas of distinctive landscape character: the Southern and Eastern Lowlands, the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment, the River Wear Valley Shelf and the River Wear Valley Area of Landscape Value, which contain characteristic features which help to identify the differences between these areas. The boundaries of these areas are shown on Plan 1.

The Southern and Eastern Lowlands are characterised by gently undulating farmland drained by the River Skerne. The land use is predominantly mixed farming with fields divided by hedges and tree cover provided by shelter belts and blocks of woodland. There are a number of farm buildings and few hamlets. The area provides a setting for Sedgefield, Newton Aycliffe and Winterton Hospital. It is outside the mineral extraction area and the only derelict land is related to redundant railway lines. The area is crossed by the main north-south transport routes (the east coast mainline railway, A1(M) and A167).

The Magnesian Limestone Escarpment is a prominent feature in the Borough, extending from Shildon in the south-west to the Trimdons in the north-east. It is dissected by the steep natural valley of the Ferryhill Gap. The landscape has been affected by mineral workings (limestone, sand and coal). Most of the derelict land remaining in the Borough is found in this landscape area. The agricultural land is used mainly for grazing. There is little tree cover and some hedges have been replaced by fences. The area is the most urbanised and provides the setting for Shildon, Chilton, Kirk Merrington, Ferryhill, Cornforth, Bishop Middleham, Fishburn and the Trimdons.

The River Wear Valley Shelf is characterised by the transition between the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment and the steep sided valley of the River Wear. This relatively level area provides the setting for the town of Spennymoor and extends from Byers Green and

Todhills in the north west of the Borough to the A167 and mainline railway transport corridor to the east. The landscape character of parts of this area can be enhanced by tree planting, particularly within the urban fringe of Spennymoor, the transport corridor (Policy E8) and around Todhills brickworks.

The River Wear Valley is considered to be of sufficient importance to the character of the County to require special recognition and is defined in the Durham County Structure Plan Review as an Area of High Landscape Value where the conservation and enhancement of the landscape character is a primary objective. The characteristic quality of this area is created by the River Wear which flows through the steeply sided valley on the northern edge of the Borough. The area is mostly in agricultural use with important woodlands, particularly along the valleys of Burton Beck. Although this area is mostly attractive, some of the land has been the subject of opencast coal working. The land north of Tudhoe has been restored and improved through tree planting. Some of the Whitworth Park has also been opencast with the result that parkland trees have been removed. The proposal to develop a golf course here (Policy H4) will create an opportunity to enhance the landscape quality.

The distinctive character of landscapes is dependent upon the combination of many different elements: the type and location of trees, woodlands, grasslands and other vegetation; the scale of fields and the nature of their boundaries; the style of buildings and the nature of local materials; the character of streams and ditches, etc.

In order to maintain the diversity of landscape character, decisions on the use and management of land should take account of these features.

Within each of these areas of landscape character there are particular areas that need to be conserved for reasons of wildlife, geology, landscape quality or history; these are referred to in Policies E2, E3, E10, E11, E13, E15, E17 and E18. There are also areas that need to be enhanced, referred to in Policies E5, E6 and E8.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications.

Giving advice to developers.

## **POLICY E2 THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THE HISTORIC CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE FOLLOWING HISTORIC LANDSCAPE AREAS:**

**HARDWICK PARK;  
WHITWORTH PARK; AND  
WINDLESTONE PARK.**

**WITHIN THESE AREAS ONLY DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH EXISTING USES ALREADY WITHIN THE AREA AND MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED PLANNING PERMISSION:**

- (A) THE PROPOSAL IS NOT DETRIMENTAL TO THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE OF THE AREA; AND**

- (B) ANY BUILDINGS ARE SITED AND OF A DESIGN, SCALE AND MATERIALS THAT ARE SYMPATHETIC TO THE EXISTING CHARACTER OF THE AREA.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

Historic parklands are an important part of the Borough's heritage and environment. The English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens in England identifies Hardwick Park of national importance. The Council has identified two other parks and gardens as being of local significance: Windlestone and Whitworth Parks.

The approved County Structure Plan identifies these areas as being of Special Landscape Value. The quality of the landscape is largely due to the planned relationship between tree groups, buildings and farmland. The danger is that by the full or partial destruction of the vegetation, either intentionally or through neglect, the quality of these areas could be dramatically reduced. The areas will therefore be protected from inappropriate development and management.

Appropriate development could include golf courses, country parks, picnic areas which predominantly make use of open countryside and require little built development.

The cores of these areas are designated Conservation Areas. Proposals that would damage the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting would be contrary to Policy E18. The Council will ensure that features of architectural and historic interest are preserved or enhanced in accordance with Policy E18 and the advice of English Heritage.

The approved Durham County Structure Plan identified the woodland fringe of the Wynyard Estate on the southern edge of the Borough as another area of Special Landscape Value. It adjoins the area defined as being of special landscape value in the approved Cleveland County Structure Plan and the Stockton Borough Local Plan. The woodland is characteristic of the southern and eastern lowlands landscape area of the Borough (Policy E1) and will be protected by Policies E11 and E15.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications.

Providing appropriate advice to landowners and developers.

Preparing enhancement schemes for the historic parks and gardens, including physical improvements to buildings, spaces and landscape features.

Consulting English Heritage.

**POLICY E3 THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO CONSERVE THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF THE BRADBURY, MORDON AND PRESTON CARRS WHEN APPROVING PROPOSALS BY ENSURING THAT THEY DO NOT DAMAGE THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE AREA.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

The area of land south of Bradbury, drained by the Rushyford Beck, Woodham Burn and River Skerne, is known as the Bradbury, Mordon and Preston Carrs. The area was created by a post glacial lake and the special character of the landscape is recognised by a combination of certain features; most of the land below the 76 metre contour is flat and low lying. Due to the low lying nature of this area, it is partly drained by artificial drainage ditches; these along with the streams and River Skerne contribute to its landscape character. The area is of importance due to its human and natural history which is reflected in sites of archaeological interest and a rare example of fenland grassland situated alongside the East Coast Main Line. This Site of Special Scientific Interest is protected by Policy E10.

The Carrs contain some small areas of woodlands and the small scale planting of woodlands and trees including alder and willow, also thorn hedges may be of benefit to the landscape and nature conservation interest of the area.

Certain types of development would harm the special character of this area but the Council recognises the importance of the rural economy in helping to protect this historic landscape. New buildings or extensions and alterations that are reasonably required for agriculture will be treated in accordance with the requirements of Policy IB19.

This policy will not affect the normal agricultural management of land in this area in the future.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications.

## **POLICY E4 PROPOSALS FOR BUILT DEVELOPMENT WILL NORMALLY BE REFUSED IN THE FOLLOWING GREEN WEDGES WHICH PROVIDE THE SETTING OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES:**

**NORTH OF SPENNYMOOR;  
EAST, WEST AND NORTH OF NEWTON AYCLIFFE;  
NORTH OF SHILDON;  
SOUTH OF SEDGEFIELD VILLAGE; AND  
SOUTH AND WEST OF AYCLIFFE VILLAGE.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

Green wedges comprise the open areas around town and villages and between parts of settlements which maintain the distinction between the countryside and built up areas, prevent the coalescence of adjacent places and provide a rural setting to development.

They can also provide a link between the countryside and built up areas and can be a valuable recreation and wildlife resource. The wildlife value of open space can be enhanced by modifying their management and through additional planting (See Policy E13).

In order to fulfil these functions, green wedges must be preserved and built development within them be resisted. The type of land uses that the Council will encourage in green wedges include: agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor leisure uses, wildlife reserves and other appropriate open space uses. Essential built development connected to such open uses that has to be located in green wedges may be granted planning permission.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications.

**POLICY E5 THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE OF THE BOROUGH BY THE RECLAMATION OF ALL CURRENTLY DERELICT LAND BY 2006 AND BY ENCOURAGING THE BENEFICIAL USE OF AREAS OF REDUNDANT AND VACANT LAND AND URBAN FRINGE LAND.**

**ATTENTION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF LAND IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:**

**MAGNESIAN LIMESTONE ESCARPMENT LANDSCAPE AREA;**

**MAJOR TRANSPORT ROUTES;**

**URBAN FRINGE AREAS AROUND TOWNS AND VILLAGES;**

**RECREATION AND TOURIST AREAS.**

**RECLAMATION SCHEMES SHOULD TAKE ACCOUNT OF AND MAKE PROVISION FOR THE INCORPORATION WITHIN THE RESTORATION PLAN, OF ANY NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST THAT MAY HAVE DEVELOPED ON THE SITE.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

The appearance of the Borough is important to local people and also to visitors and those seeking to invest in the Borough.

An important element of sustainable development is ensuring that the best use is made of non-renewable resources, including land. Land which is derelict or under-used can often be reclaimed to a commercial use such as industry or housing which means that the equivalent area of greenfield land is not developed. Derelict land can also be reclaimed for environmental purposes, including leisure, recreation and nature conservation.

The Derelict Land Survey found that at 1st April 1993 there was some 46 hectares of derelict land in the Borough, almost all of it within the rural area. This consists of former quarries, spoil heaps and mineral railway lines.

Around 90% of the derelict land is within the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment landscape area (42 hectares) and as this area contains the main quarries, there is also the potential for further dereliction in those quarries that are not subject to modern restoration conditions.

The major transport routes include the East Coast Main Line and Darlington to Bishop Auckland railways and roads A1(M), A167, A688, A689, A177 and A6072.

The view from these routes gives an impression of the Borough which is important for visitors and residents. Creating an attractive landscape alongside these roads and railways will improve and maintain the image of the Borough as an attractive place in which to live and work.

A scheme to enhance the landscape adjacent to the mainline railway is the subject of Policy E6.

The landscape corridor of the motorway has received attention by the Department of Transport and the County Council. New road schemes offer opportunities for landscape enhancement.

Residual land areas in the Winterton and Sedgefield Community Hospital sites will be reclaimed as part of the comprehensive planning scheme the subject of Policy L15.

The urban fringe is the countryside surrounding towns and villages. The problems here arise from trespass on to private land, including damage to footpaths and vegetation and the dumping of rubbish, and changes in agricultural land use caused by real or anticipated pressure for development.

There are various ways of managing the problem so as to prevent trespass:

- (a) A buffer of recreation land between housing and agricultural land is provided which may be planted so as to encourage wildlife interest and amenity value;
- (b) Footpaths are clearly marked and managed and lead to and from where people want to go.

The countryside can be made a more attractive setting for towns and villages by, for example, creating recreation links and wildlife corridors.

The Local Plan will clearly indicate where development will be allowed during the next ten years and this should enable landowners and farmers to plan the future management of their land.

There may be opportunities within degraded areas of the countryside to create new features for recreation or tourist attractions to enhance the landscape by, for example, creating wetlands or woodlands.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Monitoring and reviewing the Council's Environmental Improvement Programme.

Liaising with Durham County Council, Groundwork East Durham, Town and Parish Councils, voluntary organisations, local firms, landowners and developers, schools and community groups, the Forestry Authority, English Nature and the Countryside Commission, as appropriate.

Seeking English Partnership grants for Council schemes and encouraging owners and developers to do likewise.

The Council using its powers under the Town and Country Planning Acts and the Environmental Protection Act, 1990.

**POLICY E6 THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE FERRYHILL STATION - CHILTON LANE AREA AND LAND ADJACENT TO THE EAST COAST MAIN LINE RAILWAY LINE.**



### **Reasons for the policy**

This area contains about 40% of the Borough's total derelict land (at 1st April 1993), including the Chilton Lane quarry, the West Cornforth heaps and land at Coxhoe junction, East Howle. There are also small areas of dereliction that require treatment

The area also includes the housing in Ferryhill Station and Chilton Lane that may be the subject of future housing area initiatives under Policy H13.

The North East Railside Revival Scheme is a current programme jointly supported by the public and private sectors. The project aims to enhance the landscape alongside the railway and work has started in the Ferryhill Gap on cleaning eyesores and planting trees.

As well as upgrading the quality of the landscape, public access will also be improved to the area of nature conservation interest at Ferryhill Carrs in accordance with Policies L8 and E12. This scheme includes the proposed reclamation of the West Cornforth heaps and land at Coxhoe junction, East Howle.

The closure and beneficial restoration of Chilton Lane Quarry under Policy E7 provides an opportunity to enhance the environment of the area. The reason for drawing the boundary widely around the quarry is to allow for a comprehensive scheme to be considered, it does not necessarily mean that all of the land within this boundary needs to be enhanced.

Reclamation and environmental improvements in this area should take account of the nature conservation, geological and geomorphological sites of importance, in accordance with Policies E10, E11 and E12.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Implementing the Railside Revival Scheme and undertaking further assessment of the area as part of the monitoring of the Local Plan, to inform future requirements of a programme of action for environmental improvements.

Seeking English Partnerships' grant for Council schemes and encouraging owners and developers to do likewise.

Liaising with Groundwork East Durham, Durham County Council, Town and Parish Councils, local residents, private landowners and developers, as appropriate.

The Council using its powers under the Town and Country Planning Acts and the Environmental Protection Act, 1990.

### **POLICY E7 THE COUNCIL IN CONSIDERING THE FUTURE USE OF CHILTON LANE QUARRY WILL REQUIRE ANY DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL TO:**

- (A) CONSIST PREDOMINANTLY OF OPEN LAND USES INCLUDING AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION AND LEISURE; AND**
- (B) ENHANCE THE AMENITY OF THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE AND RESIDENTIAL AREAS.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

Chilton Lane Quarry lies within the area to be given priority for environmental improvement under Policy E6. The closure of the quarry provides an opportunity to enhance a significant area of 37.5 hectares adjacent to Ferryhill Station by the introduction of a comprehensive restoration and after-use scheme that consists of predominantly open land uses. This should serve to help upgrade the area for local residents.

It is acknowledged that there are no conditions, or formal obligations to restore the southern quarry area. The Borough Council does wish to ensure that the whole mineral working area is restored and brought into beneficial after uses, following the completion of the quarrying activities. Proposals, based on open land uses will, therefore, be supported.

It is, however, considered that some development involving housing or limited commercial activity could be acceptable within the area. For instance, some housing might be appropriate along the northern boundary of the site with access from Broom Road. However, any built development should not prejudice the overall aim of the policy, the amenity of adjoining residential areas or the surrounding countryside.

The quarry has an existing planning permission for mineral extraction. Should the proposed future use of the quarry be for agriculture, forestry and amenity purposes, an application for approval of details would have to be made to the Mineral Planning Authority under the terms of the minerals planning permission.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications.

Liaising with the quarry owners, Ferryhill Town Council, Durham County Council as Mineral Planning Authority and local residents on restoration and after-use proposals.

**POLICY E8 THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE THE PLANTING OF TREES IN ORDER TO ASSIST THE PROMOTION OF A MORE ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND FOR COMMERCIAL, RECREATION AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PURPOSES.**

**THE FOLLOWING AREAS WILL BE CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE FOR PLANTING:**

**URBAN FRINGE AREAS;  
WITHIN URBAN AREAS;  
ALONG TRANSPORT ROUTES; AND  
ADJACENT TO THE CLEVELAND COMMUNITY FOREST.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

Planting trees and managing existing areas will provide a visually more attractive landscape and also provide opportunities for recreation and wildlife.

The Council will develop a woodland and planting and management strategy and investigate areas where new tree planting would be of most benefit in terms of natural beauty, wildlife and recreation value.

The Council has adopted the Woodland Management Plan for Newton Aycliffe which aims to manage existing woodland in its ownership and plant trees in appropriate areas in order to enhance the town's appearance and provide local green links for nature conservation, leisure and recreation.

Tree planting is particularly valuable as a means of softening the edge of built development and this is the purpose of the majority of the proposed planting areas on the edge of new developments, as set out under Policy D7.

It is also a method of agricultural diversification, with trees grown either for timber or as a source of renewable energy.

The Cleveland Community Forest is being developed on land in the Boroughs of Stockton and Hartlepool, adjacent to the Borough. The Community Forest will not only be woodland, but includes areas for sport, recreation, leisure as well as agriculture. Some areas of the Borough adjoining the Cleveland Community Forest will also be suitable for tree planting for the same purposes.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Encouraging the taking by landowners and farmers of grants from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Forestry Authority, the Countryside Commission, Durham County Council, as appropriate.

Preparing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the Borough Council's Strategic Woodland Plan which will identify existing woodland and potential land throughout the Borough that could be planted and managed for the purposes of recreation, nature conservation and a renewable energy resource.

Implementing, monitoring and reviewing the District Council's Countryside Strategy.

Encouraging Town and Parish Councils, community and school groups in planting trees and managing woodland.

## **Protection of Non-renewable Resources**

**POLICY E9 OTHER THAN AS SPECIFICALLY ALLOWED BY OTHER POLICIES IN THE PLAN, ANY DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE WILL NOT NORMALLY BE ALLOWED.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

The countryside is to be protected for its own sake and therefore development outside existing settlements will not normally be allowed. The countryside is also valued and needs to be protected for its natural and human resources: agriculture, nature conservation, landscape and history.

The Plan does allow for development in the countryside where this is appropriate, for example local nature reserves (Policy E12).

There are also exceptional reasons for allowing development in the countryside in the following instances: industry and business (Policies IB10, IB11 and IB19); housing (Policies H11 and H12); transport (T12, T13 and T14); shopping (S16); leisure (L6, L8, L9, L15, L17, L19, L20, L21 and L22); and design (D12).

### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications.

**POLICY E10 DEVELOPMENT THAT IS LIKELY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT A DESIGNATED OR NOTIFIED SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST OR NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, WILL NORMALLY BE PERMITTED ONLY IF IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT:**

- (A) THE PROPOSAL IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST;**
- (B) THE DEVELOPMENT CANNOT BE LOCATED ELSEWHERE; AND**
- (C) REMEDIAL MEASURES ARE TAKEN TO MINIMISE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SCHEME AND COMMENSURATE EFFORTS TO COMPENSATE FOR ANY UNAVOIDABLE DAMAGE ARE MADE BY APPROPRIATE HABITAT CREATION OR ENHANCEMENT.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

There are seven Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the Borough.

SSSIs are identified by English Nature as being of national importance for nature conservation (which includes wildlife, geology and geomorphology).

Within the Borough the most important natural feature is the Magnesian Limestone vegetation.

Thrislington Plantation SSSI supports the most extensive example of Magnesian Limestone grassland in Britain. In recognition of its national importance, English Nature has designated the SSSI as a National Nature Reserve to be managed jointly between English Nature and the landowner, Redlands plc.

Fishburn Grasslands SSSI is an example of a nationally scarce type of grassland.

Bishop Middleham Quarry SSSI has good examples of Magnesian Limestone plants and associated animals. It is managed as a nature reserve by Durham Wildlife Trust.

Trimdon Grange Quarry SSSI is of particular interest for the geological features of the abandoned quarry workings and also for the typical grassland. It is managed as a nature reserve by Durham Wildlife Trust

Middridge Quarry SSSI is a quarry containing internationally significant fossils.

Railway Stell West SSSI supports a typical fenland vegetation, now rare in the north of England.

Ferryhill Carrs SSSI is an important area of vegetation, including grassland, fenland and woodland.

English Nature notifies the landowner and the Council of the type of development that would adversely affect each SSSI.

Some wildlife habitats, for example, wetlands and grasslands, need to be protected from being planted with trees because this would destroy the existing natural interest of the site.

### **How it will be put into practice**

There is a statutory duty for local planning authorities to consult English Nature on proposals affecting an SSSI as well as on development within the designated area and in any "consultation area" defined by English Nature around an SSSI. These "consultation areas" have not yet been defined and, in the meantime, the Council will normally consult English Nature on proposals within 500m of an SSSI that are likely to affect the site, though the distance may be greater in certain circumstances, for example, in relation to the likely effect of water pollution on a wet land site.

Site Objective Statements for all biological SSSIs will be prepared by English Nature during 1994/95. These will be brief management plans which set out the main objectives for each site. These will then be expanded upon, to produce more detailed management plans (Site Management Statements) before the end of the century. The purpose of these is for English Nature to agree a short to medium term management regime with managers of SSSIs.

Deciding planning applications. Where a significant effect on the site is likely, the Council will require an environmental impact assessment.

Consulting with English Nature, the Durham Wildlife Trust and Durham County Council on planning applications and management agreements.

Entering into management agreements with owners or occupiers of land (under Section 39 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) and the giving of loans/grants.

**POLICY E11 THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO SAFEGUARD SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST. DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE INTERESTS OF NATURE CONSERVATION WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED UNLESS:**

- (A) IT CAN BE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE ARE REASONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD OUTWEIGH THE NEED TO SAFEGUARD THE NATURE CONSERVATION INTERESTS OF THE SITE;**
- (B) THERE ARE NO ALTERNATIVE SUITABLE AND AVAILABLE SITES FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTY OR REGION, AS APPROPRIATE; AND**
- (C) REMEDIAL MEASURES ARE TAKEN TO MINIMISE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SCHEME AND REASONABLE EFFORTS TO COMPENSATE FOR ANY UNAVOIDABLE DAMAGE IS MADE BY APPROPRIATE HABITAT CREATION OR ENHANCEMENT IN THE VICINITY; OR**
- (D) DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED THROUGH CURRENT PLANNING CONSENTS WHICH PRE-DATE THE DESIGNATION OF THE SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST.**

### **Reason for the policy**

Sites of local nature conservation interest are defined as areas having locally or regionally important wildlife or geological interest, which are not statutorily protected. Such sites need to be preserved in order to provide a wide variety of areas which are important for education, research, amenity and recreation.

Advice in identifying and conserving these sites is given by Durham Wildlife Trust and Durham County Council and formalised through the Register of County Wildlife Sites and Register of County Geological Sites. Also included are Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) and all land in the Borough currently managed by the Wildlife Trust as Nature Reserves. The direct and indirect impact of development on the sites will be a material consideration in deciding planning applications.

In the Plan area, four sites - Thrislington, Bishop Middleham, Chilton Quarry and Rough Furze - already possess planning permission for uses which could, if fully implemented, adversely affect their nature conservation value. In these instances, if a future opportunity arises, the Borough Council will support appropriate efforts to protect their nature conservation value.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications.

Consulting with the Durham Wildlife Trust and Durham County Council on planning applications and management agreements.

Negotiating with landowners and developers.

## **POLICY E12 THE COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE THE DESIGNATION OF LOCAL NATURE RESERVES IN THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS;**

**FERRYHILL CARRS;  
COW PLANTATION, SPENNYMOOR;  
MIDDLESTONE FEN, SPENNYMOOR.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

Local Nature Reserves are designated by the Local Authority if they meet the criteria set by English Nature. These are that the proposed reserve should have high natural interest, or have natural interest for education, research or informal enjoyment of nature. The proposed Local Nature Reserves must be capable of being managed with the conservation of nature and/or the maintenance of special opportunities for study as the priority concern.

Ferryhill Carrs SSSI is an important area of different types of vegetation. It meets the criteria set by English Nature and is located within an area proposed for informal countryside recreation as set out in Policy L8.

Cow Plantation, situated on the edge of Spennymoor, consists of different areas of woodland with open grassland vegetation. The proposed Local Nature Reserve includes an area of ancient semi-natural woodland in the Valley Burn. It meets the criteria set by English Nature and will provide a valuable resource for nature conservation, education and leisure.

Located to the south-west of Spennymoor at the foot of the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment, a proposed Local Nature Reserve at Middlestone Fen is a mosaic of willow carr, swamp, fen and acid grassland communities.

### **How it will be put into practice**

The Council will enter into agreement with the landowners in order to declare and manage the Local Nature Reserve under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and English Nature Northumbria Area Office may require a management plan to be produced and implemented.

Liaising with Town and Parish Councils, schools and community groups, the Durham Wildlife Trust, Groundwork East Durham, Durham County Council and English Nature, as appropriate.

### **POLICY E13 THE BOROUGH COUNCIL IN THE CONSIDERATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATURE CONSERVATION ARE RECOGNISED BY:**

- (A) **THE CREATION OF LINKS BETWEEN URBAN OPEN SPACE AND THE COUNTRYSIDE;**
- (B) **THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF LINEAR FEATURES SUCH AS STREAM AND RIVER CORRIDORS;**
- (C) **IMPROVED LANDSCAPING AND PLANTING OF URBAN OPEN SPACE AREAS, AND ALONG ROUTES THAT LINK BETWEEN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND URBAN AREAS SUCH AS ROADS, FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEWAYS TO REFLECT THE SURROUNDING NATURE CONSERVATION INTERESTS; AND**
- (D) **ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE CREATION OF NEW HABITATS.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

It is important that communities and schools should have accessible wildlife sites within easy walking distance (say 10-15 minutes).

Because there are not always existing suitable wildlife sites, opportunities will be taken to create new habitats through regeneration, reclamation or other development schemes. The Council will identify suitable areas through its Environmental Improvement Programme. It is important that schools and community groups are involved in the creation and management of such sites.

Some parts of the Borough have a good network of green spaces, linking the countryside into the built up area. Newton Aycliffe, for example, was planned with a good provision of open space and planting. In other towns and villages there are densely developed parts of the built up area that are lacking in open space.

Linear features in the countryside, such as the rivers Skerne and Wear and their tributaries, are important to wildlife because their habitats are linked. There are a number of SNCIs identified alongside these rivers and it is therefore important to protect and enhance them.

Opportunities need to be taken to create and extend existing green areas. Linking green areas is of value in terms of enhancing opportunities for wildlife by allowing plants and animals to spread into new areas. These informal wildlife corridors or green routes also provide safe and pleasant routes for walking and cycling.

That part of the Borough adjoining Cleveland consists of farmland and woods, including Ancient Woodlands, Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, and an extensive area proposed for countryside recreation. These areas of open countryside link up with and provide an extension to the wildlife corridor defined in the Cleveland County Nature Conservation Strategy.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Implementing and monitoring the Council's Environmental Improvement Programme.

Liaising with Town and Parish Councils, schools and community groups, the Durham Wildlife Trust, Groundwork East Durham and Durham County Council, as appropriate.

Deciding planning applications and protecting the existing network of green areas from developments which would threaten their green and open character.

Providing advice to developers.

### **POLICY E14 DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON WILDLIFE SPECIES PROTECTED BY LAW WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED UNLESS APPROPRIATE MEASURES ARE SECURED TO:**

- (A) **FACILITATE THE SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE SPECIES;**
- (B) **REDUCE DISTURBANCE TO A MINIMUM;**
- (C) **PROVIDE ADEQUATE ALTERNATIVE HABITATS TO SUSTAIN AT LEAST THE CURRENT LEVELS OF POPULATION.**

### **Reason for the policy**

The safeguarding of the natural environmental assets of the Borough is important in helping to conserve and enhance the area. Within this, the conservation of wildlife and the protection of the habitat on which it depends is important.

Wildlife heritage is not confined to the various designated sites that are protected under Policies E10 and E11, but is found in many other areas in both urban and countryside locations.

A number of plant and animal species are protected by law as set out in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994 (the Habitats Regulations) for instance.

Where a development proposal, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to a species or its habitat, the Borough Council would wish to ensure that before planning permission is granted, arrangements are capable of being made to secure the protection of the species.



### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications and the use of planning conditions or planning agreements as appropriate.

Consulting with English Nature and Durham Wildlife Trust

Negotiating with developers and landowners.

### **POLICY E15 THE COUNCIL, IN CONSIDERING PROPOSALS AFFECTING TREES WILL:**

- (A) NORMALLY NOT ALLOW DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD DAMAGE AREAS OF ANCIENT SEMI-NATURAL WOODLAND AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP;**
- (B) MAKE TREE PRESERVATION ORDER AS NECESSARY; AND**
- (C) EXPECT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS TO RETAIN OTHER AREAS OF WOODLAND, IMPORTANT GROUPS OF TREES, COPSES AND HEDGEROWS WHEREVER POSSIBLE AND REPLACE ANY TREES WHICH ARE LOST.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

Although woodland was the natural vegetation of the Borough there is now little tree cover.

Tree Preservation Orders protect significant trees in the Borough. The Council will continue to designate them when necessary.

The environmental consequences of felling trees, including woodland or individual trees in hedgerows, are serious. They take many years to replace, they support other plants, improve the local climate and provide variety in the landscape. Trees and woodland contribute to absorbing pollution in the atmosphere and are therefore important on a more than local scale.

The woods that are recognised by English Nature as "ancient, semi-natural woodland" are particularly valuable as wildlife areas and will be given special attention to ensure the continuation of their particular structure and characteristics. Woodland should be well managed so as to enhance its wildlife value. Advice can be given to landowners and farmers who want to diversify the rural economy and permission may be granted for a small scale development which was accompanied by measures to improve the conservation value of the woodland as a whole. The ancient semi-natural woodlands are defined on the Proposals Map.

There are significant woodlands in the River Wear Valley Area of Landscaped Value and the historic parks and gardens, as set out in Policies E1 and E2, that will be managed and protected specifically for their amenity and wildlife value.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications and making Tree Preservation Orders.

Giving advice to developers and landowners.

Entering into management agreements where appropriate.

**POLICY E16 THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL NORMALLY SEEK TO PROTECT THE BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND FROM DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD CAUSE ITS IRREVERSIBLE LOSS.**

**Reason for the policy**

The agricultural land in the Borough is not of high value in national terms, but there is land of good quality in relation to the northern region.

Best and most versatile agricultural land is defined as Grade 1, 2 and 3a in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Agricultural Land Classification system. Such land is regarded as a long term national resource and considerable weight should be given to its protection. It is the Government's policy to maintain the productivity of the best and most versatile land.

Once land is developed its return to agriculture is rarely practicable.

The countryside is a resource that should be protected for its own sake as well as for its appearance, nature conservation interest and a variety of land uses, including agriculture, recreation and leisure. Agriculture is the most common land use in the countryside. With changes in the agricultural economy, resulting in diversification and set-aside, farmers will increasingly have a role in maintaining and enhancing the appearance and nature conservation interest of the countryside.

**How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications.

Consultations with Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

**POLICY E17 THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO PROTECT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS BY:**

- (A) WHERE NATIONALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS, WHETHER SCHEDULED OR NOT, AND THEIR SETTING, ARE AFFECTED BY A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT, THERE WILL BE A PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF THEIR PHYSICAL PRESERVATION.**
- (B) WHERE THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS MAY EXIST ON A SITE BUT WHOSE EXTENT AND IMPORTANCE ARE NOT KNOWN, THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD ASSESSMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BEFORE DETERMINING THE PLANNING APPLICATION; AND**
- (C) WHERE PRESERVATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS IS NOT JUSTIFIED THE COUNCIL WILL NEED TO BE SATISFIED THAT, PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT, THE DEVELOPER HAS MADE SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR AN APPROPRIATE PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION, RECORDING AND PUBLICATION.**

## **Reasons for the policy**

There are only a certain number of archaeological remains and they cannot be recreated once they have been lost.

In many cases they are highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Appropriate management is therefore essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed. They can contain irreplaceable information about our past and the potential for an increase in future knowledge. They are part of our sense of national identity and are valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism.

There are four scheduled ancient monuments in the Borough: Brusselton Incline, Bishop Middleham Castle and the Deserted Medieval Villages of Preston-le-Skerne and Layton. These are statutorily protected.

There are many other remains of archaeological interest known to exist throughout the Borough. Further remains of interest may exist, but have not yet been surveyed. English Heritage have embarked on a survey programme which is expected to result in significant additional numbers being scheduled. There may, however, be sites that are of regional or local importance that will not be scheduled. The Sites and Monuments Record provides information about the locations where archaeological remains are known to exist or thought to exist. Therefore, the identification of archaeological sites of both current and potential national or regional importance can be best achieved by early consultation with the Durham County Sites and Monuments Record and English Heritage. Planning permission for development on sites identified as such may be granted subject to the developer undertaking an agreed programme or archaeological investigation.

Where it is apparent that important archaeological remains may exist, it is reasonable for the Council to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken. This is not a full archaeological excavation, but a rapid, inexpensive survey requiring a fully qualified archaeologist. The evaluation should help to define the character and extent of the remains, indicate weight that ought to be attached to their preservation and identify potential options for minimising or avoiding damage.

The Council can expect the developer to provide the results of the evaluation. On this basis an informed and reasonable planning decision can be taken.

It is recognised that the extent of which archaeological remains can or should be preserved will depend on a number of factors including the importance of the remains. Where it is not feasible or possible to preserve all remains, an acceptable alternative may be to arrange prior excavation, during which archaeological evidence is recorded.

The Council will satisfy itself before granting planning permission that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for excavation and recording of the remains and their publication. Agreement on the excavation, recording and publication may be reached between the Council, the developers and archaeological consultants under voluntary agreements such as the British Archaeologists' and Developers' Code of Practice.

## **How it will be put into practice**

Negotiating with developers and entering into agreements, either made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or made within the terms of the spirit of the British Archaeologists' and Developers' Code of Practice. Responsibility for funding any

archaeological site investigations or recording of remains should normally be at the developer's expense. The model condition in PPG 16: Archaeology and Planning may be included in granting planning permission.

Liaising with the Durham County Antiquities Section who maintain the County Sites and Monuments Records, and English Heritage.

## **Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment**

### **POLICY E18 THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE BOROUGH'S CONSERVATION AREAS BY:**

- (A) NOT NORMALLY ALLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD DETRACT FROM THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA OR ITS SETTINGS;**
- (B) NOT NORMALLY ALLOWING THE DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE AREA'S CHARACTER. APPROVAL OF THE DETAILS OF THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITES OF BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE AREA'S CHARACTER WILL HAVE TO BE OBTAINED PRIOR TO CONSENT BEING GRANTED FOR THE DEMOLITION;**
- (C) CONSIDERING OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATIONS WHEN SUPPORTED BY SUFFICIENTLY DETAILED DRAWINGS TO DEMONSTRATE THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL ON THE CONSERVATION AREA;**
- (D) NORMALLY PROTECTING TREES, HEDGEROWS, OTHER SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS, LANDSCAPE FEATURES, VIEWS AND OPEN SPACES, INCLUDING VILLAGE GREENS, WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE AREA AND ITS SETTING;**
- (E) NORMALLY GRANTING PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION, REPAIR OR ALTERATION OF ANY BUILDING, STRUCTURE, ROAD OR FOOTPATH ONLY IN MATERIALS OF A TYPE AND COLOUR, AND WHERE APPROPRIATE WITH SIMILAR ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS, TO REFLECT THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA; AND**
- (F) NOT NORMALLY GRANTING PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE ERECTION OF TEMPORARY BUILDINGS.**

#### **Reasons for the policy**

A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. It is the responsibility of the Borough Council to identify and designate an area as a conservation area.

One of the main purposes of designating conservation areas is to manage future development proposals in a way which will protect or enhance the special character of each conservation area.

Sedgefield Borough contains several settlements which retain buildings and features of architectural or historic importance that add a distinctive character to the area and which provide valuable connections with the history of locality.

The following Conservation Area are designated in the Borough:

Aycliffe, Bishop Middleham, Brusselton, Cornforth, Hardwick Park, Kirk Merrington, Mainsforth, Middridge, Mordon, Sedgefield, Shildon, Trimdon Village, Tudhoe Village, Whitworth and Windlestone.

The character of each of the conservation areas is different and needs to be treated individually in order to reflect its particular historic and architectural character. Character appraisal reports of each are set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 1 on Conservation Areas. These will give residents and developers an indication of the special architectural and historic character which the Borough Council is seeking to preserve or enhance.

Implementing the policy will help to improve the overall attractiveness of the Borough as a place for people to live and work in.

Whilst a high standard of design is expected for all developments, this is particularly important for conservation areas where developments will be expected to enhance the appearance of the area.

The loss of any buildings or features within these areas could adversely affect their unique physical character and appearance.

The need to preserve and enhance the existing character of conservation areas is important. There is usually insufficient information with an outline application to determine whether this will occur.

Trees and hedgerows are considered to be an integral part of a conservation area and they should be treated as being as important as the buildings. Landscape features such as changes in ground level, walls, village greens and commons, also contribute to the character and appearance of conservation areas.

New built development should be of a design and materials that sympathise with and help to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

It is recognised that agricultural buildings and other structures may need to be erected or extended within conservation areas. Planning advice and any supplementary planning guidance on this issue will be based on a practical approach to the use of materials and design and siting considerations.

Roads and footpaths form an essential part of these areas and their appearance can do much to affect the quality of an area.

The Borough Council will encourage the Highway Authority and statutory undertakers to carry out the construction, repair and maintenance works to roads and footways in conservation areas in appropriate materials in order to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area.

Temporary buildings are not normally of a sufficiently high standard of design and materials to be allowed in conservation areas.

A co-ordinated approach to the design of signs on commercial buildings is needed in conservation areas.

The control of advertisements in conservation areas is covered in Policy D15.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Providing appropriate advice to developers.

Deciding planning applications and applications for consideration and consent.

Preparing enhancement schemes for conservation areas, including physical improvements to buildings, spaces and streets.

Consideration will be given to the use of powers to provide the Council with extra controls. Article 4 Directions may be used in especially sensitive areas in order to control development which would otherwise not require planning permission such as alterations to doors and windows. Such a Direction is in force in part of Sedgefield Conservation Area.

Making Tree Preservation Orders.

Consulting with the Highway Authority and statutory undertakers.

Implementing environmental improvement schemes

Assisting applications for grant aid from English Heritage and others.

### **POLICY E19 THE CHANGE OF USE, ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS WILL NORMALLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE MET:**

- (A) **THE ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ARE SYMPATHETIC TO THE DESIGN, SCALE AND MATERIALS OF THE EXISTING BUILDINGS;**
- (B) **THE ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC ELEMENTS WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO THE CHARACTER OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING, INCLUDING THOSE OF THE INTERIOR AND WITHIN THE CURTILAGE OF THE BUILDING, REMAIN UNALTERED; AND**
- (C) **THE STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING ARE NOT ALTERED OR WEAKENED.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

A Listed Building is a building or structure considered to be of special architectural or historic interest and is included in a list (approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment) giving details of each building or structure. They are protected from unauthorised works on or near them and from unauthorised demolition.

Buildings are listed because of their architectural or historic importance. They provide a valuable contribution to the character of the Borough and its links with the past, and because of this it is important that they are retained in a reasonable state of repair and their essential character is not destroyed by new developments.

The policy will ensure that any alterations or extensions to a listed building are:

- (a) designed to the highest standards;
- (b) sympathetic to the design of the existing building; and
- (c) do not harm or destroy any of the important features of the building.

Structural elements are defined as any member forming part of the structural frame of a building or any other beam or column, a floor, walls (including external, separating, compartment, load bearing walls), a structure enclosing a protected shaft, and a gallery.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Listed building consent is required for works to all listed buildings and structures. English Heritage will be consulted.

Deciding planning applications for listed building consent.

Assisting applications for grant aid from English Heritage and others.

## **POLICY E20 THE TOTAL OR SUBSTANTIAL DEMOLITION OF LISTED BUILDINGS WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

Buildings that have been listed because of their historic or architectural interest are irreplaceable. They can make a positive contribution to the Borough's image and may be important in attracting visitors.

Listed buildings need to be protected from damage and neglect which could lead to them needing extensive repairs. There are grants for repairing listed buildings (from English Heritage, the Borough Council and Durham County Council) but the most satisfactory method of retaining these buildings in good repair is to make use of them.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications and applications for listed building consent.

## **POLICY E21 PLANNING PERMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO A LISTED BUILDING WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED PROVIDED IT DOES NOT DETRACT FROM THE SETTING OF THE LISTED BUILDING.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

The setting of a listed building is often an essential feature of its character. It is important to consider the effect that proposed developments may have upon the character of the setting of such buildings.

When development is proposed, the relationship of the listed building to walls, open spaces, trees and other vegetation needs to be considered.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Deciding planning applications.

**POLICY E22 THE COUNCIL WILL CONTINUE TO PROMOTE THE REPAIR AND RE-USE OF BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES WHICH FORM PART OF THE HERITAGE OF THE BOROUGH OR WHICH SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OF THE LOCALITY BY NORMALLY ALLOWING PROPOSALS FOR APPROPRIATE USES THAT ACCORD WITH OTHER POLICIES OF THE PLAN AND SECURE THEIR FUTURE.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

This policy does not apply to listed buildings. Listed buildings are protected from unauthorised works on or near them and from demolition as set out in Policies E19-E21.

There are many buildings and structures which have strong historical associations with the locality which may not be of sufficient importance to be "listed" and are not located within a conservation area. They do, however, play an important part in identifying different places and creating a special character which may be difficult to reproduce. The Council will need to identify the relevant buildings and structures and maintain a list of them. This will enable the Council to contribute towards improving the environment through controlling development and assisting applicants in applying for possible grant aid.

Although it is preferable to retain the original use of a building or structure, when this is not feasible ways of re-using instead of demolishing them will be encouraged.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Drawing up a list of relevant buildings and structures.

Negotiating with owners and developers.

Serving repair notices where significant buildings are neglected.

Assisting applications for grant aid from English Heritage and others.

**POLICY E23 THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES AND CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT THROUGH A BROAD RANGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS AND, AS APPROPRIATE BY CO-ORDINATING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESOURCES. ATTENTION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE FOLLOWING:**

- (A) TOWN AND VILLAGE CENTRES;**
- (B) CONSERVATION AREAS;**
- (C) OLDER HOUSING AREAS;**
- (D) OTHER HOUSING AREAS WHERE THERE MAY BE TRAFFIC AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS;**



- (E) INDUSTRIAL AREAS WITH A POOR ENVIRONMENT; AND**
- (F) AREAS THE SUBJECT OF ROAD IMPROVEMENTS OR TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES.**

### **Reasons for the policy**

There are a number of ways of improving the surroundings of where people live and work in the Borough.

Improvements to town and village centres have already been carried out and there will continue to be opportunities to create new landscape areas and features, for example by tree and shrub planting, new paving, lighting and street furniture. Policy S10 in the Shopping and Town Centre Chapter deals with this matter.

Derelict buildings should be re-used or demolished and vacant sites tidied and maintained. The Council will prepare Planning Briefs to promote vacant sites for development.

Conservation Areas will be enhanced in accordance with Policies E2 and E18.

It is particularly important that buildings and land owned by the Council and other public bodies are well maintained. Schemes to improve Council owned houses and their environment will be continued where necessary as set out in Policy H13 in the Housing Chapter.

The opportunity should be taken to improve the appearance of land adjoining road schemes, particularly when views of the rear of buildings are opened up.

The environment of some industrial areas needs to be improved. for example by repairing and maintaining buildings, traffic management schemes and tree planting. All these areas can have problems of litter which spoil their appearance. Environmental improvements in older industrial areas are the subject of Policy IB14 in the Industry Chapter.

Environmental improvements in the countryside are covered in Policy E5 and E8.

Priority is also being given to improving the area of Ferryhill Station/Chilton Lane, see Policy E6.

### **How it will be put into practice**

Providing advice to developers, including planning guidance and Development Briefs.

Implementing the Borough's Environment Improvement, Housing and Economic Development Programmes.

## Environmental Protection

**POLICY E24 PLANNING PERMISSION FOR SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS WILL NORMALLY BE ALLOWED WITHIN 250 METRES OF SITES USED FOR WASTE DISPOSAL ONLY IF IT IS PROVED THAT THERE IS NO RISK TO THAT DEVELOPMENT OR ITS INTENDED OCCUPIERS OR USERS FROM LANDFILL GAS OR THAT SATISFACTORY REMEDIAL MEASURES CAN BE UNDERTAKEN.**

### Reasons for the policy

It is necessary to consult the County Council as Waste Disposal Authority on all significant development proposals within 250 metres of a closed or operational landfill site. Significant proposals are defined by the Waste Disposal Authority and include any development that would be at risk from gas explosions. This means that only applications such as minor extensions to existing property or temporary development are not significant.

Methane gas is produced by decomposing waste in sites that have been filled with refuse. The gas migrates through cracks in the rock in any direction before coming to the surface with the risk of explosion.

It is usually difficult to be sure that development within 250 metres of a landfill site will be safe because of the length of time during which gas is produced and the uncertainty of the direction of gas migration.

It may, in some circumstances be possible to grant planning permission if the site has been monitored for sufficient time (for example two years) and there is no risk of landfill gas or that the gas being produced can be safely dealt with.

### How it will be put into practice

Consulting the County Council.

Deciding planning applications.

Negotiating with developers.

**POLICY E25 THE COUNCIL WILL NORMALLY GRANT PERMISSION FOR SITES FOR RECOVERING RE-USABLE MATERIALS FROM WASTE PRODUCTS PROVIDING THAT IT WOULD NOT SIGNIFICANTLY HARM LIVING CONDITIONS FOR NEARBY RESIDENTS OR HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE LOCAL CHARACTER OF THE AREA.**

### Reasons for the policy

The Borough Council is the waste collecting authority for domestic waste.

The Government White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", expressed the intention that 25% of domestic waste will be recovered by the year 2000.

The Borough Council is operating a Recycling Policy as required by the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

A number of different methods of recovering paper, glass, textiles, oil, compostibles, metal and plastic have been investigated. A number of methods require sites close to where people live, work, shop or go to school, for example in the case of bottle banks. The siting, design and location of these should ensure that they are easy and safe to use.

The processing of recycled waste should take place on certain General Industrial Areas in accordance with Policy IB6.

**How it will be put into practice**

Liaising with voluntary groups as appropriate.

Implementing and monitoring the Council's Recycling Policy.