

BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY

- 2.1 The Local Plan looks ahead for the next 10 years or so. It must try to set out a broad land use and development strategy that will provide a framework to guide new building and deal with changes taking place both now and in the future. It provides the basis for the planning of the Borough by the Council in co-operation with residents, businesses, landowners, public agencies and investors. Its wide scope and status as a detailed development plan make it an important strategy document for the future of the Borough.
- 2.2 In undertaking this task it is essential that the Plan has a clear view of what it is seeking to achieve - the Aims of the Plan - and how this is to be brought about - the Strategy of the Plan.
- 2.3 The aims of the Plan have been devised from an assessment and review of the Borough and the development opportunities and constraints it faces. Account has also been taken of existing planning policy advice provided by Central Government, the Durham County Structure Plan and existing Council Policy and Programme Documents.

Plan Aims

- To seek an increasing population base in the Borough.
 - To further the economic regeneration of the Borough so as to achieve a stable and diverse employment base that is self sustaining.
 - To provide an attractive and quality environment in the Borough by the conservation and enhancement of the area's appearance, and the conservation of natural resources.
 - To enhance the economic, residential, environmental, community and social conditions of the Borough.
 - To ensure sufficient development land is available in environmentally acceptable locations that is attractive to investors, and able to meet the requirements of industry, housing, shopping, leisure and community developments.
 - To improve accessibility in accordance with the needs of residents, industry and commerce whilst minimising the need for motorised travel wherever possible.
 - To recognise the different needs of all sections of the community in the provision of facilities and in the design of buildings and the environment
 - To encourage new development to locate where it makes the best use of existing developed sites, infrastructure and resources, and where it contributes towards achieving more sustainable patterns of development.
- 2.4 These Plan aims are in many respects interrelated. The promotion of the economic regeneration should assist to stem the outward movement of population and lead to an increasing population, as well as bring about improvements to the environmental appearance of the Borough. In other instances some aims may conflict such as in making choices between the release of land for housing development and the conservation of the area's appearance.

- 2.5 In making such choices, the Borough Local Plan gives priority to the promotion of economic activity as this provides the stimulus to the achievement of many of the other aims concerning the regeneration, improvement and vitality of the Borough. However, in making such choices full regard will be given to the environmental impact of development, because of its long term consequences on the Borough and the quality of life of residents. Economic activity and development must take place within the environmental capacity of the Borough. Development proposals should, therefore, be sustainable so as not to harm the quality of life for future residents of the Borough.

Plan Strategy

- 2.6 Achievement of the Plan's aims is to be guided by four specific strategy approaches toward land use and planning decisions. These will also provide a focus for the implementation of individual policies and proposals.
- 2.7 Three of the strategy approaches are topic based, whilst the fourth indicates how these types of activities are to be concentrated or distributed across the Borough.

Environmental Strategy

To conserve and enhance the natural and built environment of the Borough by:

- Identifying the key characteristics of important aspects of the Borough's landscape and individual towns and villages, so as to protect and enhance the features that contribute towards the appearance and image of the Borough.
- The improvement of the appearance of the Borough's town and village centres, residential and industrial areas and countryside areas, and by the treatment of areas of derelict and vacant land to establish more beneficial uses.
- Ensuring that the natural resources of the Borough - areas of nature conservation interests, geological sites, trees and better quality agricultural land - are safeguarded.
- Protecting areas of open countryside from unnecessary development.
- Attention to the appearance and design of new developments and their impact on the surrounding environment.
- Ensuring that new developments and environmental improvements are usable by all sections of the community.

Development Strategy

To promote and facilitate development opportunities for employment, housing, shopping and leisure in the Borough by:

- The provision of an attractive range of employment sites to assist economic regeneration, attraction of inward investment, development of small businesses and the promotion of modern manufacturing industry and an enhanced service sector.

- Maintaining a sufficient supply of land for housing that comprises a range of attractive sites for private sector development, and for the requirements of low cost housing and social housing provision.
- Ensuring the attractiveness, diversity, vitality and viability of the Borough's town and shopping centres is maintained and enhanced.
- Encouraging the maintenance and development of a range of recreational, leisure, social and community facilities to improve the opportunities available to the Borough's residents.

Transport Strategy

To improve accessibility for people in the Borough in an environmentally friendly manner by:

- Providing for the safe and convenient movement of people by foot, cycle, public transport and by cars in a manner which limits their impact on the environment.
- Facilitating the operation of public transport.
- Increasing the opportunities for the use of rail for the movement of people and goods.
- The promotion of road improvements within the Borough and to the regional road network.
- The promotion of transport investments that enhance the environment, conserves energy resources, assists economic investment and supports the use of town centres.

Spatial Strategy

To direct new investment in the Borough to areas where the greatest benefit will be achieved through:

- The promotion of the Borough's major towns of Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor and encouraging major new development to be located in these two towns as well as Ferryhill and Shildon.
- Ensuring that outside these towns, development proposals are normally located in villages and are compatible with their existing scale and environmental quality so as to protect and enhance the image and appearance of the Borough.
- Encouraging the re-use of land within towns and village, with greenfield development taking place only on selected sites where necessary.
- Locating development in areas that assists in minimising the need to travel and assists in encouraging a sustainable development pattern.
- Promoting economic development and social measures that support communities in the rural eastern part of the Borough that form part of the East Durham Rural Development Area.
- Giving priority to environmental measures to prestige development locations and town centres, to improve the setting of settlements and major communication routes.

Environmental Considerations

- 2.8 The application of these strategies to the Plan preparation process has given a shape to the collective purpose of individual policies and proposals. In this, account has been taken of the Government's Environment White Paper - "This Common Inheritance", which sees local planning authorities as having a key part to play in helping to achieve its purposes.
- 2.9 Accordingly, environmental considerations have been consistently and comprehensively taken into account in the preparation of the Borough Local Plan. Attention has in particular been given to a key factor highlighted in the White Paper: energy conservation and global warming.
- 2.10 Government advice suggests that one way in which development plan policies can address energy conservation is in the location of new development, so as to reduce the need for car journeys and the distance driven, or which permit the choice of more energy efficient public transport. Other suggested policy initiatives include making full and effective use of land within existing urban areas, locating development near to public transport networks, encouraging development into town centres and positive encouragement of facilities to assist walking and cycling. The Council will encourage the development of renewable energy resources in the Borough where this is compatible with environmental considerations.
- 2.11 These considerations have contributed towards influencing the Plan's overall approach to the future planning and development of the Borough. The key aspects are:
- Urban concentration
 - Conservation of rural areas
 - Protection of the open countryside

Environmental Appraisal

- 2.12 The Planning & Compensation Act 1991, requires that development plans should include policies for the conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of land and for the improvement of the physical environment. The Town & Country Planning Act (Development Plans) Regulations 1991, also require attention to environmental considerations and PPG 12- Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance recommends that authorities should carry out a basic environmental appraisal as part of the plan preparation process.
- 2.13 An environmental appraisal has been made of the Plan's policies and proposals. The process of plan preparation has had to weigh up economic, social and environmental matters. In some cases decisions will be made that favour economic or social factors, whereas other cases may favour environmental factors. There are frequently cases which are not clear cut, for example, by concentrating development in the towns of Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe and thereby reducing the need to travel for the majority of people in the Borough, some new houses and industry has to be developed on green field sites.
- 2.14 An environmental appraisal ensures that the Plan makes an adequate provision for development but at the same time takes account of the need to protect the natural and built environment, paying particular attention to the impact of development on the environment which may be irreversible.

Planning Policy Context

- 2.15 The Borough Local Plan as part of the Development Plan has not been prepared in isolation, but within a broad framework that encompasses:
- Government Planning Policy Guidance.
 - Regional Planning Guidance for the North of England.
 - Strategic Planning Policies of the Durham County Structure Plan.
 - Existing Plans and Policies and other Council Policies.

National Planning Policies

- 2.16 Central Government planning policy advice is issued in the form of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs). These provide advice on general and specific aspects of planning policy and local planning authorities are expected to have regard to them in the exercise of their planning functions.
- 2.17 A list of all current PPGs is set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.18 The principle PPG concerning Local Plan preparation is PPG 12 - Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance (February 1992). Advice is given on the procedures for plan preparation, the contents of plans and their format.

Regional Planning Guidance

- 2.19 The Government is also systematically extending the coverage of Regional Planning Guidance. This is prepared by the Secretary of State for the Environment following public consultation and takes account of national planning policies. Its primary function is to provide the necessary framework for the preparation of structure plans, and deals with planning issues which are of regional importance or need to be considered on a wider geographical basis than that of individual structure plans.
- 2.20 Regional Planning Guidance for the Northern Region was published by the Secretary of State for the Environment in September 1993. It covers the areas of the County Councils of Cleveland, Durham and Northumberland. The Tyne and Wear area also has in place the Government's guidance in the form of Strategic Guidance. Regional Planning Guidance for the whole Northern Region is in the course of preparation.
- 2.21 The main theme of the existing Regional Planning Guidance is that County Councils, through their Structure Plans should continue to:
- concentrate on the regeneration of the Region's existing urban areas;
 - attract employment to the area to improve its economic base;
 - pursue policies designed to safeguard the countryside, forests and coastline.
- 2.22 The Borough Council is required to have regard to this Regional Planning Guidance in preparing the Borough Local Plan.

Strategic Planning Policies

- 2.23 The Durham County Structure Plan provides the strategic planning basis for the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan. Structure Plans provide the broad policy framework for Local Plans and development control; ensure that the provision for development is realistic and consistent with national and regional policy; and that there is consistency between Local Plans for neighbouring areas. A Local Plan is required to be in general conformity with the Structure Plan.
- 2.24 The Durham County Structure Plan was approved by the Secretary of State in January 1981, and subsequently two updating alterations on a range of topics were approved in May and August 1989.
- 2.25 The Structure Plan seeks to achieve a number of aims. These are concerned with obtaining sufficient employment to support a County population of around 600,000; to provide a range of opportunities for work, shopping, education, leisure and community facilities; to maintain and improve town centres; and to safeguard the environmental resources of the County.
- 2.26 The key aspects in the achievement of these aims are to create the conditions to maintain sufficient employment by providing an attractive range of industrial sites throughout the County with good transportation links; to concentrate new development within the County's major centres to sustain and provide access to a range of services and activities; and to protect the character and appearance of the County's countryside from intrusive development.
- 2.27 Durham County Council have now embarked upon preparing a full review of the existing Structure Plan which will cover the period up to 2006. As part of this, a proposed strategy for the Review has been published which has as its main principles:
- (a) to generate and provide for development to meet the social and economic needs of the County's residents in ways which do not compromise the quality of the environment and the quality of life of future generations, in accordance with the principles of sustainability;
 - (b) to create for the people of County Durham the best possible opportunities for work, housing, shopping, education and leisure and for meeting social and community needs, including assisting those within the community with particular disadvantages to improve their quality of life; and
 - (c) to improve and protect the built and natural environment of the county.
- 2.28 The Strategy also states that to fulfil these principles it is necessary to sustain and expand the Economy and to maintain and improve the Environment These two main themes are seen as inter-dependent and to underline the whole of the Review.

Existing Plans and Policies

- 2.29 The Borough Council has approved other planning and non planning policies and documents that will have a bearing on the Borough Local Plan. The Local Plan deals with the relevant land use and development aspects of these plans and policies, and will in other instances provide a framework for their achievement on a longer term context.
- 2.30 These include:
- Council adopted Local Plans for Aycliffe Village, Bishop Middleham and Eldon.
 - Informal Local Plans approved by the Council.

- Council Policy Statement on such matters as Economic Development, Housing and Countryside Conservation.

2.31 Plans and policies of other authorities have also been considered:

- Durham County Council's adopted Local Plans: Magnesian Limestone Escarpment (Minerals and Landscape Restoration) Local Plan, and County Durham Waste Disposal Local Plan.
- Adjoining Councils' Local Plans.
- Durham County Council's Transport Policies and Programme Document.

2.32 Further details of all of these documents are set out in Appendix 2.