

Durham City Neighbourhood Plan

Summary of Consultation Draft

Prepared by the Durham City Neighbourhood Forum



This summary is to help you to make your views known on the Draft Plan.

- You will need a Feedback questionnaire from a 'Drop-in' event or from Durham Town Hall, County Hall reception or Clayport Library, where you can also return the completed questionnaire. Or by post to The Miners' Hall, Redhills, Durham DH1 4BD
- You can also go to <http://npf.durhamcity.org.uk/the-plan/> where you will find a full electronic version of the Plan, and can also respond online.
- This Plan has been produced by local volunteers who have come together as the Forum. To make the policies truly representative of local people's views, it is important that as many people as possible express a view. Please give your feedback by 18th December. Many thanks for your contribution to 'Our Neighbourhood' Plan
- This summary contains 32 policies and suggestions for projects in the community. Reply on all or any part of the plan in which you have an interest.

Views expressed by people responding to earlier consultations are shown in this format.

And our responses go here

Theme 1: A City with a Sustainable Future

What is sustainable development? It is development that meets current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is the so-called 'golden thread' running through the National Planning Policy Framework and this Draft Plan.

How can this be achieved? By making sure that all sites and buildings approved for development contribute to a sustainable future for Durham City. This can only be done by ensuring a successful balance among environmental, social and economic outcomes:

The **environmental function** is to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, all of which are particularly rich in Durham City. This function will include helping to increase biodiversity, using natural resources prudently as we move to a low carbon economy, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change. In Durham City this requires particular attention to building resilience to flooding and safeguarding the high qualities of the built and natural environment.

The **social function** is to support strong, balanced, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations and by creating a high quality built environment with accessible local services that meet the community's varied needs and support its health, educational, social and cultural well-being.

The **economic function** is to contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation. It must also identify and coordinate development requirements, including the provision of a modern transport and communications infrastructure.

Sustainable development policies

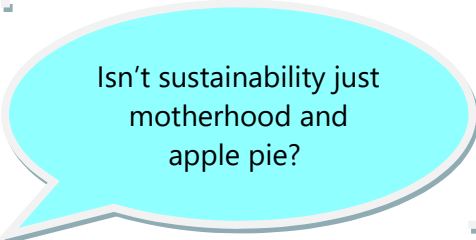
The two sustainable development policies cover all proposed sites and buildings. All elements will have to be considered although not every one of them will necessarily be relevant to every proposal. These development policies have been included to avoid unnecessary repetition in later themes where detailed requirements will be specified.

Policy S1 Sustainable Development Requirements of all Development and Redevelopment Sites

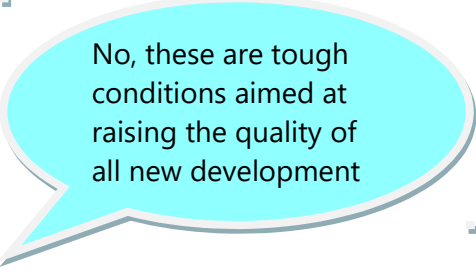
Development proposals must have the right mix of land uses; use brownfield land to protect the Green Belt; protect wildlife and biodiversity; efficiently use natural and processed resources; show resilience to climate change; improve safety, paving, lighting and signage, and reduce crime; protect heritage assets; incorporate public benefits; and enable ease of access for all by public transport, walking and cycling.

Policy S2 Sustainable Development Requirements of all New Building Developments

Development proposals must be in harmony with built and natural heritage; respect privacy of neighbouring property, use sustainable building techniques including the use of local materials; ensure minimal energy consumption and maximum energy generation; avoid impact on water quality and incorporate sustainable drainage approach; share technologies; and minimise waste production during construction and after-use.



Isn't sustainability just motherhood and apple pie?



No, these are tough conditions aimed at raising the quality of all new development

Theme 2a: A Beautiful and Historic City - Heritage

The City of Durham is one of the most important historic cities in Britain. Its unique townscape forms the immediate setting for the Cathedral and Castle World Heritage Site recognised by UNESCO as being of 'such exceptional cultural significance as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity'. The challenge is to plan for accommodating modern needs while respecting history and heritage. The policies are designed to protect and enhance the many buildings, the medieval pattern of streets, vennels, and green spaces for its residents, businesses, workers, shoppers and visitors both now and for the future.

Policy H1: Protection of the World Heritage Site

Planning policy and processes will protect The Durham Cathedral and Castle World Heritage Site from inappropriate development both within the existing boundary and the proposed extension into the surrounding banks of the River Wear, and its landscape setting. Any proposed developments must safeguard views to and from The World Heritage Site and preferably enhance its value.

Policy H2: The Conservation Areas

Development proposals within the Durham City Conservation Area and the Burn Hall Conservation Area will only be permitted if they retain existing continuous frontage; are of high design quality and respect the architectural qualities of the buildings and the historic streetscape; have sensitive scale, density, massing, height and detailing; and avoid loss of all or parts of buildings of character.

Policy H3: The Character Areas

The Durham City Conservation area is divided into five character areas comprising the Peninsula, and the four historical boroughs of Framwellgate, Crossgate, Elvet and Gilesgate. Each has a unique identity. Development proposals will be required to use materials that reflect that character; restore architectural features; incorporate uses appropriate both building and area character; retain and improve distinctive shop fronts and signage; and demonstrate understanding of the character area and its needs.

Policy H4: Our Neighbourhood outside the Conservation Areas

Areas outside the Conservation Areas have their own character and this policy is to ensure that developers demonstrate awareness of the need to protect and enhance the setting, and to employ high quality and sympathetic design.

Policy H5: Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, and Registered Battlefields

These diverse heritage assets are crucial in giving a sense of identity and are an essential part of the collective memory of the community. They are the core of the City's enduring appeal and will be safeguarded from inappropriate development or demolition. Proposals which conform to the sustainability policies will be supported only if they preserve and conserve these assets.

Policy H6: Non-designated Heritage Assets.

Buildings, monuments, sites, or landscapes of local significance which are not formally designated heritage assets in this Plan will be safeguarded from inappropriate development and from demolition. Development proposals will be supported if they preserve and bring back into use such assets.

Theme 2b: A Beautiful and Historic City – Green Infrastructure

What is green infrastructure? It is our natural environment and is the network of green spaces and natural resources including the River and riverbanks; the Green Belt; parks and the Botanic Garden; the grounds of the University, colleges, schools, hospitals, businesses and business parks; individual wildlife sites and habitats; woodland; gardens; highway verges; railway embankments; footpaths and green corridors; cemeteries and churchyards; allotments and community gardens; sports and playing fields; amenity green space ; designated Local Green Spaces; trees, hedgerows, grass, vegetation; built structures such as green roofs, green walls; natural water features; bird and bat boxes and roosting sites.

Policy G1: Preserving and Enhancing Green Infrastructure

This makes clear what is required of planning proposals, in contributing towards the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure in improving the City's setting, in addressing shortage of open space, in

promoting healthy communities, and in meeting the challenges of climate change and flooding.

Policy G2: Designation of Local Green Spaces

Neighbourhood plans have a power to identify and designate Local Green Spaces as a way of providing protection against development of green areas of particular importance to local communities because of their beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife. Local Green Spaces have the similar development constraints as for the Green Belt.

Policy G3: Creation of the Emerald Network

The Emerald Network will help create a network of sites of wildlife importance lying within or adjacent to Our Neighbourhood. Existing rights of way will provide corridors between sites to enhance biodiversity and connectivity between them. The idea for an Emerald Network came from discussion between the Forum and the Friends of Flass Vale. This builds on County Council policies including the Necklace Park which was never implemented.

Policy G4: Enhancing the Beneficial Use of the Green Belt

No policy in our Plan includes development on the Green Belt, other than for proposals that meet the NPPF exceptions criteria. The Green Belt is particularly important to Our Neighbourhood because of one of its purposes is "to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns". However, the NPPF does allow consideration of developments that could lead to the improvement of the quality of the Green Belt, such as better access, improved landscape, biodiversity, visual amenity and improvements to damaged or derelict land.

Why are there so many policies protecting the City's heritage?

Bringing together and updating these policies is vital in protecting the City and increasing its appeal

Theme 3: A City with a Diverse and Resilient Economy

What kind of economy should we plan for? A sustainable and vibrant local economy, supporting large and small businesses, retail and tourism, which encourages diverse range of employment is realistic. Making the most of the available strategic and local sites to diversify the economy needs to be made. Also, promoting a competitive City centre with balanced retail development, benefiting from online shopping, tourism and leisure is vital.

Policy E1: Larger Employment Sites

Provision will be made for modern office space on the County Council's scheme for a prestige business park at Aykley Heads, and the development of high-tech small and medium-sized enterprises and business incubators at both Aykley Heads and Durham Science Park, Mountjoy.

Policy E2: Other Employment Sites

Sites for finance and business services are scarce and so support will be given to three small sites at Blagdon Depot, Frankland Lane: Providence Row Depot site; and Fowler's Yard, and windfall brownfield sites that become available.

Policy E3: Retail Development

Encouragement will be given to proposals that would contribute to the vitality of the primary retail area and to its proposed extension into North Road and the development area of Milburngate House. Other uses, such as leisure, recreation, entertainment, sport arts, culture and tourism will be encouraged.

Policy E4: Primary and Secondary Frontages

This policy brings up-to-date the definitions of the areas which are to be primarily shopping and the areas where a wider range of uses would be allowed, including drinking establishments and hot food takeaways as well as the conditions that would applied to all applications.

"Gis a job"

One purpose of this consultation is to find new ideas for employment opportunities

Theme 4: A City with Attractive and Affordable Places to Live

The rampant expansion of student accommodation in recent times into all parts of Our Neighbourhood is by far the greatest source of dissatisfaction of residents of Durham. It not only causes disruption to their lives but also has consumed nearly all larger housing sites that might have been used to create much needed general housing, including affordable housing. The University is planning further growth which will cause more pressure for accommodation. The national policy of creating sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities has been sadly undermined and new policies have to be included in this plan in order to achieve better outcomes in future.

Policy D1: Land for Residential Development

With sites for over 1500 homes recently approved for student accommodation, every remaining site is precious. Land is needed for at least 200 dwellings in the Plan period with dwellings for the growing proportion of the elderly a particular priority. It is only possible to identify seven sites which could provide for 521 dwellings. The largest site by far is the former government offices at Milburngate House of 440 units with small sites at Whinney Hill (former Johnson School) at John Street, the Bernard Gilpin site at The Sands, Main Street U.S.A., Offices at Diamond Terrace, and The Avenue. There are a further four sites where various problems are preventing them from currently becoming available which could provide for 38 units.

Policy D2: Student Accommodation in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO)

The spread of conversions to student accommodation needs to be far more strictly controlled. Under this critical policy, applications to convert to an HMO will not be approved if more than 10% of the total properties within 100 metres are already HMOs or student accommodation, or if the student population exceeds 20% in the same area.

Policy D3: Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSAs)

All developers will be required to prove that there is a genuine need and that there has been full consultation with the education provider. There will need to be proof that no negative impacts will result from the development. It will have to be in conformity with the standards in Policy D2 above, and be adjacent to existing academic, hospital or research sites and meet stringent design standards.

Policy D4: Housing for Older People and People with Disabilities

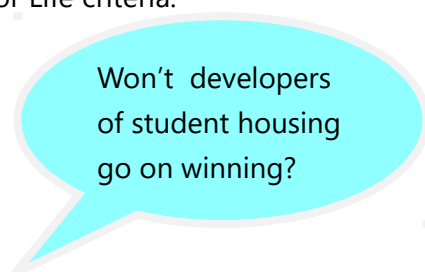
There has been a complete absence of provision for this group in recent years at the same time as their numbers increase. To help with this deficiency, the new policy will require 10% of appropriate housing units, or more, to be provided on sites of 10 or more housing units. Adaptations of houses and flats to enable residents to continue independent living will normally be allowed, subject to being in keeping with the building and surroundings

Policy D5: Meeting Other Housing Needs

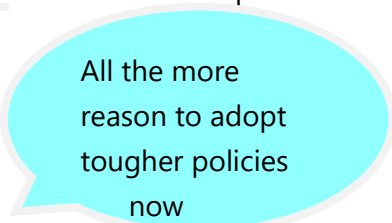
To change the imbalance arising from the dominance of student and executive housing, this policy requires that on any housing site, 15% of the units must be affordable housing to provide opportunities for young professionals, young couples starting out, families with children, and older people where appropriate.

Policy D6: Design of New and Renovated Housing to the Highest Standards

To meet Our Neighbourhood's sustainability criteria and national standards of design, developers will be required to add to the overall quality of the area, respond to the local strong sense of place, local character and history as well as being visually attractive. All housing developments will need to meet at least the national accepted Building for Life criteria.



Won't developers of student housing go on winning?



All the more reason to adopt tougher policies now

Theme 5: A City with a Modern and Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

The Durham City Sustainable Transport Strategy provides the strategic context for transport in Our Neighbourhood. The role for our Plan is to support the strategy by putting into place land use policies which promote and enable sustainable transport.

Policy T1: Accessibility of proposed developments

The policy will promote walking, cycling and public transport access in new developments and the minimisation of transport impacts. Developers will need to provide solutions to congestion on pavements and deficiencies in cycle routes.

Policy T2: Designing for sustainable transport

Development sites should incorporate attractive and safe walking, cycling and public transport access. On main roads and within sites, these modes should be separated from motor traffic. Direct and well-designed links to existing networks are also essential in creating a walkable and cycle friendly City.

Policy T3: Residential car parking in the controlled parking zone (CPZ)

Existing parking policy requires car parking in proposals beyond 400m of Market Place. The high cost of incorporating parking makes residential development less viable than student flats where parking is not required. This change could encourage high density housing close to the town centre.

T4: Residential storage for cycles and mobility aids

All new residential development will have to accommodate storage of cycles and mobility aids as was the requirement up to 2014. Since then, some new 3-bed houses have no garages and no storage for mobility aids, making this housing unsuitable for people at all stages of their lives. This policy would remedy that deficiency.

Why are there no big transport ideas in this Plan?

Strategic policies would be disallowed by the County Council and we would have to delete them.

Theme 6: A City with an Enriched Community Life

What can an essentially planning document do to improve community life?

The importance of the Plan is that it has arisen from community concerns, and many of those are about the need to support community life, including health and well-being and an enriched artistic and cultural life for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. The Plan can encourage the provision of these facilities and help to retain and improve those that already exist.

Policy C1: Community Arts Facilities

This policy sets out the planning requirements for new community arts facilities; either on an appropriate site or through the conversion of an existing building.

Policy C2: Information Hub

This policy sets out the planning requirements for a new Information Hub in the City Centre, for the benefit of visitors and residents alike. The Hub could also provide places where community groups could meet and classes and events be held.

Policy C3: Provision of New Community Facilities

This policy sets out the planning requirements for new facilities such as community and youth centres, sports fields, libraries, and places of worship.

Policies C4 and C5 : Protection of Existing Community Facilities and Open Spaces

Two policies setting out the obligation to demonstrate and prove that the facility is no longer viable or needed.

Policy C6: Health Care and Social Care Facilities

This policy sets out the planning conditions to be met in new proposals.

Haven't you heard?
There's no such
thing as community

Well, there is
in Durham

Projects to Improve Our Neighbourhood

Although the purpose of a neighbourhood plan is to set out planning policies and proposals for the use and development of land, it also provides an opportunity for views on other types of improvements that are seen to be necessary or desirable. Some of the ideas expressed in consultations so far are set out here to stimulate further contributions which will be compiled for consideration by all the bodies that might help to bring them about.

1. Durham Sustainable City – annual report on journey towards sustainability
2. Durham City Centre Clean Air Zone – a proposal and implementation
3. Clean Forum Durham set up to find ways towards cleaner City environment
4. A formal review of status, management and use of all open space
5. A Master Plan for Aykley Heads Business Park
6. A new Travel to Work Plan initiative for all major bodies and businesses
7. Completion of fast broadband upgrade and full mobile connectivity
8. Continuing improvements to the public realm of the City Centre and North Road and retail revival action plan including shop front grant scheme
9. New Visitor Centre, improved and new welcoming facilities, information, trails, events, and accommodation for visitors and tourists
10. Extension of Article 4 Direction to all of Our Neighbourhood to control student and HMO accommodation and a 'To Let' sign control protocol
11. Integration initiative within and between public transport services
12. Funding of a rolling programme of walking and cycling improvements
13. Completion of registration of currently unregistered rights of way
14. Priority in City centre for short term parking including 'Click and Collect'
15. Modernising taxi services by 2023 using electric and hybrid vehicles only
16. Support for greater availability and local production of healthier food.

Give your feedback on what projects you favour and any ideas you would like to be considered. Just enter in the 'Any Comments' under each theme