

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The most important feature of a neighbourhood plan is that it is prepared and agreed by local people. The work is normally carried out by a parish or town council on behalf of its local community. However, until April 2018 Durham City was ‘non-parished’. In order for the local community’s wish in 2012 for a neighbourhood plan to be prepared, the County Council enabled the setting up of the Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum.

1.2 The Forum adopted the name ‘Our Neighbourhood’ for the area covered by the Plan, which is shown on Proposals Map 1. Work on the Plan began in 2014 and provided the opportunity for continuous consultation throughout. These consultations enabled the Forum to find out what people who live and work in the area, and those who visit, think of the policies and proposals as the Plan developed (see para. 2.17 to 2.19). The City of Durham Parish Council now (since May 2018) has responsibility for the Plan.

1.3 *This explanatory note was added, post examination, in March 2021.* The Draft Durham City Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to Durham County Council by the City of Durham Parish Council in November 2019. An Independent Inspector examined the Submitted Draft Neighbourhood Plan and put forward Modifications necessary to make the Plan accord with the Basic Conditions. All of his modifications have been implemented here in this document now being put forward for referendum in May 2021. At the time of submission, the County Durham Plan was also in preparation. It was formally Adopted in October 2020 and, accordingly, all references in the following text to the stage of preparation of the County Durham Plan are superseded; it is now the principal statutory development plan for all parts of County Durham. Similarly, all references to the City of Durham Local Plan 2004 are now redundant as it has ceased to have any status. Once the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan has passed a referendum, the Parish Council will prepare up-to-date reports to take account of new information. This will form part of the evidence base for a future revision of the Plan. This will be linked to further studies and progress with initiatives set out in the associated ‘Looking Forwards’ document that the Parish Council adopted alongside the Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

1.4 There are four matters to be borne in mind when reading and using this Plan:

- Its policies, when adopted, will have statutory force, i.e. they will be relevant in the consideration of planning applications by the County Council, and they will need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the current adopted development plan, which at the time of writing (September 2019) is the set of ‘Saved Policies’ of the City of Durham Local Plan 2004 as assessed by the County Council in 2015 for consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- Quite early in the lifetime of the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan a new Statutory Local Plan - the County Durham Plan - will be adopted. The Neighbourhood Plan policies will then need to be reviewed, and if necessary changed, to bring them into general conformity with the strategic policies of this new County Durham Plan.

It has been possible to seek to future-proof the Neighbourhood Plan by having regard to the emerging County Durham Local Plan. At the time of writing (September 2019) the new County Local Plan has been submitted and the Examination in Public is due to start in October 2019;

- The Neighbourhood Plan should be read as a whole - the planning policies all relate to one another even though they appear under different themes, so common aspects only appear in one policy to avoid repetition;
- As well as this document containing the Neighbourhood Plan for Durham City, a companion document has been prepared – 'Looking Forwards: Durham as a Creative and Sustainable City' (Durham City Neighbourhood Plan Working Party, 2019a) – which presents an opportunity to go beyond the planning policies in identifying the actions and initiatives for statutory, community and other bodies in furtherance of the vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.5 It is hoped that the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan will prove to be effective and truly representative of the wishes of local people for a sustainable future for this beautiful and historic City.