



Durham City Neighbourhood Forum  
The Miners' Hall  
Redhills  
Durham  
DH1 4BD

13 December 2017

Dear Sirs

### **Durham City Neighbourhood Plan November 2017**

I am writing on behalf of the County Durham Local Access Forum (LAF) to thank you for this further opportunity to comment on the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan. We are a statutory body established under Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to advise local authorities and other agencies on the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of outdoor recreation and enjoyment while paying due regard to the needs of conservation and land management. Our comments therefore focus on issues connected to the benefits of access to the natural environment and are offered in the spirit of independent adviser and critical friend.

We are delighted to see that representations made by the LAF in respect of your March 2017 draft are reflected in the latest version of the plan, particularly in relation to giving public health greater strategic prominence, preserving green spaces, and encouraging safer walking and cycling. While we feel no need to repeat our arguments, we would none the less like to take this opportunity to acknowledge your endeavours and restate our support for your proposals to conserve and enhance access to the city's green infrastructure. The notion of the Emerald Network (policy G3) is particularly welcome, building, as you say, on the redundant concept of a Necklace Park. Indeed, given the current physical and mental health challenges in County Durham and abundance of evidence proving the remedial impact of green spaces on people's well-being, the need for such a facility is more urgent than ever. To this end we recommend that ambition should extend to developing new rights of way as well as promoting and enhancing existing provision, and should like to see Section 106 monies earmarked to improve links not only within the neighbourhood area but to green spaces beyond. We also believe that a high profile, well-maintained environmental network accessible to all,

regardless of age or disability, would add another string to the local economy by attracting more visitors.

Marketing and design will be key to the Emerald Network's success and we would be happy to see the LAF added to the list of key stakeholders (paragraph 5.5) with a view to ensuring an independent perspective on any access proposals in the implantation phase.

In summary, the LAF reiterates its belief that the preservation and enhancement of Durham City's green infrastructure are critical to the social, economic and environmental well-being of local residents and that improving public access to such areas should lie at the heart of plans for a healthy and sustainable future for your neighbourhood. If you wish to explore our comments in more detail, please contact me via our Secretary, Jill Errington, at [jill.errington@durham.gov.uk](mailto:jill.errington@durham.gov.uk)

Yours faithfully

  
Per Robin Trounson  
Chair, County Durham LAF