

Consultation Statement Draft 22 October 2018

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1. Introduction

This consultation statement describes how the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to fulfil the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. Section 15(2) of Part 5 of the Regulations sets out what a Consultation Statement should contain:

- a) Details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed Neighbourhood Plan;
- b) An explanation of how they were consulted;
- c) A summary of the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted;
- d) A description of how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

2. Background: Why we decided to develop a neighbourhood plan

- a) Citizens of Durham have a long-standing interest and concern about their City and developments in it: the civic amenity society The City of Durham Trust was founded in 1942. More recently concerns about the growth of the University and the conversion of family homes into student houses in multiple occupation led to the setting up of the Balanced Communities Working Group in 2003 and the Balanced and Sustainable Communities Forum in 2008. This was coordinated by Durham's MP, Roberta Blackman-Woods.
- b) Alongside this residents' associations have been established dealing with similar issues and also taking a more general interest in their neighbourhoods. The longest established of these are the Elvet Residents' Association, the Crossgate Community Partnership and the St Nicholas Community Forum. The Friends of the Durham Green Belt are another organisation taking a keen interest in local planning issues.
- c) All of these bodies have commented on planning applications as they affected their areas of interest. These are assessed against the prevailing local plan, which since 1 April 2004 has been the City of Durham Local

Plan, and the overarching national guidance which, at the time, was the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) and Planning Policy Statements (PPS).

- d) Most Local Plan Policies remained in force until 27 March 2012 when the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published. This replaced the PPG and PPS. The consequence was that the Local Plan Policies had to be assessed against the new overarching rules. Some were superseded; others had to be modified, but most survived: these are known as “Saved Policies”.
- e) Because of the erosion of the Local Plan, problems were being encountered in finding policies to control unsuitable development. Developers were also criticising the Local Plan claiming that it was too old to be relevant. And new problems were arising, particularly in the growth of student accommodation, that the Local Plan was not equipped to deal with.
- f) The Localism Act of 2011 has the stated aim of devolving decision-making down from central government to local communities. It made provision for neighbourhood plans to be created by parish councils or, where one did not exist, by neighbourhood planning forums. This created interest among residents’ groups and the Balanced and Sustainable Communities Forum, even as the law was passing through its parliamentary stages. The possibility was there to create a neighbourhood planning forum that would address these issues and provide new opportunities to steer development in Durham in the right direction.
- g) Following an initiative from the MP the Sustainable Communities Forum reconstituted itself as a steering group that was working towards becoming a Neighbourhood Planning Forum. Having obtained the right number of members it formally applied to the County Council on 10th July 2013 to be designated, and this request was agreed to on 16th January 2014.
- h) Role of the new PC to be added here

3. Consultation Aims and Strategy

Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 047 Reference ID: 41-047-20140306. Revision date: 06 03 2014) sets out the requirements for the role of the wider community in neighbourhood planning. These are that a qualifying body should be inclusive and open in the preparation of its neighbourhood plan and ensure that the wider community:

- is kept fully informed of what is being proposed
- is able to make their views known throughout the process
- has opportunities to be actively involved in shaping the emerging neighbourhood plan or Order
- is made aware of how their views have informed the draft neighbourhood plan or Order.

These are precisely the aims and strategy followed by the Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum (The Forum). The most important feature of a neighbourhood plan is that it is prepared and agreed by local people and the Forum describes the area covered by the plan as “Our Neighbourhood”. 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.

In the Forum's priority consultation (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2015) very strong views were received from the public about planning and planning decisions. Community consultation and involvement have been sought from the outset of this plan for Our Neighbourhood, through public meetings, leaflets, surveys, community events, activities with schools and a stall in the Market Place. The planning policies in our Neighbourhood Plan have all been drawn directly from what people, including children, have said in response to the open questions: What is good about Durham City? What is bad about Durham City? What needs to change? This has ensured that the

voices of the people participating in all of the consultation opportunities have been the determinants of emerging policy ideas.

3. Scale of the task and activities undertaken

Our Neighbourhood has a population of around 30,000, including around 16,000 students, and contains many important sites and functions. It is the county town and the World Heritage Site of the cathedral and castle is a strong tourist attraction. It is home to Durham University, an agricultural college, four secondary schools, nn primary schools, the county's main hospital, a major prison, several sporting venues, a green belt, government offices for passports and national savings, a main bus station and an East Coast Main Line rail station. It is a business and retail centre providing a range of professional and leisure services. Much of its housing stock is occupied by students and several key sites in the City centre have been developed for purpose built student accommodation. Others are under development for offices, hotels and leisure and retail facilities. It is a very confined location and needs improvements to sustainable modes of travel to reduce congestion and improve air quality. In short, Our Neighbourhood presents many issues for planning policies to address.

The Forum was established in January 2014. It started slowly as members learned what was required and their attention was taken up with the Examination in Public of the County Durham Local Plan that was later withdrawn. Work gathered momentum in 2015 and details are given in xxx of this statement. The Forum itself has held nn meetings and its working group has met nn times (as at the end of October 2018). Nn emails have been exchanged among members of the working group. Leaflets have been delivered to every house in Our Neighbourhood. Nn consultation events have been held and almost 400 responses were received during the Regulation 14 consultation (See xxx).

Figures to be added.

4. Co-operation with Major Stakeholders

Durham County Council (DCC) is the local planning authority and as such has a duty to provide advice or assistance to a neighbourhood planning forum as required by [paragraph 3 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as amended\)](#). The Forum has worked closely with DCC in the preparation of the plan. DCC's liaison officer, Carole Dillon, is included in mailings to members of the Forum and she has attended several meetings, accompanied as appropriate by other officers with specialist knowledge of areas such as conservation, landscape and transport as the policies on each theme were developed. DCC also provided a very detailed response to the Regulation 14 consultation (See xxx).

Durham University obviously does not have such a statutory role, but it is the biggest institution in Our Neighbourhood. In the early stages of the development of the plan it was not easy to persuade them to engage with the Forum. However, from just before the time of the Regulation 14 consultation DU took a more active part in our consultations. It provided two venues for consultation events so that staff and students could be involved. It also provided a very detailed response to the Regulation 14 consultation and this was followed up by a constructive meeting (See xxx). DU's contact person, Matthew Wright, is included in mailings to the Forum and has attended some of the meetings as appropriate.

The University has around 16,000 students living in Our Neighbourhood and they actually constitute over half of the population covered by the Plan. It has not been easy to engage students in our consultations, mainly because they are a transient and temporary population, but they have been included in all our efforts to contact local people through leaflets, emails and consultation events.

Another major stakeholder is the Business Improvement District (BID). Its director is a member of the Forum and he has been closely involved as co-convenor of the Economy theme.

5. Stages in the Process