

FOREWORDS

Introduction from the Member of Parliament for the City of Durham

I am delighted that after many years of hard work from the Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, and latterly the City of Durham Parish Council, we now have a Neighbourhood Plan for Durham City.

Durham represents a unique set of challenges for a Neighbourhood Plan, as it encompasses housing and commercial areas, as well as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. To now be at the point of having a plan for the City is testament to the time and effort of everyone involved in the process of gathering evidence, speaking to the public, businesses and other stakeholders, and putting together policies for the future for the City.



This plan seeks to provide local, detailed planning policies to enable the right development in the right places; to protect the City's wonderful heritage, as well as protecting vital green spaces, and making sure that the City is accessible and welcoming to residents, visitors and businesses.

There has been a significant level of support from residents and groups in the City towards this Plan, and I hope that everyone who lives, works and spends their leisure time in the City will see the benefits of having a robust Neighbourhood Plan for the whole Parish.

Roberta Blackman-Woods
Member of Parliament for the City of Durham

Introduction from the Chair of the Parish Council

Durham is a unique, beautiful, historic City and the challenges involved in devising a Neighbourhood Plan to preserve and enhance those qualities for future generations have been considerable, but I am now pleased to be able to commend and present the City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan.

The idea that the City of Durham should have a Neighbourhood Plan was first floated more than eight years ago, even before the Localism Act which made it possible was passed. It has been a long journey, one with two essential aims.

The first of these is that this is a Plan shaped by the residents of what is now the City of Durham Parish, meeting your hopes and aspirations for the next fifteen years. This has involved extensive consultations, ranging from primary school children to older members of the community, using face-to-face meetings, exhibitions, and an extensive web site. There have now been two formal consultation exercises and the comments made in both have been carefully considered and the Plan now being submitted to the County Council is much improved because of them.



The second is the theme of sustainability that runs like a golden thread through the Plan, to be read alongside every other policy. All new development will contribute to a long-term sustainable future for Durham City by ensuring a balanced relationship among environmental, social and economic outcomes.

When the Parish assumed responsibility for the Neighbourhood Plan in April 2018 it was able to build on the work of a team of dedicated volunteers who had formed the Neighbourhood Planning Forum. Most of these were pleased to join the Parish Working Party set up to complete their work. Their names are listed inside the front cover, and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Councillor Elizabeth Scott
Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council

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 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.

1.4 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.

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