

16<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Spatial Policy

Room 4/24-35

Durham County Council

DH1 5UQ

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Consultation on the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan**

I am responding to the above consultation on behalf of my wife and I. Having drafted the response from Crossgate Community Partnership which is in support of the Neighbourhood Plan this submission I am attaching that response as a summary of our views on the Plan.

**“The Partnership welcomes and strongly supports the draft Neighbourhood Plan.** Whilst the Plan does not cover the whole of the City it does deal with significant areas such as the city centre and the surrounding area, the majority of the University’s estate and the World Heritage Site. It is a model that could be used for the adjacent parished areas to develop their own Neighbourhood Plans.

The Partnership welcomes a Plan that, for the first time since the demise of the Durham City Council, concentrates on the city to create a planning framework for the future. Durham City has been under significant pressure from development, increased levels of traffic and degradation of air quality and so an up to date local planning policy has been needed.

The Partnership has supported the development of the Plan firstly through the work done by the Neighbourhood Planning Forum in which some of our members participated and latterly through the City of Durham Parish Council. We have been impressed with the extent of community participation and consultation that took place over the development and the Plan reflects the outcome of those efforts. By comparison with the County Plan we felt that there was more buy in from participants given the clearer focus. Clearly the Plan cannot reflect everybody’s views but the Parish Council has collected the evidence to support the proposals that it has put forward and is to be commended for that.

The breadth of this consultation is covered well in the Consultation Statement reflecting the additions, amendments and deletions in the Plan that have emerged from the process

This increased local involvement in the development process is emphasised by the use of the phrase “Our Neighbourhood” throughout the Plan as the proposals reflect that theme.

Having supported the Plan as a whole I shall address some specific areas.

## **Theme 2a**

One of the city's strengths is its heritage so protecting it for future generations is crucial in addition to its being a basis for the tourist and student economy. This approach is endorsed and encouraged in Part 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

**CCP therefore supports the Neighbourhood Plan policies H1 to H4 which support this**

## **Theme 2b**

CCP notes the support that the local population has for the green spaces and the general environment of the city as noted in paragraph 4.75. CCP also acknowledges the broad thrust of this chapter. We note the criteria that the NPPF sets out regarding the designation of Local Green Spaces (LGS) in Para 100(b) and consider that the proposals in the Plan meet these criteria. The Wear Valley Corridor delivers pleasant routes for moving around the city other than through the city and enables people to view historic aspects of the city other than the cathedral and castle. Paths within the wooded areas give unexpected views of these major sites. The Flass Vale LNR brings a green area into the city which has been improved over the years providing a peaceful presence, a wildlife and historical area linking through to the Neville's Cross Battlefield site. Similar thoughts could be expressed about the other areas proposed as LGS

**CCP therefore supports the Neighbourhood Plan policies G2 and G3 on Protecting and enhancing the green infrastructure and Designating Local Green Spaces.**

## **Theme 4**

A major topic for discussion and consideration in the CCP over the past few years has been the increasing studentification of the Partnership's area. Paragraphs 4.172 and 4.173 set out clearly the outcome of this and the potential increasing problem as the University seeks to increase its intake. The Viaduct area where 90% of the properties are Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) falls within the CCP's boundary. This studentification has also taken some significant potential housing sites out of the mix such as the old Berendsen's Laundry site.

Paragraph 4.178 shows that housing is one of the key public priorities to be delivered in a future plan and the Plan reflects this.

CCP welcomes the intention of the University to develop further Purpose Built Students Accommodation (PBSAs) on its own land rather than using land intended for housing.

CCP also welcomes the intention to prevent further expansion of existing HMOs and the creation of additional HMOs.

**CCP therefore supports the proposed Neighbourhood Plan policies D2 and D3 on PBSAs and HMOs**

One of the consequences of the increasing studentification has been the loss of affordable terrace housing in the city. These were properties which people bought as their first homes. Post conversion to HMOs these properties are now outside a price bracket that could be described as “affordable”.

Conversely much of the new housing developed on sites such as Mount Oswald could not be described as affordable.

**CCP therefore strongly endorses the Neighbourhood Plan policy D5**

One of the criteria for the acceptance of Neighbourhood Plan is that it should meet national policies and advice predominantly expressed in the NPPF. Clearly a small group such as CCP cannot check that the NP meets this criterion in totality. However, sampling of certain elements shows that these have met the NPPF requirements. This gives CCP the confidence to support the statement in Para 27 of the Basic Conditions Statement that “ The evidence provided in this Basic Conditions Statement demonstrates that the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions as set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012).”.

To reiterate the statement in the second paragraph of this letter, **The Partnership welcomes and strongly supports the draft Neighbourhood Plan.”**

We support the Neighbourhood Plan.

Yours faithfully

Simon and Ros Priestley