

# **Spennymoor Masterplan Update**



**Durham County Council**

**December 2016**

## Context for Masterplan Update

Masterplan Updates are being developed for the majority of the largest towns in County Durham. This Masterplan Update for Spennymoor is an update to the 2013 Regeneration Masterplan. It provides details on what has been delivered across Council services in the recent past and sets out key activities for the future, including in the town centre, in housing, in retail, in employment, and in education.

### Key Priorities:

- Support Spennymoor as a major employment centre including the Green Lane Industrial Estate and Durham Gate development;
- Work with the private sector to deliver successful and sustainable housing expansion;
- Work with the private sector to bring about an effective and sustainable solution for the future of Festival Walk; and
- Encourage adaptation and change for the town centre.

## Profile

Spennymoor is a major town in the south east of the County. The town has good accessibility across the County, with the A167 linking to Durham City to the north and Newton Aycliffe to the south. The A688 provides connections to Bishop Auckland to the west and the A1(M) to the east. Spennymoor has a population of 16,866 (Census 2011) which rises to 20,682 when the wider AAP area is taken into account.

Spennymoor dates back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when it developed as a centre for coal mining and iron production. The town has evolved to draw in Middlestone Moor and joined Tudhoe to form a substantial combined settlement. Like many coalfield settlements it was badly affected by the decline and ultimate cessation of the mining and iron industries in the early twentieth century. The town's economy successfully diversified through the development of a range of significant manufacturing employment sites at Merrington Lane and Green Lane Industrial Estate which were anchored by branches of multinational manufacturing concerns.



In recent times, employment opportunities have now consolidated at Green Lane Industrial Estate, with Merrington Lane currently undergoing transformation through the development of former manufacturing sites for housing. Spennymoor remains an established location for manufacturing as evidenced by Thorn Lighting, which together with Tridonic, are part of the Austrian Zumtobel Group and have built their Academy of Light at Green Lane. Stanley Black and Decker have a site which houses a global research and development centre serving its manufacturing sites across the world.

The town has witnessed housing expansion on a number of sites and the town centre has scope to improve its retail offer with development opportunities available.

## What has been delivered?

### Housing

- Spennymoor has proved to be a popular location for new housing in recent years, delivering 366 housing completions between April 2014 and March 2016 (206 in 2014/15 and 160 in 2015/16). In the first two quarters of 2016/17 a further 62 homes have been built. As of October 2016 there are commitments for a further 2,000 houses across a number of sites in the town.
- The redevelopment of land at Watson Court, Green Lane is now largely complete with Persimmon Homes and Dunelm the developers of the site.
- Barratt/David Wilson Homes are continuing to build out their site at Whitworth Park which has around 400 units still to be built.
- Barratt are also building (367 dwellings in total) on the former Thorns lighting site at Merrington Lane. To date there have been 117 recorded completions.
- The adjacent former Electrolux site at Merrington Lane also benefits from outline planning permission for 425 houses, but there is no developer as yet for the site.
- DurhamGate (including former Black & Decker) has planning permission for 507 units across the whole site, with 127 recorded completions to date. Yuill Homes and Taylor Wimpey have developed the site; together with some self-build at Eve Lane.
- Gleeson Homes will be developing land north of South View in the Middlestone Moor area for 46 houses.
- Land at, and to the west of the former Hartwell factory at Green Lane Industrial Estate benefits from permission for 120 units. The first phase has detailed permission for 70 homes and Partner Construction will be developing the site.
- Land north of Durham Road in the Middlestone Moor area has outline planning permission for 300 homes.
- Butterby Grange will be redeveloped by Livin Homes for 14 apartments.



## Business

- Business Durham has made a further £65,000 investment in their existing property at Coulson Street. As a result, all four units are now fully occupied employing 10 people.
- Thorn Lighting has seen significant growth in recent years as it manufactures new ranges of LED lighting including for public spaces including sports stadia. Durham County Council has retrofitted thousands of new Thorn LED street lights in towns and villages across the county, replacing inefficient and expensive sodium lights with high-tech LED lights, tackling one of the council's major energy costs. Since 2010, Thorn has supplied more than 14,000 street lights to help Durham County Council replace its ageing stock. Furthermore, the Thorn Academy of Light is based in Spennymoor.
- At DurhamGate, progress across the site has seen the delivery of infrastructure improvements, the first phase of commercial space, a public house and new residential properties as part of the comprehensive plans to provide office space, retail and housing.
- Community Economic Development (CED) have recently supported two businesses through the Targeted Business Improvement Scheme, with DCC investment of £19,362 creating three new FTE jobs and bringing a vacant unit back into use.
- The Employability Team, with support from then Spennymoor AAP, have supported Spennymoor companies to recruit 56 apprentices since 2014.

## Town Centre Retail Offer

- The town remains a service centre within the County serving a growing residential catchment and adjacent villages.
- The town centre has 203 outlets and over 16,849sqm of convenience and comparison floor space (2015 Town Centre Survey).
- There is good representation from budget food retailers including Farm Foods, Aldi and Lidl, as well supermarket provision from Asda and the Co-op sharing a store with Iceland.



## Town Centre Regeneration

- Significant investments have previously been made in improving the physical fabric of the town centre. Since 2009, a further £300,000 of the Council's town centre capital programme has been invested in regeneration projects aimed at improving the retail environment and encouraging a diverse range of shopping

facilities. This has included supporting 25 businesses across Spennymoor through the Targeted Business Improvement Programme.

- Improvements to the underpass have been undertaken with new lighting and redecoration (£31,650) to improve links from Merrington Lane to the town centre.
- £600,000 has been approved to secure a development plot and create additional town centre car parking at Festival Walk as part of the wider regeneration proposals.

## **Recreation, Leisure and Culture**

- Spennymoor Leisure Centre is one of the Council's key leisure facilities. It consists of a leisure pool with a water flume and wave machine. It has an 8 court sports hall with tiered seating to accommodate major events and functions. An extensive fitness suite which has recently been refurbished and a dance studio. The centre has a multi-sensory room and is a key location for the Durham Pathways Project. It also has space for performing arts and is home to South Durham Gymnastics and Spennymoor Boxing Academy, who both have purpose built facilities within the centre. The centre has undergone a number of refurbishment works over the last 18 months.
- In the Norman Cornish Room at The Bob Abley Gallery at Spennymoor Town Hall there is an exhibition entitled 'Coming Home' showing a selection of the famed artist's work.
- The town benefits from a library within the town centre.
- The Spennymoor Settlement and its Everyman Theatre have a notable record for workers education and drama.
- Whitworth Park provides outdoor recreation opportunities within a historic parkland with resident deer, an ornamental lake, Victorian walled garden and Grade II listed hotel building.
- There are cycling and walking opportunities in the surrounding area and the Auckland Walk connects Spennymoor to Bishop Auckland by a four mile route based on a former rail line.
- The Council's Culture and Sport service offers support to local clubs, societies and communities to enhance engagement and participation in such amenities. An example of this is the recent work undertaken with Spennymoor Town FC to develop an academy site on former school playing fields.

## **Transport and Connectivity**

- Spennymoor is well positioned in the centre of the County and on good east/west (A688) and north/south (A167) routes and close to the A1(M).

- The town has frequent daily public transport services to the key centres of Bishop Auckland, Durham and Newcastle and regular Monday – Saturday daytime services to Darlington. In addition, public transport provides good access to the surrounding communities, including Ferryhill, West Cornforth, Kirk Merrington, and Byers Green.
- In terms of accessing the more remote locations and for passengers unable to access mainstream services as a result of mobility/disability issues, the county council also operate a Link2 accessible service for local journeys to hubs and transport interchanges
- The town is midway between the major employment areas in Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley. The town's good transport connections generate opportunities to access employment opportunities across the north east.

### **Improvements to Educational Facilities**

- Planned improvement to school accommodation across the town has been delivered in line with housing growth and the Council continues to support the development of new and improved school facilities across the town.
- The extensive remodelling and extending of Whitworth Park School and Sixth Form Centre has taken place and provides good quality building for combined secondary provision in the town at a cost of almost £11 million. This has released the two former school sites at Durham Road and St. Charles Road for potential alternative uses.
- Close to £4 million has also been spent in the town on education facilities:
  - A two classroom extension at Tudhoe Colliery Primary School at a cost of approximately £765,000.
  - A two classroom extension, hall extension and provision of Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Ox Close Primary School for September 2016 at a cost of approximately £1.2 million.
  - Two classroom extension and enhancements to outdoor areas at North Park Primary School for September 2016 at a cost of approximately £1 million.
  - Window replacement at King Street Primary School for September 2015 at a cost of approximately £110,000.
  - Repair and replace ducts at Whitworth Park School and Sixth Form at a cost of approximately £630,000.

## **Spennymoor Area Action Partnership (AAP)**

The AAP, since 2009, has been working on and investing in a number of key priorities voted for by the public. The priorities for investment for 2016/17 are identified as:

- Safer, Stronger and Healthier Communities;
- Employment & Jobs; and,
- Town Centre Regeneration.

Each year AAPs get an allocation of £120,000 through the Council's Area Budget to support projects and initiatives in the area. Projects and initiatives are developed through the work of the Task and Finish Groups and are approved by the AAP Board. The following projects and initiatives have been supported in the Spennymoor area during 2015/16:

- What's On (£15,457 for the co-ordination of a children's and young people's network);
- Durham Savers Project (£4,500 to raise financial awareness and saving schemes);
- Prison Me No Way (£10,000 to deliver crime and safety awareness days);
- Destination Employment (£25,560 to deliver a programme of person centred employability support); and,
- Apprenticeship Scheme (£25,000 to tackle the high levels of youth unemployment).

The AAP also received additional funding of £33,333 from the Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield (DDES) Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), £10,000 from Durham County Council (DCC) Public Health and a further £10,000 from DCC Welfare Reform monies. This enabled additional projects to be funded:

- South Durham Gymnastics (£14,033 in total for equipment and coaching);
- Sport Start Spennymoor (£6,140 to provide community activity sessions and engagement with older children);
- Sponsor a Grown Up (£12,643 to engage young people and their adult relatives in physical activity);
- B Network (£10,000 to work with residents who are isolated and lonely as a result of illness, disability, age or family circumstance);

- Durham Savers Project (extra £5,000 to support scheme above); and,
- Apprenticeship Scheme (extra £5,000 to support scheme above).

In 2015/16 the AAP again delivered the It's Up 2 U Community/Participatory Budget Voting Event. The AAP allocated £40,000 to the event with nearly 1,000 members of the public attending on the day, voting for a total of fifteen local projects to deliver their schemes in the local community.

## What will be delivered?

### DurhamGate 'North'

- The former Wellsprings site had been partly developed for an office development but this was not finished and the site has fallen into a state of disrepair and suffered vandalism following the insolvency of the previous developer. The owners of DurhamGate have acquired the site and it will be developed for a mixed use development consisting of up to 12,000 sqm of business/office/light industry (Class B1), general industrial (Class B2) and storage (Class B8). It is envisaged that this would be developed in a flexible manner reflecting market demands. It is also intended that a 930 sqm car showroom, 270 sqm crèche and 350sqm café/restaurant/drive thru (A3/A5 use) be provided.

### DurhamGate

- The DurhamGate development continues, providing high quality commercial and residential accommodation. The serviced plots are available for office development.



### Former Thinford Inn Site

- The former Thinford Inn Pubic House site has been demolished and together with adjacent land will be redeveloped for the erection of a drive through coffee shop (Use Classes A3/A5) and retail bakery unit (Use Class A1), along with associated car parking, servicing and landscaping ('Phase 1'). Outline permission has also been granted for the erection of a pub/restaurant (Use Class A3/A4), gym (Use Class D2), restaurant (Use Class A3/A5) and hotel (Use Class C1) with all matters reserved apart from access ('Phase 2'). Road – widening and junction improvements will be undertaken to enable regeneration at the site.

### Town Centre Improvements - Festival Walk

This 1960s shopping precinct will be redeveloped with the proposals seeking to:

- demolish a significant part of the shopping parade and structures within the existing car park;
- create a new development plot which is to be occupied by a food store operator that wishes to expand its operation and remain in the town;
- develop additional car parking capacity to serve the town centre; and,
- refurbish and modernise the remaining retail units within the block to create lettable space for the remaining tenants and for the attraction of new operators.

## **Housing**

- The 2,000 units with planning permission across the sites identified above will continue to be built out in the coming years.

## **Water Management**

- Tudhoe Mill serving Spennymoor has limited capacity but investment is currently underway, and the work should be completed by 2018.

## **Walking and Cycling Infrastructure**

- The Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Cycling Strategy led to Spennymoor becoming as an Access Prioritisation Area in Phase 2. This has resulted in significant path improvement schemes in the area. Spennymoor will also be included in the Cycling Network Planning Process and the network will be audited, assessed and improved.