

INTRODUCTION

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- 1.1 The Sedgefield Borough Local Plan provides the Council for the first time with borough wide statutory local plan coverage. Essentially the Local Plan sets out a series of planning policies and proposals to take account of environmental considerations and the need to accommodate the realistic development needs of the area.
- 1.2 In providing this planning policy framework, the Local Plan specifically indicates:
 - the Borough Council's policies for the control of development;
 - proposals for the development and use of land; and
 - the allocation of land for specific purposes.
- 1.3 As a statutory Local Plan, the Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 and the Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) Regulations 1991.
- 1.4 The Borough Local Plan covers the whole of the administrative area of Sedgefield Borough Council and is intended to be for the period up to 2006, but will be subject to regular revisions.

Why Prepare a Plan

- 1.5 There are three key reasons that influenced the Council's preparation of its Borough Local Plan.
 - (a) The Council has to:

The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 makes the preparation of borough-wide local plans mandatory for all areas.
 - (b) The Council needs to:

The Planning Acts require that where an authority has to have regard to the development plan (i.e. a Structure Plan and a Local Plan) decisions are to be in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The planning system is now essentially Development Plan led. The Sedgefield Borough Local Plan puts into place an up-to-date Development Plan to replace existing planning policies based upon old Town Maps, informal plans and existing adopted Local Plans requiring review. This process will be complemented by the County Durham Structure Plan Review.
 - (c) The Council wants to:
 - The Borough Local Plan will assist in creating a better Sedgefield Borough in which to live or carry out business. It provides the Council with the opportunity to set out a vision for the future development of the Borough, and forms a response to the opportunities and challenges facing the area. In particular, it addresses the issues arising from the need to promote sustainable patterns of development that will assist the regeneration and improvement of the Borough and the increasing concern both nationally and locally to maintain and improve environmental standards and conserve natural resources.
 - The Plan will provide the Council with a comprehensive basis for the consideration of all planning applications to ensure that consistent and well-supported decisions are taken.

- It sets out a clear statement of the Council's policies and priorities. This will strengthen the Council's position in negotiations with developers on achieving schemes of benefit to the Borough and in supporting bids for additional finance for projects to be undertaken in the Borough.
- Finally, but not least, it has given an opportunity for local communities to become involved in planning choices about balancing the interest of environmental conservation with the need to accommodate development in their areas.

How the Plan was Prepared

- 1.6 In preparing the Borough Local Plan the Council was not faced with a clean sheet of paper. Certain planning considerations that provide a context for the Borough Local Plan have had to be taken into account. These are described in the planning policy context section at paragraph 2.15 in the strategy chapter. They include planning policy and advice set out in Government Planning Policy Guidance Notes, the Durham County Structure Plan and Structure Plan Review and the provisions of other approved plans, policies and programmes. All of these have had an influence on the content of the Borough Local Plan.
- 1.7 Existing development trends and commitments such as planning permission have had to be recognised and account taken of what is happening to the Borough's economy, its population and use of land. It is also a certainty that during the plan period, circumstances and opportunities facing the Borough will change. The Borough Local Plan has, therefore, been prepared to be both responsive to present trends and flexible to accommodate future needs.
- 1.8 A draft Local Plan was published in June 1992 and this was the subject of the extensive public consultation exercise between September and November 1992, designed to involve as many people, communities and organisations as possible in its preparation. This programme of public consultation included sending a Local Plan newspaper to each household in the Borough, the Local Plan being displayed at all libraries in the Borough and at the Council Offices; publicity on the Plan in the Council's "Industry in Focus" newspaper; 22 public exhibitions; 10 public meetings and 2 follow-up meetings in Spennymoor and Sedgefield; and an informative video being made available to local interest groups. Over 1,000 people attended exhibitions and over 400 attended meetings, with over 180 people at later follow-up meetings. Copies of the Draft Plan were sent to a wide range of organisations in the Borough, regionally and nationally. 384 written responses were received and 7 petitions raising, 939 individual comments. All the comments received were considered by the Borough Council.
- 1.9 As a result of this public consultation process changes were made to the Local Plan, and the Plan was again made available for public consultation. Individual people as well as organisations and interest groups had an opportunity to formally object to the policies and proposals of the revised Local Plan or to make representations in support of the Plan.
- 1.10 A total of 689 duly made objections and counter objections were considered by two Planning Inspectors, appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, either at the Public Local Inquiry or dealt with as written representations.
- 1.11 The Inspectors' report on the objections to the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan was considered by the Council and the subsequent Proposed Modifications were advertised and made publicly available in Spring and Summer 1996. After examining the objections received to the Proposed Modifications, the Council resolved to adopt the Plan in July 1996.

1.12 A summary of the stages involved in the preparation and adoption of the Borough Local Plan is set out in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1- STAGES IN THE PREPARATION
OF THE SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN**

Publication of Draft Local Plan	June 1992
Public consultation	June - November 1992
Revision to the Local Plan taking account of public consultation	Spring - Autumn 1993
Local Plan placed on Public Deposit	February 1994
Consideration of objections to the Local Plan	Spring - Summer 1994
Local Plan Inquiry	Winter 1994-1995
Inspector Reports to the Council	September 1995
Publication of Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan	April 1996
Adoption of the Local Plan	October 1996

How to Use the Plan

1.13 The first part of the introduction sets out what a Local Plan is. Here an explanation is given on how to use the Local Plan, which it is accepted is a large and relatively complex document.

1.14 The Local Plan consists of:

- This document that sets out the proposals and general policies of the Plan - the Written Statement
- Four large maps covering the entire Borough with larger scale Town Centre plans - the Proposals Map.

1.15 The Written Statement has two main parts:

- A Strategy Section. This outlines the thinking behind the Local Plan and establishes the aims and strategies that have guided the preparation of the Plan's policies and proposals.

- Policies and Proposals Chapters. This forms the largest part of the Plan. Each chapter, except the Design Chapter, deals with a different land-use planning topic. The policies outline the planning approach towards each topic while proposals are more specific and are related to precise areas of land.

The Design Chapter provides specific guidance on the planning considerations that will be applied to all forms of planning applications, ranging from housing estates to factory extensions to recreational developments. It sets out the planning requirements such as levels of car parking and open space provision, and planning principles on matters like landscaping and accessibility, that the Council wishes to see all development schemes meet or seek to achieve. The provisions of the chapter are very much concerned with the quality and detailed aspects of the development process.

- 1.16 The policies and proposals in the Local Plan are printed in upper case BOLD type to distinguish them from the accompanying text. Each policy or proposal has a reference number and is accompanied by a section 'Reasons for the policy' which explains the reasons why the Council thinks the policy is necessary and the factors that have been taken into account. There is also a separate explanation of how the policy or proposal will be put into practice.
- 1.17 The Proposals Map shows on an Ordnance Survey base precisely which areas of land are affected by individual policies and proposals, and are cross-referenced to sections of the Written Statement. Policies which do not relate to a specific area apply to the entire Plan area. The Proposals Map is not however a 'zoning plan', it does not show how all the land in the Borough is to be used, nor does it show sites that already have planning permission for a particular use. Only the policies and proposals of the written statement are illustrated on the Proposals Map.
- 1.18 In using the Local Plan, if you wish to know the attitude of the Council towards particular types of development you may find it more useful to refer to the appropriate section in the Written Statement first. If you want to know the planning proposals for a particular site or area, you should refer to the Proposals Map. It is advisable, however, to consult the Plan as a whole.

Scope and Operation of the Local Plan

- 1.19 The Local Plan is primarily confined to those actions and proposals which can be implemented through the existing Town and Country Planning legislation. It cannot directly address wider economic and social issues. It has to be seen as part of a wider range of public policy actions. For instance, land is required to attract new jobs to the Borough. Equally important is the need to ensure that the Borough's workforce can offer the skills demanded by new enterprises and to make sure public transport connections to new employment areas are available. The Local Plan's role is to allocate land for industrial development and it can point to the need for relevant training and adequate public transport. It cannot guarantee that investment will take place. These matters are outside the scope of the Local Plan and are the responsibility of other Council and public sector policy areas.
- 1.20 Public Sector resources are important for the implementation of many aspects of the Plan. These resources are limited at present and, as such, proposals which require resources will be undertaken "as resources permit." The intentions of other public sector agencies and the private sector will also have a significant effect on what can be achieved.