

**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

## **1) INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.0.1 Teesdale District is the largest district in County Durham, occupying an area of 325 square miles (842 square kilometres). Despite its size, relative to other districts in the County, Teesdale has the smallest population; 24,000 in 1991. The A66 Trunk road runs through the south of the district linking it to Cumbria in the west and the Teesside conurbation in the south. The district is mainly rural with the main town of Barnard Castle at its heart and a number of former mining and rural villages dispersed throughout.



### **1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

1.1.1 The Teesdale District Local Plan is a statutory document, which provides a land use framework in which the District's future needs for growth, protection and restraint are balanced. It forms the basis for making day to day planning decisions. The plan allocates areas, which are appropriate in terms of their environmental impact, development demand and social need, to accommodate growth, and protect areas where development would be unsuitable. The Local Plan aims to ensure that land within the District is used in ways which are for the benefit of its residents as a whole, balancing the demands of business with the needs of the public within the environmental constraints of the District.

1.1.2 The Local Plan has been prepared under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 and all the policies that it contains must be capable of implementation under these Acts.

1.1.3 Under Section 54A of the 1991 Act, statutory force is given to the role of the Local Plan, whereby applications for planning permission or an appeal shall be determined in accordance with the Local Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.1.4 Hence, the purpose of the Local Plan will be that when determining planning applications, rational and consistent decisions will be made, and greater certainty will be provided to all interested bodies and/or individuals.

1.1.5 The Local plan has four main functions:-

- i. To develop the policies and general proposals of the County Durham Structure Plan and to relate them to precise areas of land;
- ii. To provide a clear and detailed framework for determining planning applications by incorporating policies and proposals for areas for development and protection;
- iii. To provide a detailed basis for long term planning by utilities, businesses and others wishing to invest in the District;
- iv. To bring local issues to the attention of the public and to provide them with the opportunity to comment on the future development of Teesdale.

1.1.6 This is the first District-wide Local Plan for Teesdale, a Consultation Draft of this Plan was published in March 1996. The Plan sets out the District Council's planning policies and proposals for a period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1998 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010. The Plan once adopted will supersede all the previously prepared statutory and non-statutory local plans including: -

- |                                      |      |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| i. Evenwood and Etherley Local Plan  | 1984 |
| ii. Barnard Castle Area Local Plan   | 1985 |
| iii. Teesdale District Housing Study | 1986 |

However, the Local Plan will be regularly monitored and may be altered or replaced before the end date, depending on circumstances. This is in line with the Government's plan, monitor and manage approach, which by regular monitoring and review should ensure the Plan is never out of date. As part of this approach the Council intends to undertake and publish annual monitoring reports, at least in relation to housing activity in the District.

## **1.2 RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS AND DISTRICT COUNCIL POLICIES**

1.2.1 The Local Plan is just one part of the statutory development plan for Teesdale District. The other parts are prepared by Durham County Council and take a view of the whole County. They include: -

- i. The County Durham Structure Plan 1991-2006 Adopted March 1999; and
- ii. The Durham County Minerals Local Plan Deposit February 2000; and
- iii. The County Durham Waste Disposal Local Plan Adopted 1984

1.2.2 A Local Plan is required to be in general conformity with the relevant structure plan.

1.2.3 The Local Plan is primarily a land use plan. Its scope is limited to actions and proposals that are capable of implementation according to town planning legislation. The plan cannot, therefore, address other economic and social issues that may be subject of other plans and/or Council policies. Only where these other issues relate directly to the development of, and use of, land have they been included in the Local Plan.

## **1.3 GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE**

1.3.1 In addition to other parts of the development plan, the Local Plan needs to take into account current Government Planning Policy, both national and regional. National guidance is mainly given in the form of topic based Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs). A list of all current PPGs is set out in Appendix 1. There are many other publications such as “A better quality of life-a strategy for sustainable development for the UK 1999” which are useful in formulating the policies of the Plan.

1.3.2 Regional Planning Guidance for the Northern Region (RPG7) was issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions in 1993. Its overall theme is to balance the need to regenerate existing urban areas, attract employment to the region and improve its economic bases. The District Council will need to have regard to RPG7 in the preparation of its Local plan. RPG7 is currently under review with a draft published in December 1999 and an Examination in Public held in June 2000.

## **1.4 AIMS OF THE PLAN**

1.4.1 The Local Plan sets out a broad land use framework that will guide new development over the period to 2010. As such it provides the parameters within which investment decisions can be taken by the Council, other public agencies, businesses and developers.

1.4.2 The District Council uses its general role in planning as one of reconciling the necessary process and development with protection of the environment and conservation of the District's heritage. In drawing up the Local Plan the Council has been guided by the objectives set out below:

- To protect the environment from unnecessary development for the benefit of future generations and the economic regeneration of the County as a whole.
- To encourage economic development, as a means of achieving a balanced employment structure.
- To achieve a stable population base and provide enough housing land for a range and choice to be available.
- To guide development to areas, which reduce the need for motorised travel and help to retain local services.
- To ensure that the health and social needs of residents are met.

Further detailed aims of the plan are found at the beginning of each section.

1.4.3 The District Council supports the concept of sustainability. The policies, which flow from these objectives, are designed to give practical meaning to the term 'sustainable development'.

## **1.5 STRATEGY**

1.5.1 Teesdale district is very rural in nature, thinly populated, with large tracts of attractive countryside including parts of the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and areas of international and national nature conservation value.

1.5.2 Barnard Castle is the stand-alone main town and the only significant provider of services in the district. Much of the area's population live in small villages and scattered hamlets along the rivers Tees, Greta and Gaunless. Residents face problems of accessibility and many look outside the district to Bishop Auckland and Darlington for many services. Problems include an ageing population, rural deprivation, and a lack of affordable housing. The district has suffered from a decline in the local economy as quarrying and mining jobs disappeared from the north east of the district, whilst the loss of jobs in traditional industries such as quarrying and the long term reduction in agricultural employment spread these problems widely. The largest single

employer is in leading edge pharmaceutical production in Barnard Castle.

- 1.5.3 A key role of the planning system, as defined by central government, is to enable the provision of homes and buildings, investment and jobs in a way which is consistent with the principles of sustainable development. The core strategy for this plan is made up of four interrelated strands, environmental, residential, economic, and transport.
- 1.5.4 Environmental: The district is well endowed with a rich mixture of resources, both natural and man-made. The protection and enhancement of these resources for the present and future generations is central to the strategy. This is reflected in policies, which protect the natural environment from damage or irreversible loss, and a similar approach is proposed for the man-made environment. This leads to policies of constraint in several areas, where development will only be allowed if it respects the character of the locality. Essential to this strategy is the aim to use land, which has been previously developed, rather than greenfield sites for essential development. In a rural district like Teesdale, with limited previously developed land, achieving the national targets will be difficult. Similarly the rural attractiveness of the area must be allowed, through careful policies, to be enjoyed by residents and visitors, and bring economic benefits to the area.
- 1.5.5 Economic: The economic position of the District in relation to other parts of the Northeast is fairly sound, when measured by unemployment. However, there are distinct variations across the district. The economic strategy aims to provide additional employment opportunities, to reduce the reliance on one major employer in Barnard Castle, and provide further opportunities in the north and east of the district, close to where people live, where the decline of coalmining and associated activities has reduced the economic base. Throughout the rural district new employment and income generating schemes are necessary to counter the reduction in jobs in farming and minerals. Sensitive development of tourism, related to the resources of the district, is an integral part of this strategy. These needs are reflected in allocations of employment land, policies to encourage and allow rural diversification, and reduce the loss of employment related buildings. The plan will concentrate employment and other economic activities, such as retailing and entertainment in locations where there is potential for the use of public transport, and a reduced dependence on the private car. The plan will facilitate home working, as technology develops rapidly to allow this.
- 1.5.6 Residential: The core strategy of the Plan is to retain the current population of the District over the next decade. All the indications are that that same population will be housed in extra houses as household size falls. The locational strategy of the plan is to concentrate new housing in Barnard Castle as the main service centre, and in a small

number of key settlements which already provide a range of key services. These include educational, medical, shopping and public transport facilities. This is to support those service centres and to reduce the need to travel, in line with sustainable development. This is reflected in housing allocations, and policies for development within development limits. It is also reflected in constraint policies to minimise new housing and residential conversions in the countryside to avoid a scatter of housing away from essential services, and to constrain the loss of shops and village facilities.

- 1.5.7 Transport: The transport strategy reflects the aims of the County Durham Local Transport Plan. The integration of a transport strategy is based upon allocating developments in locations which reduce travel needs. Where travel is essential the opportunity to use public transport is an important criteria in selecting and allowing development whether for homes, work or leisure. Increased use of more environmentally friendly modes of transport will be encouraged, including leisure and tourist routeways across the district. Design and traffic management in new developments will be encouraged. Because of the small size of commercial centres in the district, and the competition from out of town centres, restrictions on short term parking supply are not proposed in order to maintain the viability of the centres.

## **1.6 FORMAT OF THE LOCAL PLAN**

- 1.6.1 The Local Plan consists of two parts, a Written Statement and a Proposals Map.
- 1.6.2 The Written Statement contains the Council's policies and proposals in full, together with the justification for each and how they will be implemented. All policies and proposals are presented in **UPPER CASE BOLD TYPE**, contained within a shaded box and are prefixed by a policy number.
- 1.6.3 The Written Statement is arranged into chapters on a topic by topic basis. Each chapter is preceded by an introductory section containing background information, the national and strategic planning framework for that topic, and the specific objectives of the Local Plan.
- 1.6.4 The Proposals Map consists of 1:20,000 scale Ordnance Survey bases of the District divided into four segments, namely NE, NW, SE and SW, and 1:5000 scale inset maps of the settlements, which have defined development limits. Policies and proposals of the Local Plan which apply to specific areas are shown on the Proposals Map together with the boundary to which they apply.
- 1.6.5 In the event of a contradiction between the Written Statement and the Proposals Map the provisions of the Written Statement will prevail.

## **1.7 STAGES OF THE PLAN**

1.7.1 The Local Plan was placed on deposit' for a six-week period in September 1999 and provided a formal opportunity for individuals and organisations to object to the policies and proposals of the Local Plan or to make representations in support of the Plan. Any objections received, which cannot be resolved, were considered at a Public Local Inquiry chaired by a Planning Inspector who was appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. Following the production of the Inspector's Report modifications were made to the Plan and placed 'on deposit' in November 2001 for a further round of consultation. After receiving further comments. Further Modifications were placed on Deposit in May 2002. Having received no further comments the Plan was adopted in June 2002. This process is shown diagrammatically in Fig.1.

Fig 1 Stages of the Plan



## **1.8 ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL**

1.8.1 The Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) Regulations 1991 expressly require local planning authorities to take account of environmental considerations when preparing their development plans. Local Authorities are also required to



undertake an environmental appraisal of all policies and proposals within their plans.

- 1.8.2 An environmental appraisal of the Consultation Draft March 1996 was carried out, this document helped in the formulation of the Proposals and Policies of this Plan. A summary of the environmental appraisal undertaken on the deposit draft Teesdale District Local Plan will be published as a supplementary document to be published by end of January 2003.