

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

14 July 2010

CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF
DEVELOPMENT AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: CHARACTER AREAS

SUMMARY

1. There are a number of areas within the Borough that have a distinctive character and sense of place. However, many of these areas within the Borough have been under pressure from development in recent years. Areas considered as having special character will be designated within the Regeneration DPD and be supported by policy to offer these areas protection from inappropriate development. A technical paper containing the methodology of selecting character areas and their individual assessments will support the Regeneration DPD Preferred Options as an evidence base document.

DETAIL

2. There are a number of areas within the Borough that have a distinctive character and sense of place. These areas are those which are well established, have a mature quality and identity that sets them apart from the rest of the urban environment and where the fabric of what has made them special has not been fundamentally eroded. At present there is no recognition or protection of their local distinctiveness.
3. The character and distinctiveness of many areas within the Borough has been under pressure from inappropriate development in recent years. National planning policy for housing encouraged the intensification of housing development and in particular development on 'previously developed land'. It should be noted that the government has now removed private gardens from the definition of 'previously developed land', and removed the requirement upon local authorities to have regard to national minimum density for housing. The Council recognises that if a considered approach is not adopted then such developments can result in the loss of character or distinctiveness of an area.
4. The Core Strategy DPD provides the overarching development strategy for the borough. Core Strategy Policy CS8(3) outlines the policy considerations relating to housing densities, including, that in locations 'which are characterised by mature dwellings and large gardens, a density lower than 30 dwellings per hectare may be appropriate'. The reasoned justification to this expands to identify that:

"Specific locations where development of a lower density than 30 dwellings per hectare may be appropriate will be identified through character assessment work the Council is undertaking and will be detailed in the Regeneration Development Plan Document."

(Core Strategy, Para 12.28)

5. A report was taken to LDF members steering group on 8 December 2008 advising members of those areas considered of having special character and welcoming suggestions of any additional areas they considered appropriate for assessment for inclusion as character areas.

6. The following 9 areas have been assessed as having Special Townscape Character:

- Oxbridge Lane
- Yarm Road (North), Eaglescliffe
- Yarm Road (South), Eaglescliffe
- Junction Road
- The Spital/Leven Road
- Leven Road
- Darlington Road
- Yarm Road, Stockton
- Thornaby Airfield

7. A number of areas were assessed for inclusion but were not considered appropriate for inclusion owing to the following reasons:

- Durham Road- It is clear that there is a identifiable character within the area with respect to the street pattern and to some extent the house types present. However, there has been modern development in the area and it is not considered that there is an apparent mature quality in the area. As such it is considered that the site is at best borderline for inclusion as a character area.
- Darlington Lane (193-201 and surrounding)- The entirety of Darlington lane could not be considered appropriate as a character area as there is no mature quality or distinctive character. The properties 193 – 201 set within spacious plots and do have a mature quality. However this is only a small number of properties and they are not considered to have a specific identifiable character.

8. A technical paper containing the methodology for selecting character areas and their individual assessments will support the Regeneration DPD Preferred Options as an evidence base document. The technical paper is available as a supplement to this report.

9. It is intended that the proposed character areas will be consulted upon as part of the Regeneration DPD Preferred Options Report. The technical paper will be consulted upon as part of the preferred options.

NEXT STEPS

10. Following consideration by planning committee a report will be referred to Cabinet on 5 August 2010 for Members agreement

RECOMMENDATION

11. Members are recommended to: -

- i) Note the content of the report

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Background Papers

Townscape Character Areas in Stockton-on-Tees Borough: Background Study

Financial Implications

The cost of producing the Character Areas work is being met through current budgetary provisions.

Environmental Implications – None.

Community Safety Implications – None

Human rights Implications – The provision of the European Convention of Human Rights 1950 has been taken into account in the preparation of this report.

Ward and Ward Councillors – All ward Councillors