

Press Release

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Consultation to start on County Durham Plan changes

Proposals to create thousands of jobs and new homes across County Durham are to take a step forward with further consultation beginning next week.

Durham County Council's County Durham Plan will move a step closer to being adopted, with people being given eight weeks from Tuesday 26 May to comment on modifications made to it.

Much of the content of the plan has been accepted by a government planning inspector subject to a number of modifications that he considers are necessary before it can proceed.

It sets out a range of development proposals as well as planning policies for the county until 2035. This will ensure that the right homes are developed in the right places to meet the needs of residents, including a mix of affordable properties for the elderly on each and every site. The plan is expected to facilitate thousands of new jobs at locations right across the county, including key economic sites at Seaham, Durham and Newton Aycliffe.

It also looks at ensuring the protection of the historic and natural environment and how infrastructure will come forward to support development, such as new or expanded schools, healthcare provision and community facilities.

The council believes the plan will aid the county's economic recovery from coronavirus and provide certainty to businesses and communities.

It includes provision for:

- Housing and employment land - the plan envisages 24,852 new homes across the county and over 300 hectares of new land being allocated specifically for business and industry development, including the Aykley Heads site.
- Green Belt deletions at Aykley Heads, Sniperley Park and Sherburn Road.
- Twenty seven housing allocations.

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- Affordable and older persons housing - the plan proposes that between ten and 25 per cent of homes in all developments are affordable. A proportion would have to be designed for older people.

The modifications include the removal of proposals for two relief roads on the outskirts of Durham City and a third at Barnard Castle.

It is purely the modifications that are subject to consultation, not the rest of the plan which people have been given chance to comment on previously.

The council is proceeding with the consultation now in line with government guidance encouraging local authorities to do so.

It has taken steps to ensure its consultation is as accessible as possible with the planning inspector having approved these.

These include running the consultation over eight weeks rather than six.

From 8.30am on Tuesday:

- Consultation materials will be available on the council's website at www.durham.gov.uk/cdp. People who have previously engaged in the plan process will be contacted to alert them to the consultation.
- Hard copy documents will be posted, free of charge, to anyone who is unable to access the consultation materials via electronic means and requests the documents be sent to them.
- Arrangements will be in place to ensure anyone who is 'shielding' and unable to access the documents electronically can get hard copies.
- Documents will be made available in alternative formats where needed.
- A telephone hotline will be operational to allow people to make an appointment to speak to an officer by phone, ask questions about the consultation documents or the process, and to request printed copies or alternative formats.

Cllr Carl Marshall, the council's Cabinet member for economic regeneration, said: "We have been closely following government guidance around when consultation can be carried out on local plans and are pleased to now be in a position to give people the chance to comment on the modifications.

"Due to the current situation we are extending the consultation period from six to eight weeks to give people as much opportunity as possible to take part.

"Coronavirus is having, and will continue to have for some time, significant impacts on the county's economy. We firmly believe the County Durham Plan can aid the county's

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economic recovery by guiding future development. It can also help provide the certainty needed to support businesses and communities both during the recovery from coronavirus and beyond.”

At the end of the consultation all responses will be sent to the inspector, who will consider them and decide whether he is happy for the plan to be adopted. Should he be so, the plan will go before the council’s Cabinet and then full council for adoption.

To find out more, visit www.durham.gov.uk/cdp or email cdpconsultation@durham.gov.uk

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