

Barnard Castle 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 Barnard Castle provides an update to the 2012 Development Plan, showing what has been delivered across Council services in the recent past.

Key priorities:

- Improving the vitality and attractiveness of the town centre and villages;
- New uses for vacant buildings and sites;
- Supporting the development of new housing and more jobs;
- Providing support to businesses;
- Getting people into work;
- Developing a wider programme of events;
- Opportunities and support for residents; and
- Promoting the town better to attract more visitors.

Profile

Barnard Castle is the main market town in the west of County Durham. It has an important role as a key local service centre for the upper dales and as a central point for tourism. The town is located 25 miles south west of Durham City, is 16 miles from Darlington and only 50 miles from the heart of the Lake District.

It is accessible from all directions from the A688 to the north via Bishop Auckland and Spennymoor, the A1(M) from the south, Darlington and Tees Valley via the A67 and has particularly good access to east-west routes via the A66. Barnard Castle is well-served in terms of bus provision with access to services to Bishop Auckland and Darlington.

It is a relatively compact town and most areas are within easy walking distance of the main centre. Barnard Castle has a resident population of 7,040 in the main town but also serves a rural hinterland which has a catchment area of over 25,040 people that reside in the market town of Middleton-in-Teesdale and also surrounding villages, which include the settlements of:

- Cotherstone;
- Mickleton;
- Eggleston;
- Staindrop;
- Whorlton;
- Bowes; and
- Startforth.

The population of Barnard Castle has increased in recent years due in part to a marked rise in the birth rate and the popularity of new housing developments in the town.

The area contains a number of key employment sites including the Harmire and Stainton Grove Industrial Estates and around 4,397 jobs are provided. Economic activity stands at around 71.4% (2011) of the working age population – which is marginally below the county, regional and national averages.

Barnard Castle acts as the main service centre for the rural west, as well as the principal focus for employment. Consequently, the office market is concentrated within the town's two main employment areas of Harmire Enterprise Park and Stainton Grove.

Barnard Castle contains a major industrial facility operated by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK). The company has had a presence in the town for over 70 years. The site employs over 1,400 staff and supplies nearly half a million packs of products per day to 140 global markets. The existence of GSK within the town has also led to the existence of a small but significant cluster of companies both in the town and the surrounding rural areas, providing pharma, service and engineering solutions to GSK.

HMYOI Deerbolt a prison for young offenders is located in Barnard Castle and is also a large employer within the town.

The shopping offer in the town has a history of attracting independent and creative shops. It has a cluster of interior design, antique and furniture shops predominantly on The Bank.

Barnard Castle and the surrounding villages are well-served for education provision. Teesdale School provides secondary and further education via its Sixth Form Centre for the town and surrounding area. The town is also home to the nationally renowned fee paying Barnard Castle School.

Leisure provision within the Teesdale Leisure Centre and across the parks and sports hubs in the area is of a good standard. The Teesdale Leisure Centre features a 25m pool, and air conditioned gym, a small pool to provide swimming lessons, a sports hall, indoor climbing wall and a 3G outdoor pitch. The town also has established athletic, cricket, rugby, and golf and football clubs.

The town has several selling points to market itself to potential visitors and tourists, including:

- The Bowes Museum – an iconic museum of international importance built in the style of a French Chateau in the 19th century by John and Josephine Bowes and housing collection of art and textiles. The Museum has held extremely popular exhibitions in the last two years of particular note was the Yves Saint Laurent; and Shoes, Pleasure and Pain.
- Its setting as a Georgian market town in a beautiful landscape and the gateway to Upper Teesdale and North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Barnard Castle – the ruined Norman Castle after which the town is named, in a stunning position overlooking the river. There are magnificent views of the ruins on entering the town from the west;



Barnard Castle is a visitor gateway entry town for the south of the county and nearby High Force, Raby Castle, the Durham Dales and the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB). The town has an appeal to walkers, families and those with an interest in heritage and art.

What has been delivered?

Housing

Barnard Castle has consistently proved to be a popular location to live. In the past couple of years, 70 new homes have been delivered.

Business

- GSK recently announced an investment of £92 million (August 2016) to fund the construction of an aseptic sterile facility supporting the manufacture of existing and new biopharmaceutical drugs. This is expected to safeguard the presence of the company within the town and the many jobs it provides.
- In 2013 GSK announced plans to recruit 16 apprentices over the next two years.
- Many firms in the area are benefitting from support from a range of agencies including Business Durham. Staff are based at Barnard Castle on a regular basis to undertake outreach work with local rural businesses and also have sponsored initiatives such as the Teesdale Business Awards.
- The Council has been successful in working with Smiths Grove Works, manufacturers of road signs and providers of car vinyl and have found them an alternative site locally that would enable the firm's expansion whilst retaining the current workforce, safeguarding 63 local jobs. They have relocated to Stainton Grove from their previous constrained town centre site and the site is available.
- In partnership with the AAP, Durham County Council has also undertaken various shop frontage improvements as part of the Targeted Business Improvement scheme which has helped to improve the overall appearance of the town.
- The Durham County Council Employability Team has assisted 25 local residents into Apprenticeship Schemes since 2014.

Retail

- Vacancy rates around the town centre remain low at 8% (in 2015). This equates to approximately 15 units and this figure is expected to reduce following a number of lettings in the last 12 months.
- The County Council has focussed on a range of improvements to the town centre to improve the visual quality of the shopping environment.



- Niche Living in Galgate, an Interior Design Shop has recently doubled its floorspace.
- National retailer 'Fatface' has opened a branch within the High Street.
- Morrisons have recently carried out a refurbishment and rebranding of their supermarket in the town centre.
- Funding has been used to carry out public realm works including new paving, lighting, street furniture and planting areas.
- In order to increase pedestrian footfall the council has recently installed a tourist trail consisting of discs in the pavement to direct people in to the town centre from Bowes Museum and vice versa.
- New directional signs have been introduced across the town centre. A number of circular recreational walks for all abilities have been created around the town centre.

Tourism, Leisure & Recreation

Barnard Castle has a full leisure facility with sports hall, swimming pool, fitness suite and climbing wall. In addition, 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 growing 'Couch to 5k'.

Barnard Castle is surrounded by historic and protected landscapes and tourism is an important contributor to the local economy. The Durham Dales attracted over 2.46 million visitors and was estimated to be worth over £140 million to the local economy (2015 Figures).

- Several key events are held in the town such as The Barnard Castle Meet, The Barney Big Bash music festival, Fireworks display, the Teesdale Steam Show; and more recently the town hosted its own triathlon.

The Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership this year drew to a conclusion. Running for five years, it was a successful scheme in delivering projects across the Teesdale area to a value of over £2.7 million. Building upon Teesdale's rich landscapes, projects included:

- 18 new walking trails created with interpretation boards and online information including footpaths and cycle ways along the former Barnard Castle to Bishop Auckland railway line;
- the mini golf course at Scar Top which following completion saw user increase from 3,540 in 2012 to 6,118 in 2013.
- training for 1,524 individuals through non accredited training, including training for 10 farm building surveyors.

- the relocation of the Town Council Woodleigh House, which now lease this along with the Citizens Advice Bureau and Teesdale Day Centre.

The Witham Hall refurbishment was completed in 2013. This facility right in the heart of the town centre is also able to deliver cultural programmes including live performances and concerts. It also offers a café and gallery, as well as space for holding functions and meetings. The County Council's Library and Customer Access Point formed part of the redevelopment.



The project won a number of awards including:

- 2014 RICS NE Renaissance – Building Conservation Award;
- 2014 RTPI North East Project of the Year;
- 2014 County Durham Environment Awards – Outstanding Project.

Infrastructure

- Public transport provides regular daily bus services to Darlington, with regular Monday to Saturday daytime services to Bishop Auckland and the upper dale as far as Middleton-in-Teesdale. There is a network of connecting services to surrounding villages which includes the Barnard Castle Town service. In terms of accessing the more remote locations and for passengers unable to access mainstream services as a result of mobility/disability issues, Durham County Council operates a Link2 accessible service for local journeys to hubs and transport interchanges.
- Improvements have been carried out to bus stops at Prospect Place and Darlington Road within the town centre.
- Significant investment has been made in schooling facilities in recent years within the area. Improvements to schools include windows replacement at Green Lane CE Primary School for September 2017 at a cost of approximately £240,000. Roof and boiler repairs at Montalbo Primary School for September 2015 at a cost of approximately £78,000.
- Specialist health facilities include Contraception and Sexual Health Services.
- Teesdale Leisure Centre provides Dementia-Friendly swimming sessions.

Teesdale Action Partnership (TAP)

The Teesdale Area Action Partnership (TAP) has been key in delivering a range of projects locally including:

- 'Older Adults Action' providing physical and social activities in local villages delivered by the Council's Culture and Sport service;
- supporting the provision of lamppost banners to publicise events at Bowes Museum within the town;
- providing funding to the Athletics Club for maintenance of the track;
- contributing towards the adoption of Startforth Park Estate in respect of drainage and lighting.

Also, The Teesdale Action Partnership (TAP) has provided money to enable a feasibility study to look at traffic management within the town centre looking to address damage continuing to the Market Cross from Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs). Funding has been provided by the County Council to fund repairs to damage to the Market Cross caused by vehicles.

What will be delivered?

Housing

There are a number of housing schemes which will deliver 260 new dwellings.

- Work has now started providing an access road at the significant site north of Green Lane in a development of 60 houses by Barretts.
- Work is currently ongoing on a mixed use scheme, providing upwards of 12 dwellings and converting the County Council's former offices at Teesdale House, a Grade II Listed Building.
- The Taylor Wimpey development at Castle Vale on Darlington Road continues and when complete will have delivered over 100 new homes.
- At Bowes Gardens, Startforth on the southern side of the River Tees work has now started including a new access road onto Bowes Road and the inclusion of a bus route for a development of over 60 homes, creating more attractive and sustainable communities.
- There is a current pending application to develop land to the east of Deerbolt HMYOI, south of the River Tees, for 162 dwellings by Kier Living (Northern).



Infrastructure

- As a result of the Digital Durham project supported by the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport, British Telecom and the Council most areas in and around Barnard Castle should experience an improvement in the quality and speed of broadband services through the roll out of fibre services.
- The Highways team have set aside some funding for the road network around the Market Cross Area, which subject to the outcome of the feasibility study could lead to a Heritage Lottery Fund bid to address congestion around the area.

Town Centre

- The contribution of Durham County Council's Targeted Business Improvements programme to continue within the town centre.

Business

- There will be the continued expansion of the GSK site with an additional specialist factory.

Leisure

- Through the AAP, Teesdale Sports Coaching identified a shortage of coaches to deliver sporting activity in the local area. Therefore, more people are to be trained as coaches led by the Council's Culture and Sport service.