Chapter 2

Doncaster into the 21st Century
INTRODUCTION

2.1 This chapter, together with the Part 1 Topic-based Policies which follow (in Chapter 3), sets out and explains the Borough Council’s overall UDP Strategy. It has three functions: firstly, it explains the essential background to strategic policy formulation, including a summary of the Secretary of State’s Strategic Guidance. Secondly, it defines how the strategy proposes to meet the agreed objectives for the Plan. Finally, it identifies certain key geographical areas and aspects of the plan. These are the subject of specific Part 1 Policies which are included within this Chapter because they cannot be satisfactorily dealt with merely on a topic basis.

BACKGROUND

2.2 Despite previous economic difficulties Doncaster has cause to be optimistic about the future. Firstly, it has many assets. For example, its communication linkages are generally good; attractive countryside is always close at hand; and there are generally few physical constraints to development. In addition, Doncaster is well located to take advantage of the general growth in trade with Europe, via the Humber Ports and Wharves and the Channel Tunnel.

STRATEGIC GUIDANCE AND REGIONAL GUIDANCE

2.3 The UDP has a key role to play in directing Doncaster’s future in ways that make full and best use of these inherent advantages and opportunities.

2.4 At the same time the Plan must address those problems which have arisen as a result of major changes to Doncaster’s economic fortunes during the past fifteen years or so. During this period its traditional coal mining and manufacturing industries have seriously declined or, in some cases, disappeared, resulting in heavy job losses and consequent high unemployment levels which peaked in 1986. Environmental dereliction and decay and an increase in social problems followed in the wake of colliery and factory closures. By 1990 a gradual but significant upturn in economic fortunes had taken place, but further recent colliery closures have meant that unemployment is again high, whilst environmental and social problems remain considerable.

2.5 The Plan is required to have regard to the “Strategic Guidance for South Yorkshire” issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment in October, 1989. Further reference to specific elements of the Guidance is included in the topic sections of the plan. A summary of the parts of the Guidance which have a particular bearing on Doncaster’s planning strategy is set out below.

2.6 Doncaster Borough Council, together with the other South Yorkshire Districts, made a major contribution to the content of the Strategic Guidance through the South Yorkshire Planning Conference and its advice to the Secretary of State. The Council welcomed the Guidance as an appropriate framework within which to develop its own planning objectives and priorities.

2.7 Although the timescale of the Plan for most purposes extends to 2001, in respect of land supply for employment, housing and aggregate minerals development it extends beyond that date. After 2001, the wider strategic framework is provided not by Strategic Guidance but by the Regional Guidance (RPG 12) Issued by the Government Office for
Strategic Guidance - A Summary

2.8 Key objectives are to foster economic growth and revitalise built-up areas, whilst conserving the countryside and urban heritage (Para. 2).

* The regeneration effort is to be concentrated on inner urban areas and coalfield settlements, including the Dearne Valley (Para. 3).

* An adequate supply of land should be maintained for industrial and commercial development. Recycling of vacant and derelict land for these purposes is to have high priority. (Para. 4).

* Tourism is to be encouraged, taking advantage of the county’s historical cultural heritage, good communications and major recreational and retail facilities. (Para. 8).

* Existing town centres are to continue as the main areas for shopping facilities. (Para. 10).

* There is a basic requirement for 14,000 new dwellings in Doncaster between April, 1986 and March, 2001. Housing development should take place, as far as possible, where it can contribute to the regeneration of urban areas. (Para. 12).

* U.D.P.’s should continue to safeguard what is best in both the urban and rural environments, whilst reclaiming and improving land despoiled by former industrial activity. (Para. 17).

* U.D.P.’s should reflect the Government’s aim of encouraging the growth and diversification of the rural economy. The best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected. (Para. 20).

* The main objectives of the South Yorkshire Green Belt are to regulate the growth of urban areas and prevent coalescence, protect countryside and assist urban regeneration. The aim must be to establish firm boundaries which will ensure the permanence of the Green Belt (Paras. 21-23).

* U.D.P.’s should ensure that South Yorkshire’s contribution to the supply of minerals is maintained. The unnecessary sterilisation of mineral resources by other forms of development is to be avoided. (Para. 24).

Regional Guidance

2.9 In view of the limited applicability of Regional Guidance to the current plan, a detailed summary of its contents would be inappropriate. In general, the guidance seeks to promote land use policies which are sustainable and meet four broad objectives:

1) to promote economic prosperity and the achievement of a competitive position in national and international markets;
2) to conserve and, where possible, to enhance the Region’s environment;
3) to facilitate the processes of industrial adjustment, economic diversification and urban and rural regeneration and renewal; and
4) to make best use of the available resources and encourage efficient use of energy.

DONCASTER’S OBJECTIVES AND DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

2.10 Three fundamental objectives have been agreed for the Doncaster Unitary Development Plan:

i) Economic Regeneration
ii) Environmental Improvement
iii) Reduction in Social Inequalities

2.11 These objectives were chosen following early public consultation at the outset of the Plan preparation process and were subsequently agreed by the Borough Council as the basis for the Plan. They were further confirmed by the results of the Public Attitude Survey. The objectives provide the context for the strategic planning policies that follow and for many of the specific proposals in Part 2 of the Plan.

The way in which the Council have taken account of Regional Guidance in respect of proposals for employment, housing and aggregate minerals land supply is detailed in the relevant topic chapters.

* Highway improvements and car parking policies should be designed to secure environmental improvements, ease congestion and contribute towards road safety. Priority should be given to proposals which improve access to the inner parts of major towns and areas identified as priorities for regeneration. Account should be taken of proposals for:
  - detrunking A630T and A638T South of Doncaster and north of Redhouse;
  - a new junction on M18;
  - a Dearne Towns Link Road;
  - upgrading the A1 to motorway standard from Redhouse to Ferrybridge (Paras. 26-27)

* District Councils should examine any opportunities for economic development arising from improvements to the East Coast Main Railway Line and consider locations for construction of road/rail interchanges related to the Channel Tunnel development. (Para. 29).
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Economic Regeneration

2.12 The promotion of industry and tackling of unemployment emerged, in the Public Attitude Survey, as the two most important issues for Doncaster to address. The UDP policies must therefore strengthen and diversify the economic base of Doncaster as a sub-regional centre and maximise the benefits for its people and above all secure new jobs and protect existing jobs.

In particular, this means:

* Ensuring an adequate supply of development land in appropriate locations to cater for the needs of existing, expanding and new businesses;
* Protecting key employment areas from other forms of development;
* Promoting a variety of measures to regenerate the economies of colliery and former colliery settlements and other areas of high unemployment.
* Maintaining and enhancing the role of Doncaster Town Centre as a key focal point for the wider provision of shopping, service and leisure facilities;
* Encouraging diversification of the rural economy;
* Promoting development of a range of tourism facilities;
* Developing and improving the strategic highway and public transport networks within the Borough and links to the regional and national networks and providing strategic transport interchange facilities.

Environmental Improvement

2.13 The need to bring about substantial improvements to the quality of the environment in Doncaster is a major issue highlighted by the results of the Public Attitude Survey and thus has to be a central concern of the plan. The UDP policies therefore promote a high quality of physical environment throughout the Borough, not only for its own sake but in particular, to sustain the attraction of Doncaster as a place in which to live, to work, to play, to invest in and to visit. This will be achieved by:

* Undertaking a major programme of environmental improvements, rehabilitation and refurbishment within Doncaster Town Centre, the older and more run down urban areas and defined major sites and corridors;
* Reclaiming and bringing into beneficial use derelict, degraded and waste land;
* Protecting the environment and amenity of the countryside through the designation of a Green Belt and Countryside Policy Area, within both of which very strict development control policies will apply;
* Ensuring that new development makes a positive contribution to the environment in which it occurs, through the development control process and in specific guidance;
* Identifying or designating areas where special measures for conservation or enhancement are needed, including Areas of Special Landscape Value; Sites of importance for nature conservation; Conservation Areas; Sites of archaeological importance; etc.
* Defining, protecting and enhancing urban open spaces;
* Ensuring that mineral extraction proposals are confined to areas where they are acceptable in terms of their impact on amenity and the environment and that they provide for restoration to a beneficial afteruse;
* Ensuring that transportation proposals contribute to environmental improvement through, for example, highway improvements, traffic management, traffic calming and pedestrianisation.

Reduction in Social Inequalities

2.14 Although the UDP will focus primarily on land use matters, it will nevertheless support and contribute to the development of policies and initiatives by which the Council can enable its communities to overcome the relative discrimination and deprivation generated by social inequalities. These inequalities have been confirmed by the results of the Public Attitude Survey.

The Plan will contribute by:

* Focussing investment, particularly public sector investment, in the areas of greatest deprivation, specifically the inner urban area of Doncaster; the Dearne; and the other coalfield settlements.
* Identifying residential areas where a combination of poor housing and environment warrant priority remedial attention;
* Promoting job creation and diversification within the areas of highest unemployment;
* Undertaking measures to secure and enhance the vitality of existing small town and district centres, many of which are located within the more deprived areas of the Borough;
* Supporting the maintenance and improvement of public transport facilities;
* Targeting community initiatives on areas with the severest concentrations of social deprivation;
* Ensuring that development proposals take into account the specific needs of relatively disadvantaged people.
KEY POLICIES

2.15 In order to address these overall objectives eight key policies have been identified regarding Doncaster Town Centre; New Development; The Regeneration Priority Areas; Small Town and District Centres; The Countryside; Sustainability and Social Inequality. These are the subject of the eight Part I Policies which follow:

DONCASTER TOWN CENTRE

2.16 Doncaster Town Centre represents a principal focus for commercial, social and cultural activity within this Region. The need to maintain and enhance both its role and its vitality are crucial to the success of the overall strategy. An attractive and vibrant Town Centre is essential not only for the well-being of Doncaster and its citizens but also for the image it portrays since it is principally the quality of the Town Centre that determines Doncaster’s image to the outside world. Image is especially important to a town such as Doncaster which is seeking to attract jobs and investment into the Borough.

2.17 Strategic Guidance supports this position by emphasizing that existing town centres should continue to be the main areas for shopping facilities and that town centre retail developments can assist regeneration, especially where coupled with improvements to the environment and infrastructure. Strategic Guidance also requires that priority is given to transport proposals which improve access to the inner parts of the major towns. The results of the Public Attitude Survey also support the need to improve the Town Centre. One fifth of all households considered improvements to the Town Centre to be the most important issue for the Borough Council to address.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

2.18 Doncaster’s settlement pattern broadly comprises a main urban nucleus, the Doncaster Urban Area, together with a series of sizeable detached satellite settlements, which are themselves mostly urban in nature (most are colliery or former colliery settlements). So as to protect the overall integrity of the Green Belt and the countryside outside the Green Belt, and to make the best use of existing facilities and services, it is proposed where possible, to accommodate the new development that is required either within or adjacent to the Doncaster Urban Area or the larger satellite settlements.

2.19 Nevertheless, sufficient land has to be made available to provide for the future needs of housing and industry and whilst opportunities will be taken, where appropriate, to re-use derelict land and use urban waste land for development, substantial development of open or “greenfield” land cannot be avoided. Extensive “greenfield” development is, indeed, fundamental to Doncaster’s regeneration needs, since the Borough has relatively little land that is both capable of being recycled and situated in locations which are appropriate for the development that is needed. Considerable attention is given in this plan to ensuring that such development will be carefully designed to minimise its impact upon the adjacent countryside. Additionally, improvements will be sought to the general standards of design and layout of major new development.
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THE REGENERATION PRIORITY AREAS

Within the regeneration priority areas listed below, attention will be focussed on measures to secure economic, environmental and social improvements.

Adwick Le Street (Including Carcroft)  
Armthorpe  
Askern  
Bentley (Including Scawthorpe and Toll Bar)  
Conisbrough (Including Denaby Main)  
Doncaster - Town Centre  
Balby  
Hexthorpe  
Hyde Park  
Town Field  
Belle Vue  
Doncaster Carr  
Wheatley  
Intake  
Edlington  
Hatfield - Dunscoft Only  
Mexborough  
Rossington  
Stainforth  
Thorne (Including Moorends)

2.20 Regeneration Priority Areas have characteristically suffered from a combination of problems including high unemployment levels, poor health, an inadequate and narrow employment base, low average income levels, poor health, rundown housing estates and a degraded urban environment with poor quality built development and, frequently, extensive areas of derelict, waste or underused land.

2.21 Particular emphasis is put on the social and community considerations in Regeneration Priority Areas. The inclusion of social considerations in the UDP conforms with the 1991 Regulations in respect of Development Plans and provides an appropriate response to community issues which in themselves may not have a well defined geographical or land use context.

2.22 The Borough Council, with the assistance of other agencies and organisations, is addressing the problems of these areas but much remains to be done. If the UDP is to achieve its agreed objectives, it will be necessary to target certain policies and resource priorities to the inner urban areas and coalfield settlements, including the Dearne Valley. The need to concentrate the regeneration effort within these areas was recognised by the Secretary of State in Strategic Guidance. It is important not to regard the areas as inflexible in either geographical location or exclusivity. It may well be that during the plan period the justification for recognising other Regeneration Priority Areas will be merited.

2.23 The proposed Regeneration Priority Areas are specified in the Policy. They relate to the general extent of the settlements indicated and are not defined by specific boundaries. Hence they are not identified on the Proposals Maps.

SMALL TOWN AND DISTRICT CENTRES

Small town and district centres are identified below. They comprise the main retail area, other service uses, transport uses, community facilities and recreation uses. Their consolidation, enhancement and improvement will be encouraged and special attention will be given to opportunities for the rationalisation of land uses, environmental improvements, community based initiatives and economic regeneration.

Adwick  
Edlington  
Carcroft  
Hatfield  
Armthorpe  
Dunscoft  
Askern  
Mexborough  
Bawtry  
Rossington  
Bentley  
Stainforth  
Conisbrough  
Thorne  
Balby  
Moorends  
Intake  
Tichhill  
Edenthorpe
2.24 Small Town and District Centres provide a wide variety of facilities and services and play an important role in meeting the needs of their immediate surrounding area. This policy recognises these functions and promotes their enhancement through general planning control and specific measures when and where opportunities arise.

2.25 The Council’s Public Attitude Survey (1988) bears this out. Between 30% and 40% of those surveyed use or would like to use small nearby shops for food goods in preference to other types of shops. The Survey also indicated that presently the smaller centres poorly serve many members of society, namely young people and the unemployed. By contrast the elderly in respect of the provision of post offices, doctors, libraries, chemists and health facilities in these centres are well served. The Survey shows the Borough’s residents rely heavily on their local facilities and services.

2.26 The emphasis will vary from centre to centre. The priorities in the coalfield settlements and Regeneration Priority Areas will be social, economic and environmental improvements focussed on the centres, while in centres such as Bawtry or Tickhill a more conservation and protection based approach would be appropriate.

2.27 The availability of programme funding and project based initiatives targeting the centres can make a significant contribution to the implementation of Policy GEN4. The Borough Council will also encourage the private sector to consider how best to improve and enhance the local facilities and services when putting forward development proposals in the centres. In the period leading up to the submission of planning applications within the centres or during subsequent negotiations the Borough Council will expect the applicant to have regard to an assessment of community needs. The Council itself will continue to consult with community groups and local people in this respect.

2.28 The Small Town and District Centres are specified in the policy. They relate to the general extent of the centres indicated and are not identified as such on the proposals maps.

THE COUNTRYSIDE

2.29 Doncaster contains extensive areas of accessible open countryside within its boundaries. Except where it is necessary to expand existing settlements to accommodate new housing and industrial development, it is proposed to confirm and strengthen the protection already afforded to the countryside by:

* Green Belt designation in the western half of the Borough;

* Maintaining a level of protection, similar to that afforded to the Green Belt, in the eastern half of the Borough;

* Maintaining and extending protection for nature conservation sites, trees and woodlands;

* Protecting the landscape of the countryside and enhancing it, where necessary, through for example, derelict land reclamation, restoration schemes associated with mineral working and improvements to the visual character of the urban fringes;

* Supporting the re-use of appropriate agricultural buildings for new businesses subject to amenity and environmental considerations;

* Encouraging the provision of small scale business and service uses in rural villages;

* Promoting countryside recreational uses, both informal and more formal and intensive;

* Policies to encourage development of tourism facilities of a scale and nature appropriate to the countryside.

2.30 Whilst ensuring maximum protection for the countryside, the Plan also has to take on board the implications for the countryside of national changes in the rural economy. Over the last thirty years, increases in agricultural efficiency and the introduction of new farming practices have pushed up agricultural productivity, resulting in a substantial fall in agricultural employment. Central Government policy is therefore, to foster diversification of the rural economy and promote a wider range of employment opportunities.

The UDP will encourage diversification by:

* Maintaining and extending protection for the attractive built environment of much of the countryside, including Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and archaeological sites.

2.31 The provision of more countryside recreational and leisure facilities is supported by public opinion as indicated in the Public Attitude Survey, one-third of households believing that this should be the most important thing for the Borough Council to do in the future.
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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

2.32 The securing of major improvements to the physical environment and higher standards of design of new development are crucial to the regeneration of Doncaster. They are an important element in improving the quality of life of the Borough’s residents and a major factor in improving Doncaster’s image which has been damaged by the economic decline in its traditional industries, notably coal mining and railways. In addition, the area has suffered visually from the exploitation of coal, limestone, sand and gravel workings and manufacturing industry over the past 150 years. In environmental terms this has resulted in a legacy of colliery spoil heaps, unsightly quarries, obsolete industrial buildings and polluted sites and waterways. If the Council is successful in promoting the recovery of the Borough’s economy, assisted by various grant-aided regimes, it will be possible to redress many of these problems. The emphasis for the future must be to promote and encourage development, redevelopment and improvement/restoration schemes of a higher quality. To be effective it follows that this approach will need to be applied consistently over many years.

SUSTAINABILITY

2.33 The Government has made clear its intention to work towards ensuring that development and growth are sustainable and has stated that it will continue to develop policies consistent with the concept of sustainable development. Recent Government Planning Policy Guidance has sought to incorporate some of the principles of sustainability. The Borough Council supports the concept and wishes to ensure that new development takes account of its principles, in so far as this is consistent with the need to meet other key principles and objectives of the plan. The Council’s commitment to sustainable development was confirmed in September 1995 when it agreed to participate in the Local Agenda 21 process.

2.34 The Borough Council will promote sustainability in various ways, for example by:

* Minimising the distance people have to travel between home, work and other amenities by ensuring that most development takes place in or adjacent to existing urban areas;
* regenerating Town and District Centres;
* ensuring adequate greenspace is provided in urban areas;
* promoting re-use or rehabilitation of derelict and degraded land;
* encouraging and promoting the regeneration of run-down and decayed industrial and residential areas;
* protecting and conserving the countryside, including wildlife sites and woodlands;
* measures to reduce the impact of vehicular traffic, especially in existing centres;
* encouraging and supporting “green” transport options, including public transport, cycling and walking;
* protecting water resources;
* encouraging recycling;
* supporting development of renewable energy sources.

SOCIAL INEQUALITY

2.35 The Borough Council will make every effort to ensure that the needs of the relatively disadvantaged are taken into account when considering development proposals, in order to reduce social deprivation and disadvantage.
2.35 One of the three principal objectives of the UDP is the reduction of social inequalities. Part of this objective is to ensure that development proposals take into account the specific needs of relatively disadvantaged people.

2.36 The term ‘relatively disadvantaged’ has no widely accepted meaning but in the context of the UDP it is intended to mean those who suffer from problems resulting from, for example, old age, disability, unemployment or homelessness, or those who are discriminated against because of race, sex etc.

2.37 The UDP, through its policies and proposals, aims to create an environment that serves the whole of the Borough’s community, including those with special needs, such as the less mobile and the elderly. The UDP will try, through specific policies, to secure this objective by:

* Providing sites for and supporting provision of homes for those with special needs, such as the elderly and the less well off;
* Protecting community facilities from alternative forms of development;
* Ensuring that development proposals make appropriate provision for people with disabilities/the less mobile;
* Encouraging provision of childcare facilities;
* Promoting education and training initiatives;
* Encouraging and supporting improved public transport links, thereby improving accessibility for those without a car;
* Promoting improved public safety in new and existing development;
* Improving access to the countryside, particularly in the urban fringes.

2.38 However, although the UDP seeks to aid disadvantaged people wherever possible, there are limits to what it can achieve. The UDP is mainly concerned with land-use issues, and clearly cannot influence all of the factors that contribute to social inequalities. Even so, the UDP is able to address some of the problems of certain groups within the community, and thereby contribute to shaping a more caring environment for the future.

**THE UDP AND OTHER POLICY AREAS**

2.39 It is important to recognise the limitations of the UDP. It is a land-use plan, albeit one which takes account of wider social and economic issues in its formulation, and it therefore provides answers to only some of the areas of concern to the Borough Council. There is much that needs to be tackled outside the planning system. A context for some of these other areas of concern is provided by complementary documents such as the Doncaster Economic Development Strategy and Plan and the Annual Housing Strategy Statement.

2.40 The UDP’s influence, however, is not confined to the land use planning system. Once adopted, for example, the UDP will provide a well argued strategic context, with statutory backing, to strengthen annual resource bids such as the Transport Policies and Programme submission and Housing Investment Programme, and similarly can support bids for resources from other sources such as those available from European and United Kingdom programmes, and through other agencies including English Partnerships.