

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Question 17

What should be the extent of the proposed Aykley Heads Strategic Employment Site?

- a. Only reusing existing land currently used for employment, excluding any Green Belt land;*
- b. As above but also including land at County Hall car park currently in the Green Belt;*
- c. As above but also including former police leisure centre and playing fields currently in the Green Belt; or*
- d. As above but only use Green Belt land when other areas have been redeveloped.*

Where relevant please set out the exceptional circumstances that exist to justify the removal of some Green Belt land?

The City of Durham Trust endorses Option (a). We welcome the confirmation of Aykley Heads as a strategic employment site where valuable job opportunities have been attracted over a number of years. Care was taken in designating the developable parts of the Aykley Heads estate to respect the paramount importance of protecting views to and from the World Heritage Site of Durham Cathedral and Castle. Accordingly, redevelopment of existing land currently used for employment is supported, provided that the heights of new structures are controlled so as to not breach the skyline of the green landscape bowl around this part of the city.

Option (b) would also include the car park that extends into the Green Belt. The non-Green Belt area of Aykley Heads is capable of accommodating many thousands of jobs; the car park in question would provide for only a small number of additional jobs or even none if retained as a car park. Thus there are no exceptional circumstances to justify removing it from the Green Belt.

Option (c) would lose a part of the Green Belt that certainly constitutes an essential component in the setting of the World Heritage Site. The former police leisure centre has in fact been removed and the site restored to open green space. A key ingredient in the outstanding attractiveness of Aykley Heads as a strategic employment site is the extensive green landscape setting and this quality must be retained.

Option (d) is best kept for the first review of the County Plan.