



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee

Minutes and Decision Record

2 March 2026

Meeting commenced

Time: 5pm

Location: Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Owen Riddle (In the Chair)

Councillors: Moss Boddy, Martin Dunbar, Sue Little, Amanda Napper, Christopher Wallace

Parish Council Representatives:

Lynn Noble (Dalton Piercy Parish Council)

Also present: Councillor Rachel Creevy as substitute for Councillor Michael Jorgeson in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2.
Councillor Corinne Male
Councillor Karen Oliver

Officers: Kieran Bostock, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services
Sylvia Pinkney, Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)
Scott Parkes, Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)
Gemma Jones, Scrutiny and Legal Support Officer

Prior to the meeting it was noted that there had been a replacement report issued for item 5.4 and this had been circulated in advance of the meeting to all Members of the Committee.

23. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Michael Jorgeson and Stephen Smith (Greatham Parish Council).

24. Declarations of Interest

None.

25. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2026

Received.

26. Urban Forest Master Plan Consultation – *Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services*

Type of decision

Key Decision – NRS 107/26

Purpose of report

To outline the key challenges and targets for achieving tree equity across the borough and to seek approval to commence public consultation on the Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP), attached at appendix 1 of the report.

Issues for consideration

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services provided an overview of the key challenges and targets for achieving tree equity across the borough. Members noted that Hartlepool faces a significant challenge in terms of urban greening, with one of the lowest tree canopy coverages in England.

To address this, the Tree Equity for Hartlepool project was launched as a multi-year initiative to close the “nature gap”. Key to this project is the use of the Tree Equity Score UK tool on a borough wide scale, the first time this has been done in the UK. This tool will identify the areas in most need of green investment.

The aims of the Urban Forest Master Plan were outlined, as well as how it would be delivered and how it would be used.

Moving to the initial Urban Forest Master Plan consultation, the Director explained that to date 579 responses had been received. The survey responses highlighted strong support for planting significantly more trees across the borough. Concerns were also raised from participants regarding long term maintenance, with calls for regular tree pruning. This feedback had shaped the Plan and will ensure future actions align with technical priorities and values of the community.

The proposed public consultation will allow residents, schools and businesses a chance to review the draft version of the plan and confirm that they reflect local priorities. This is a crucial step in ensuring the master plan is credible.

It was noted that the plan had been funded through the Tree Equity for Hartlepool project.

In the discussion that followed the following points were raised –

- A Member expressed that this was a positive proposal.
- It was confirmed the issue of overgrown trees (future maintenance) would be included in the plan.
- A member commented that it was good to see lots of different organisations involved, such as schools.
- A Member expressed concerns regarding the tree coverage in Seaton Carew. The Director urged all Members to feed any concerns/comments into the Plan consultation.
- The Director advised that concerns regarding the impact of large tree roots on properties would be taken into consideration to ensure trees would be planted in the right locations.
- A Member queried if the funding to maintain the trees would be a consideration. The Director accepted that this was an important aspect of this project but added that the council could not shy away from this due to the cost burden. This plan would guide how to move forward on this.
- The Director provided assurance that any concerns a housing developer was not delivering on what was included in the planning application would be investigated through Planning Enforcement.
- A resident raised concerns about the lack of trees in Burn Valley, and it was advised to feed these comments into the consultation.
- Conservation areas require additional considerations.
- Concerns that trees were being taken down in conservation areas should be reported to the council.
- Schools had been included in the development of this plan and future engagement with schools had also been planned.
- Whilst the review of the plan was 5 years, the Director noted that a partial review could be undertaken annually or in 3 years to monitor progress, with the full review every 5 years.

Decision

- i) The Committee noted the content of the report and granted permission to commence public consultation on the UFMP for an eight-week period, commencing in Spring 2026. The outcome of this consultation to be reported to a future Committee and prior to the UFMP being adopted.

27. Local Transport Plan Programme - *Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services*

Type of decision

Key (NRS107/26)

Purpose of report

To inform the Committee of the current position with the Local Transport Plan Delivery Plan, progress made under the Local Transport Plan delivery programme during 2025/2026, and to set the budget allocations for 2026/2027.

Issues for consideration

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services outlined that the Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026 set out how a safe and sustainable transport system can be delivered in Hartlepool. It was highlighted that funding had significantly reduced from the second LTP period. The LTP also aligned with key regional strategies and local development frameworks, specifically the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) Strategic Transport Plan.

Members were advised the current plan is coming to an end, and a budget allocation is included in this years programme to develop an updated document in line with national/regional legislation and ambitions. Works identified for delivery during 2025/26 were detailed in appendix 1 of the report. Individual scheme type allocations for 2025/26, along with allocations for 2026/27 were outlined in appendix 2 of the report.

A Member raised concerns that the proposal for a crossing on Elizabeth Way was not included in the plan and highlighted further concerns of road safety in the area, particularly for school children. The Director advised that this Committee had decided not to progress with this crossing following consultation with residents. This decision had also been discussed at Full Council. It was discussed that moving the proposed crossing to a different location would not serve its purpose as the desired line is within the shop frontage. It was confirmed that this was still on the safety scheme and would continue to be monitored.

A Member requested an update on the traffic monitoring of Rossmere Way. Whilst not included in the plan, the Director explained that work is still ongoing in this area and once concluded, the team would try and identify a budget for any proposed works. There were no timescales on this as yet. The Chair confirmed an update would be provided on this at a later date.

A resident raised concerns about a cycle crossing installed in the Burn Valley area. The Director advised that this was externally funded through the TVCA and a condition of this grant was that Active Travel England undertake an external assessment on this cycle crossing and that this had taken place. It was noted that

this was the safest route possible that met national standards. However, the presence of the cycle scheme and its features could help to reduce speeding in the area.

Returning to the crossing at Elizabeth Way, a resident also raised concerns on this issue and the Director reiterated that this had been to this Committee and the decision was taken not to install a crossing at this location. Reports on this were publicly available. The Chair echoed that this was still on the safety scheme and would be reviewed in line with all other scheme requests.

Decision

- i) The Committee noted the works/ schemes delivered during 2025/2026 and approved the budget allocations for 2026/2027.

28. Residential Design Code Supplementary Planning

Document (SPD) - *Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services*

Type of decision

Key (DNRS 114 / 26)

Purpose of report

To seek Members agreement to consult upon the draft Residential Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (the SPD), modify as required following the consultation and then present to Full Council for adoption, this was attached to the report at appendix 1.

Issues for consideration

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services informed the Committee that the council has developed and are proposing to consult upon the SPD that will, once adopted, be a material consideration in planning decisions. The SPD provides codes and guidelines that, when followed, will ensure the delivery of high-quality residential developments. It was noted that the SPD would speed up the planning application process and be bespoke to Hartlepool to meet the different characteristics of the borough.

The process of producing the draft SPD was outlined in the report. Members were advised that, following the formal consultation on the SPD, all responses would be analysed and fed into the document.

A Member highlighted the need for improvements to the number of homes for disabled people, including bungalows. The Director noted that the strategic housing assessment would provide an opportunity to feed in issues like this.

Concerns were raised by Members regarding the design of new homes and the need for character. The Director confirmed that the guide would address this issue but

would not apply to applications already approved. A Member asked if examples could be provided of developments, both good and poor in design to provide some context. The Director confirmed this document would address what would be expected in different areas and this would apply to all new developments.

A Member asked if this document would provide a clear set of criteria on which planning applications could be measured against and provide a framework to make the process simpler. The Director confirmed that this was one of the aims of the document.

Decision

- i) Members noted the content of the report and the draft SPD and agreed to the 8-week formal SPD consultation.
- ii) Members agreed to delegate to the Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services, to consider representations and make modifications to the SPD, in consultation with the Committee Chair.
- iii) Members agreed to permit the modified SPD to be presented to full council for adoption in May/ June 2026.

29. Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Article 4 Direction and SPD update - *Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services*

Type of decision

Key decision (DNRS 114 / 26)

Purpose of report

- i) To update members on the progress of three key consultations undertaken by the Land Use Policy Team in recent months. The consultations focused on:
 - A borough wide Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Article 4 Direction.
 - A HMO Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
 - A Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- ii) The report also seeks permission to consult upon the two SPDs for a further 8-week period. This is to allow for the publication of the Consultation Statement and to allow additional time to obtain residents and stakeholders view, to, in consultation with the Director of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services and the Chair of committee, update the two draft SPDs and submit to Full Council for Adoption in May 2026.

Issues for consideration

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory services provided an overview of consultations undertaken by the Land Use Policy Team in recent months, of which a timeline was detailed within the report.

The Director highlighted that the HMO Article 4 Direction consultation was in response to concerns raised by members of the public in relation to HMO's across the borough. To date 331 online responses had been received to the HMO consultation. 269 were in support of introducing the HMO Article 4 Direction and 62 (18%) were not. Other key issues raised in the consultation were that HMO'S give rise to anti-social behaviour, car parking pressures and reduce community cohesion. Responses also indicated that the HMO Article 4 Direction would allow the council to have better control over this matter and provide residents with a voice.

The HMO SPD received 30 responses and 1 letter from Historic England. These highlighted broad support for avoiding the sandwich effect of a single dwelling being placed between two HMO's and raised concerns about parking and anti-social behaviour.

Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) consultation received 14 responses with some key issues being to prioritise brownfield sites and the priorities for s106 spending. The financial and legal considerations were referred to.

In the discussion that followed the Chair acknowledged the 81% of responses that were in support of the HMO Article 4 Direction and highlighted that this issue was of real significance to the public.

A Member queried the content of the response received from Historic England with regards to the HMO SPD but this was not available during the meeting. The Chair advised this could be circulated at a later date.

Reflecting on the HMO SPD consultation showing broad support for having no more than 3 HMOs in a row, a Member raised concerns regarding the amount of people that were relocated to the town by different organisations. They highlighted the need for this document to ensure that it covered all areas.

The Director clarified to Members that the Government intends to set out that SPDs cannot be adopted after the 30th June 2026. If this deadline is not achieved, then it could be argued that the SPDs do not hold weight and cannot be relied upon in decision making.

Regarding the responses to the HMO and SPD consultations the Director confirmed that the submissions would not be made available to the public. The Chair reiterated that all submissions had formed the basis of the report.

A resident advised that their community had not just been impacted by HMOs, there were also concerns regarding Airbnb's and commercial properties. The resident expressed feelings of helplessness amongst the long-standing residents. The Director confirmed it was their view that these documents would best equip the council to be able to deal with any issues arising. They also advised there were some good landlords and that there was a place for HMOs in the town. It was also noted that new planning documents could not be retrospectively applied.

A Member commented that the introduction of the Renters Rights Act would further address concerns regarding anti-social behaviour.

A Member welcomed the start of addressing issues that were causing concerns in relation to HMOs but advised more needed to be done about this issue, especially for the residents that were already experiencing problems.

The Director confirmed that a response had been received from the HDC regarding the Planning Obligations SPD and the team were working with the Development Corporation on the HMO SPD and HMO Article 4 Direction.

The Chair commented that there were a raft of measures being used to address this issue and whilst the process could be slow, there were legal processes to be followed.

Moving to the recommendations a Member asked if modifications to the SPDs would be discussed in a public forum, noting that delegation had been requested to be given to the Director in consultation with the Chair. The Director confirmed that this item would be taken straight to full council for debate in order to meet the deadline of the 30th June 2026. All papers would be publicly available before the meeting of Full Council.

Decision

- i) Members noted the content of the report.
- ii) Members allowed officers to consult upon the two SPDs for an eight-week period.
- iii) Members agreed to delegate to the Director of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services, to consider representations and make modifications to the SPDs, in consultation with the Committee Chair.
- iv) Members agreed to permit the modified SPDs to be presented to Full Council for adoption In May/June 2026.

30. Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) 2024/25 - *Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services*

Type of decision

Non-key decision

Purpose of report

To inform Neighbourhood Services Committee of the Hartlepool Local Plan Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) 2024/25 attached at appendix 1 of the report.

Issues for consideration

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services presented the report and identified a number of areas of significance (detailed in the report) for the following –

- Housing
- Economy, employment, town centre and tourism
- Environmental quality
- Countryside/Rural Area and the Historic Environment
- Waste or renewable energy
- Sustainable Transport and Access to the Countryside
- Neighbourhood Plans, Community Infrastructure Levy, Duty to Cooperate and S106 Developer Contributions

A member noted that the town centre vacancy rate was increasing and that this was now the responsibility of the TVCA and the Hartlepool Development Corporation, they added that the TVCA needed to reenergise the shopping centre.

Decision

- i) Members noted the content of the report and endorsed it as part of the Local Development Framework.

31. Selective Licensing Update – *Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To update Members on the progress in assessing the viability of introducing a new selective licensing scheme in Hartlepool.

Issues for consideration

The Assistant Director (regulatory services) provided Members with an overview of the report. They detailed that the Housing Act 2004 (the Act) introduced a discretionary power for Local Authorities to introduce Selective Licensing (SL) schemes for a five-year period in areas which are experiencing one or more of the following conditions:

- Low housing demand (or is likely to become such an area)
- A significant and persistent problem caused by anti-social behaviour
- Poor housing conditions
- High levels of deprivation
- High levels of crime
- High levels of migration

The purpose of such a scheme is to improve standards of property management in the private rented sector. The process for the scheme was outlined, including that fees must be ring fenced to fund the resources for the delivery of the scheme. Members noted there had previously been 2 selective licensing schemes in Hartlepool, as detailed in the report.

To ensure a robust evidence base to understand the current state of Hartlepool's housing stock and enable an in-depth analysis of issues which would determine whether and where selective licensing would be a viable option, Metastreet Ltd have been commissioned to undertake an independent detailed review across the borough. This would assess housing stressors relating to key tenures, particularly the Private Rented Sector (PRS).

Members were advised that the Housing Standards team had been expanded to provide capacity to undertake the feasibility work. Data collection has commenced within and external to the Council. Meetings have been held with colleagues from other Local Authorities in the region and work has started to understand the nature of other schemes, the scale of such schemes, resources required and fee levels.

An action plan for this work has been produced, and a timeline of next steps was detailed within the report. A further detailed report, to be presented to members in June/July 2026, will set out the selective licensing designation process and include the key findings from the Metastreet Ltd report and data analysis. It will also set out alternative options.

This report will seek approval for the next steps including further exploration of alternative options and/or whether to undertake consultation on a proposed selective licensing scheme.

To proceed to consultation, the following will be considered:

- a. Summary of evidence
- b. Proposed Licence conditions
- c. Proposed fee structure
- d. Map(s) of proposed area(s)

- e. Details of the strategic fit
- f. Evidence that we have looked at alternative options

In the discussion that followed the Chair noted the work of Councillor Oliver, former Chair of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services Committee, in bringing this work to the forefront.

A Member commented the timeline seemed reasonable but that this issue should have been explored a long time ago.

Decision

- i) Members noted the report.

32. Any other business which the Chairman considers urgent

The Chair noted that a review of gritting routes would be undertaken over the summer in preparation for Winter 2026.

The meeting concluded at 6.55pm

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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