

Peterlee

County Durham

'Mark One' New Town – Designated 10 March 1948

Situated on what was the richest seam of the Durham coalfield, Peterlee was conceived to provide housing and a better living environment for the local scattered rural population and for colliery workers, and to provide a centre offering commercial, social and cultural facilities. Peterlee was named after a former colliery worker, Peter Lee, who later became a councillor campaigning for better living conditions for colliery workers. Burthold Lubetkin was originally appointed as architect-planner, but he resigned in 1950 following frustrated discussions with the National Coal Board. Located in the A19 corridor, today Peterlee is a town with a strong manufacturing base, constituting the third-largest market in County Durham. It is tightly constrained to the south, east and west.



Key facts:

- **Location:** 14 kilometres east of Durham, 16 kilometres south of Sunderland, 19 kilometres south of Newcastle.
- **2011 Census population:** 20,164, in 8,514 households.¹
- **Local authority:** Durham County Council.
- **Local Plan status:** Peterlee has been part of the unitary Durham County Council area since 2009. The Development Plan is the forthcoming County Durham Plan. Saved policies from Easington Local Plan (adopted 2001) are a material consideration.

New Town designation:

- **Designated:** 10 March 1948.
- **Designated area:** 950 hectares, revised several times up to 12,000 hectares.
- **Intended population:** 30,000 (population at designation: 200).
- **Development Corporation:** Aimed to provide homes and services for poor-quality and badly served settlements; to provide a recreational and commercial centre; and to develop a balanced community and provide employment for female workers and those not employed in the colliery. Development Corporation wound up 31 March 1988.

Housing, deprivation and health:

- The proportion of homes in Peterlee that are owner-occupied is comparable to the UK average and higher than the UK New Towns average. The proportion of socially rented households is 6% higher than the UK average and 3% higher than the UK New Towns average. The proportion of households in private rent is 2% and 6% lower than the UK New Towns and UK averages, respectively.
- Peterlee has pockets of deprivation, with 9% fewer households not deprived in any dimension compared with the English New Towns and England averages. Figures for households deprived in two, three or four dimensions are also higher than the English New Towns and England averages, by up to 9.5% (for those deprived in two dimensions).

- The 2011 Census reported that 'general health' in Peterlee is below UK New Towns and UK averages – around 7% fewer declared themselves to be in 'very good' health, and around 4% more declared 'bad' health.

Employment/economic profile:

- Peterlee has strong links with Sunderland and Hartlepool – which could be further boosted by a new railway station on the existing coastal line, with a site identified at Horden.
- Car parts maker GT Group is the town's biggest employer.
- The proportion of residents aged 16-75 who are economically active (62.5%) is lower than the UK average (69.9%). Unemployment is slightly higher (5.4% compared with 4.4%) and long-term sickness is much higher (9.6% compared with 4.0%) than the national average levels.
- Within the North East LEP.

Development Corporation legacy:

- The guiding principles of the masterplan are still followed today, but details have changed with a changing economy.
- The issue of covenants is problematic in the regeneration of some of the earliest-built areas.
- The critical mass of the New Town approach has facilitated development and encouraged private sector investment.
- The absence of a high street is considered to affect the vitality of the town centre today.
- A positive sense of space and foresight is a legacy of the New Town approach. The town incorporates a very large amount of green space, which is valued within the town.

Key issues for the future:

- Accommodating housing expansion and future growth.
- Overcoming constraints within the town centre.
- Retaining and developing a balanced employment offer.
- Planning for a new supermarket.
- The coastal area's multiple designations – Heritage Coast and a European biodiversity Natura 2000 site.

¹ Totals for the following wards: Peterlee East, Peterlee West, Horden, Wingate, Shotton

Did you know?

The Victor Pasmore designed Apollo Pavilion (named after the contemporary space missions) is considered an iconic example of 1960s public art and was listed Grade II* by English Heritage in 2011.