

## Comment

<b>Agent</b>	Mrs Jo-Anne Garrick (1250825)
<b>Email Address</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Jo-Anne Garrick Ltd
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Consultee</b>	(1250826)
<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Event Name</b>	Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 (Regulation 19)
<b>Comment by</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council ( - 1250826)
<b>Comment ID</b>	DBLPPS154
<b>Response Date</b>	15/09/20 13:39
<b>Consultation Point</b>	Policy SH 1 Settlement Hierarchy (Strategic Policy) ( <a href="#">View</a> )
<b>Status</b>	Processed
<b>Submission Type</b>	Web
<b>Version</b>	0.3
<b>Files</b>	<a href="#">Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Development Plan</a>
<b>Question 1a</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan is Legally compliant?</b>	No
<b>Question 1b</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan sound?</b>	No
<b>Question 1c</b>	

Do you consider that the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Cooperate? Yes

## Question 2

Do you consider that this part of the Local Plan is unsound because it is not: (tick all that apply) Effective

## Question 3a

### Your Comments

Please give details of why you consider that this part of the Local Plan is not legally compliant or unsound or fails to comply with the Duty to Cooperate.

Whilst Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council support the intentions of the proposed settlement hierarchy, this strategic policy is not effective as it does not form the basis for the spatial approach of the local plan.

The parish council agree that the local plan should protect and where possible enhance the character of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent as rural villages. Also, that the focus of new development should be to make efficient and sustainable use of existing buildings and infill opportunities.

This approach accords with the vision of the adopted Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan (2019) which is:

“Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent villages will maintain their individual identities as sustainable, thriving communities, accessible to people of all ages. The Parish will remain a gateway to Darlington, but visually distinct and separate from the conurbation.

New development will be of a scale and design which respects the rural setting of the Parish, conserves and enhances its unique rural and riverside environment, open spaces and heritage, for the benefit of current and future generations.”

However, completely contrary to this approach, the plan proposes that 1520 new houses should be built within the parish of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.

Therefore, the policy is not effective as it will not be delivered by the proposals contained within the local plan.

[1] <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/9090/lcm-np-final.pdf>

## Question 4

### Changes Sought

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The strategic approach of the local plan should be amended to reflect the settlement hierarchy set out within policy SH1. Correctly applying the settlement hierarchy would result in changes to:

- The neighbourhood area housing requirements set out within policy H1 – this should be amended to reflect the level of housing that is appropriate for the rural parish;

- . The strategic housing allocations at Coniscliffe Park, identified within policy H2, should be removed; and
  - . The identification of a rural gap between Low Coniscliffe and Darlington to conserve the rural settlement pattern which is identified as important to the character of the local area.
- The parish council's specific representations on policies H1, H2 and ENV3, provide further details on these matters.

## Question 5

### Attendance at Examination Hearings

**If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate in the examination hearings?** Yes, I wish to participate at the examination hearings

## Question 5a

### Participation at Examination Hearings

*Please note the inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the examination hearings.*

**If you wish to participate at the examination hearings, please outline why you consider it to be necessary?**

Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council represent the views of residents of the parish. The parish council have a detailed knowledge of the parish and a full understanding of the impact of the proposals contained within the local plan and can provide the inspector with local detail to inform the examination process.

## Question 6

**Do you request to be notified that the Local Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination under section 22(3) of the regulations and to be notified of the adoption of the Local Plan?** Yes, I request to be notified

## Question 7

Please **upload any supporting documents** here. Please do not include any signatures or other personal data such as home addresses which you would not wish to see published on the Council's website.

Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood  
Development Plan

## Comment

<b>Agent</b>	Mrs Jo-Anne Garrick (1250825)
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<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Consultee</b>	(1250826)
<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Event Name</b>	Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 (Regulation 19)
<b>Comment by</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council ( - 1250826)
<b>Comment ID</b>	DBLPPS155
<b>Response Date</b>	15/09/20 14:40
<b>Consultation Point</b>	Policy H 1 Housing Requirement (Strategic Policy) ( <a href="#">View</a> )
<b>Status</b>	Processed
<b>Submission Type</b>	Web
<b>Version</b>	0.8
<b>Files</b>	<a href="#">Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan Housing Needs Assessment</a>
<b>Question 1a</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan is Legally compliant?</b>	No
<b>Question 1b</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan sound?</b>	No
<b>Question 2</b>	

**Do you consider that this part of the Local Plan is unsound because it is not: (tick all that apply)**

- . Positively prepared
- . Effective
- . Justified
- . Consistent with national policy

### Question 3a

#### Your Comments

**Please give details of why you consider that this part of the Local Plan is not legally compliant or unsound or fails to comply with the Duty to Cooperate.**

#### **Legal compliance**

To be legally compliant the local plan must meet a number of procedural tests. Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council (LC&MPC) consider that policy H1 has not been prepared in accordance with the statement of community involvement (SCI). In addition, that it does not fulfil the duty to cooperate.

One of the principles of the adopted SCI is that the council will ensure that involvement of the public and other stakeholders is effective. Paragraph 6.2 explains that the process of preparing the local plan will be transparent, so that everyone can see how the policies have developed. Despite this commitment, it is not clear how comments made on the previous drafts of the local plan have been considered by the council. It appears that the objections by LC&MPC to the proposed housing requirement have been ignored. LC&MPC believe the process is not transparent; therefore, the local plan has not been prepared in accordance with the SCI.

In order to fulfil the duty to cooperate, the council must demonstrate that the duty has been undertaken appropriately. The council has not published a duty to cooperate statement or any information to set out how it has engaged with neighbouring local planning authorities on the approach to housing and other strategic matters. Paragraph 1.6.3 of the proposed submission local plan states that 'a full statement of the actions taken by the council under the duty to cooperate will be published in statements of common ground alongside the local plan'. These statements are not available for review or comment. The proposed submission local plan therefore fails to demonstrate how the duty has been met.

#### **Soundness**

To be considered 'sound' the local plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. LC&MPC fully support the representation from the CPRE who have expressed significant concern regarding the housing requirement proposed within policy H1.

LC&MPC consider that policy H1 is not sound for the following reasons:

##### Positively prepared

To meet this requirement, the local plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, consistent with achieving sustainable development.

There are significant unresolved objections to the overall level of housing growth that is proposed within policy H1. The level of growth appears to range between 422 and 492 net additional dwellings per annum. Crucially, paragraph 6.1.3 of the local plan explains that using the national standard method for calculating housing needs results in a figure of 177 dwellings per annum for the borough. LC&MPC fully acknowledge that the government supports the provision of housing above levels generated through use of the standard method to support economic growth. However, national guidance is clear that any increase is realistic and justified.

The level of additional housing growth proposed for the borough is excessive, therefore not realistic and very limited justification is provided for this significant difference.

Policy H1 also includes a housing requirement for the five neighbourhood plan areas within the borough. This housing requirement should also be objectively assessed. No information is included within the local plan or its supporting evidence base to explain how these figures have been calculated. The proposed housing requirement for LC&M neighbourhood area is 1,520.

The LC&M Neighbourhood Plan[1] was supported by 94.7% of those voting in the referendum and was made in June 2019. The plan was informed by a robust evidence base[2] including a housing needs assessment (HNA)[3], which was undertaken by AECOM as part of the government's technical support package. The HNA was prepared in accordance with good practice guidance and therefore estimated the OAN for the plan area by considering five different sources:

- . The adopted Local Plan requirement (2011 Core Strategy) – which identifies a housing requirement of 8,675 homes for Darlington as a whole over the plan period 2004 to 2026. The proportional share for the Plan area equates to 50 dwellings between 2017 to 2036;
- . The emerging Local Plan (Strategic Housing Market Assessment) – which identifies an objectively assessed need for Darlington of 11,160 homes between 2011 and 2036. The proportional share for the Plan area equates to 65 dwellings between 2017 to 2036;
- . National household projections (2014 based) – which identifies the total number of households for Darlington as 283 from 2011 to 2031, which would equate to 19 new dwellings between 2017 and 2036;
- . Past dwelling completion rates (2001 to 2011 and 2011+) - between 2001 and 2011 there was an increase of 79 homes in the Plan area, an annual increase of 8 homes. Between 2011 and 31 March 2016, no new dwellings were completed. Taking an average over the period 2001 and 2017 provides a figure of 4 dwellings per annum, equating to 76 new dwellings between 2017 and 2036; and
- . Draft standard national methodology (2017) – based on the proposed approach the annual requirement would equate to 1 new dwelling per annum, 19 new dwellings between 2017 and 2036.

No consideration appears to have been given to this robust local HNA in the calculation of the neighbourhood area housing requirements for the LC&M neighbourhood area.

Policy LCM12 of the Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan aims to create and maintain a balanced and sustainable community. It allocates three housing sites to deliver 25 new dwellings over the plan period to meet existing and future needs.

It is clear, therefore that both the housing requirement for the borough and LC&M parish are not an objective assessment of development needs and therefore not positively prepared.

#### Justified

To meet this requirement, the local plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate, robust and credible evidence. The local plan should show how its policies and proposals help to ensure that the social, environmental, economic and resource objectives of sustainability will be achieved.

As a result of the information outlined above, LC&MPC submit that the local plan is not supported by a robust evidence base to justify the vastly inflated housing numbers proposed both borough wide and for the LC&M parish.

#### Effective

To meet this requirement, the local plan must be deliverable over its plan period, embracing sound infrastructure delivery planning and based on effective joint working on cross boundary strategic priorities.

As previously outlined, the council has not published details of cross boundary discussions that have been undertaken as part of the duty to cooperate. It is therefore not possible to conclude that the housing requirement is based on effective joint working.

LC&MPC also consider that the justification for the use of both objectively assessed need figures and target housing figures, or the purpose of identifying two separate figures within policy H1 is unclear. Given this lack of clarity, it is considered that this would result in the implementation of the policy being ineffective.

#### Consistent with national policy

To meet this requirement, the local plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF.

As detailed above, the council has not provided evidence to justify the significantly inflated housing requirement figures. Robust justification is a requirement of national guidance. Policy H1 is therefore not consistent with national policy.

In conclusion, both the overall housing figure and that proposed for the LC&M neighbourhood area contained within Policy H1 are not sound because they are not positively prepared, justified, effective or consistent with national policy.

[1] <https://tinyurl.com/y5eg6c2d> (LC&M Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2036)

[2] <https://tinyurl.com/y2j9rgfc> (LC&M Neighbourhood Plan)

[3] <https://tinyurl.com/yymeknos> (LC&M Housing Needs Assessment)

#### Question 4

##### Changes Sought

**Please Note** your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested change, as there will not normally be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation at publication stage. There is the opportunity to attach Word or PDF files before submitting your comment.

**After this stage, further submissions will only be at the request of the Inspector, based on the matters and issues identified for examination.**

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Reduction of the housing requirement to 177 net additional dwellings per annum to reflect the national standard method.

Reduction of the neighbourhood area housing requirement for LC&M to between 19 and 76 dwellings over the plan period, which reflects the findings of the LC&M HNA.

Clarification regarding the use of two housing figures for the borough to ensure effective implementation.

#### Question 5

##### Attendance at Examination Hearings

**If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate in the examination hearings?** Yes, I wish to participate at the examination hearings

##### Question 5a

##### Participation at Examination Hearings

**Please note** the inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the examination hearings.

**If you wish to participate at the examination hearings, please outline why you consider it to be necessary?**

Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council represent the views of residents of the parish. The parish council have a detailed knowledge of the parish and a full understanding of the impact of the proposals contained within the local plan and can provide the inspector with local detail to inform the examination process.

#### Question 6

**Do you request to be notified that the Local Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination under section 22(3) of the regulations and to be notified of the adoption of the Local Plan?** Yes, I request to be notified

**Question 7**

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Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan  
Housing Needs Assessment

**Document Change Required**

No

**Action/Change to be made**

Duty to cooperate statement and statements of common ground to be submitted with the local plan.

## Comment

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<b>Consultee</b>	(1250826)
<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Event Name</b>	Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 (Regulation 19)
<b>Comment by</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council ( - 1250826)
<b>Comment ID</b>	DBLPPS156
<b>Response Date</b>	15/09/20 14:40
<b>Consultation Point</b>	Policy H 2 Housing Allocations (Strategic Policy) ( <a href="#">View</a> )
<b>Status</b>	Processed
<b>Submission Type</b>	Web
<b>Version</b>	0.8
<b>Files</b>	<a href="#">EIA Screening Direction</a>
<b>Question 1a</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan is Legally compliant?</b>	No
<b>Question 1b</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan sound?</b>	No
<b>Question 1c</b>	

**Do you consider that the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Cooperate?** No

## Question 2

**Do you consider that this part of the Local Plan is unsound because it is not: (tick all that apply)**

- Positively prepared
- Effective
- Justified
- Consistent with national policy

## Question 3a

### Your Comments

**Please give details of why you consider that this part of the Local Plan is not legally compliant or unsound or fails to comply with the Duty to Cooperate.**

#### **Legal compliance**

To be legally compliant the local plan must meet a number of procedural tests. Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council (LC&MPC) consider that policy H2 has not been prepared in accordance with the statement of community involvement (SCI). In addition, that it does not fulfil the duty to cooperate.

One of the principles of the adopted SCI is that the council will ensure that involvement of the public and other stakeholders is effective. Paragraph 6.2 explains that the process of preparing the local plan will be transparent, so that everyone can see how the policies have developed. Despite this commitment, it is not clear how comments made on the previous drafts of the local plan have been considered by the council. It appears that the objections by LC&MPC to the proposed allocation of two strategic sites at Coniscliffe Park (site 41 and site 249) have been ignored. LC&MPC believe the process is not transparent; therefore, the local plan has not been prepared in accordance with the SCI.

In order to fulfil the duty to cooperate, the council must demonstrate that the duty has been undertaken appropriately. The council has not published a duty to cooperate statement or any information to set out how it has engaged with neighbouring local planning authorities on the approach to housing and other strategic matters. Paragraph 1.6.3 of the proposed submission local plan states that 'a full statement of the actions taken by the council under the duty to cooperate will be published in statements of common ground alongside the local plan'. These statements are not available for review or comment. The proposed submission local plan therefore fails to demonstrate how the duty has been met.

#### **Soundness**

To be considered 'sound' the local plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. LC&MPC consider that policy H2 is not sound for the following reasons:

##### Positively prepared

To meet this requirement, the local plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, consistent with achieving sustainable development.

As explained within the LC&MPC response to policy H1, there are significant unresolved objections to the overall level of housing growth proposed. As a result of this vastly inflated housing figure, the local plan proposes to allocate an unnecessarily high level of housing sites.

It is clear, therefore that both the housing requirement for the borough and LC&M parish are not an objective assessment of development needs and therefore not positively prepared.

##### Justified

To meet this requirement, the local plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate, robust and credible evidence. The local plan should demonstrate how its policies and proposals help to ensure that the social, environmental, economic and resource objectives of sustainability will be achieved.

The need for the allocation of the two strategic sites at Coniscliffe Park has not been justified within the local plan or its supporting evidence base. The only justification for the sites appears to be to deliver the excessive housing requirement. The CPRE response to the local plan, which LC&MPC fully support, clearly illustrates that not all of the sites which are proposed to be allocated are required to meet the housing target. Furthermore, if the housing requirement were set using the national standard method, no housing allocations would be necessary.

LC&MPC also submit that Coniscliffe Park has not been justified as the most appropriate location for housing development. It will be physically detached from the urban area, resulting in the merger of Darlington and Low Coniscliffe. This is in clear conflict with the vision, aims and objectives of the local plan and indeed policy SH1 (settlement hierarchy).

#### Effective

To meet this requirement, the local plan must be deliverable over its plan period, embracing sound infrastructure delivery planning and based on effective joint working on cross boundary strategic priorities.

Whilst it is noted that Appendix B of the local plan provides guidance related to each housing allocation, LC&MPC are concerned that the plan contains no clear policy to guide the future development of over 1,500 new homes at Coniscliffe Park. Without this policy guidance the proposed strategic allocations are not effective.

The Secretary of State Screening Direction under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (attached) regarding the proposed residential development at Coniscliffe Park concluded that the proposed developments would represent a major physical change in the locality, sufficient to indicate that they are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

As part of the preparation of the now made Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan (2019)[1], the parish council assessed the suitability of sites 41 and 249[2]. The conclusion for the assessment of site 41 was:

*'The landscape has a high agricultural value and provides for public amenity and the loss of high value rural and amenity landscape would be highly detrimental to the people of Darlington. The impact on existing road network would be highly detrimental. The National grid pylons split the site. Local schools and basic services would not be capable of providing places for such a major development. This development in this location is not sustainable.'*

The conclusion for the assessment of site 249 was:

*'The landscape has a high agricultural value and provides for public amenity and the loss of highly valued rural landscape would be extremely detrimental and significant. Local schools and basic services would not be able to provide for such a major development. The biggest concern is the existing road infrastructure in particular Carmel Road, Coniscliffe Road, Woodland Road and Staindrop Road being incapable of being modified to cope with the highly significant increase in traffic and resultant congestion, increased pollution therefore posing a risk to public health and safety. This development in this location is not sustainable.'*

Furthermore, the proposed allocation of Coniscliffe Park will not accord with the vision of the plan to maintain the identity of Darlington as a cohesive historic market town.

#### Consistent with national policy

To meet this requirement, the local plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF.

As detailed in response to policy H1, the council has not provided evidence to justify the significantly inflated housing requirement figures. Robust justification is a requirement of national guidance. The identification of sites to deliver the inappropriate housing figures is therefore contrary to national policy and guidance.

Paragraph 117 of the NPPF requires planning policies to promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment. It requires the strategic approach of policies to make as much use as possible of previously developed land. It is submitted that the local plan has not demonstrated why previously developed land cannot be used to deliver housing, prior to the development of greenfield sites. Therefore, contrary to the NPPF.

Paragraph 170 of the NPPF is clear that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. It includes a number of criteria to explain how this can be achieved. This includes protecting sites of biodiversity value, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. In addition, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and its wider benefits, these benefits include that of agricultural land. The development of Coniscliffe Park will result in the loss of agricultural land and habitats for wildlife, therefore not according with paragraph 170.

In conclusion, the proposed identification of strategic sites at Coniscliffe Park (sites 41 and 249) within policy H2 are not sound because they are not positively prepared, justified, effective or consistent with national policy.

[1] <https://tinyurl.com/y5eg6c2d> (LC&M Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2036)

[2] <https://tinyurl.com/y5eg6c2d> (LC&M Neighbourhood Plan)

#### Question 4

##### Changes Sought

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Removal of the strategic allocations at Coniscliffe Park.

If it is resolved through the examination process that the allocations are necessary and justified then the local plan should provide detailed policy guidance to ensure the effective delivery of the strategic housing sites.

#### Question 5

##### Attendance at Examination Hearings

**If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate in the examination hearings?** Yes, I wish to participate at the examination hearings

##### Question 5a

##### Participation at Examination Hearings

**Please note** the inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the examination hearings.

**If you wish to participate at the examination hearings, please outline why you consider it to be necessary?**

Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council represent the views of residents of the parish. The parish council have a detailed knowledge of the parish and a full understanding of the impact of the proposals contained within the local plan and can provide the inspector with local detail to inform the examination process.

**Question 6**

**Do you request to be notified that the Local Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination under section 22(3) of the regulations and to be notified of the adoption of the Local Plan?** Yes, I request to be notified

**Question 7**

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EIA Screening Direction

**Document Change Required**

No

## Comment

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<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Event Name</b>	Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 (Regulation 19)
<b>Comment by</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council ( - 1250826)
<b>Comment ID</b>	DBLPPS157
<b>Response Date</b>	15/09/20 13:41
<b>Consultation Point</b>	Policy ENV 3 Local Landscape Character (Strategic Policy) ( <a href="#">View</a> )
<b>Status</b>	Processed
<b>Submission Type</b>	Web
<b>Version</b>	0.4
<b>Question 1a</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan is Legally compliant?</b>	No
<b>Question 1b</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan sound?</b>	No
<b>Question 1c</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Cooperate?</b>	No

## Question 2

Do you consider that this part of the Local Plan is . Positively prepared  
unsound because it is not: (tick all that apply) . Effective  
. Justified  
. Consistent with national policy

## Question 3a

### Your Comments

Please give details of why you consider that this part of the Local Plan is not legally compliant or unsound or fails to comply with the Duty to Cooperate.

#### Legal compliance

To be legally compliant the local plan must meet a number of procedural tests. Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council (LC&MPC) consider that policy ENV3 has not been prepared in accordance with the statement of community involvement (SCI).

One of the principles of the adopted SCI is that the council will ensure that involvement of the public and other stakeholders is effective. Paragraph 6.2 explains that the process of preparing the local plan will be transparent, so that everyone can see how the policies have developed. Despite this commitment, it is not clear how comments made on the previous drafts of the local plan have been considered by the council. It appears that the objections by LC&MPC to the lack of designation of a rural gap between Darlington and Low Coniscliffe have been ignored. LC&MPC believe the process is not transparent; therefore, the local plan has not been prepared in accordance with the SCI.

#### Soundness

To be considered 'sound' the local plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. LC&MPC consider that policy ENV3 is not sound for the following reasons:

##### Positively prepared

To meet this requirement, the local plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, consistent with achieving sustainable development.

Whilst LC&MPC strongly support the principles of policy ENV3, to protect and improve the character and local distinctiveness of the borough, the PC object to the notable omission of reference to retaining the openness and green infrastructure functions of the rural gap between Darlington and the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.

The vision of the LC&M neighbourhood plan (June 2019)[1], which was supported by 94.7% of those voting in the referendum, is clear that the villages will maintain their individual identities and that whilst the parish will remain a gateway to Darlington, it will be visually distinct and separate from the conurbation.

Not identifying a rural gap between the conurbation and the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent undermines both the vision of the neighbourhood plan and the vision of the local plan and is contrary to the principles of sustainable development.

##### Justified

To meet this requirement, the local plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate, robust and credible evidence. The local plan should show how its policies and proposals help to ensure that the social, environmental, economic and resource objectives of sustainability will be achieved.

The importance of the rural villages to the character of the borough is highlighted within the vision and objectives of the local plan. The lack of identification of a rural gap in such close proximity to the conurbation, is therefore not justified.

##### Effective

To meet this requirement, the local plan must be deliverable over its plan period, embracing sound infrastructure delivery planning and based on effective joint working on cross boundary strategic priorities.

Policy ENV3 seeks to maintain the character and local distinctiveness of the borough. The lack of identification of a rural gap between the conurbation and the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent will result in the policy not being effective.

#### Consistent with national policy

To meet this requirement, the local plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF.

By not identifying a rural gap between the conurbation and the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent there is a significant risk that future development within this area would not protect and enhance the landscape character, setting and identity of the area. In addition, it could risk the loss of connectivity of the green infrastructure network, as well as the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. The approach is therefore not consistent with national policy.

In conclusion, the lack of identification of a rural gap between Darlington and the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent by policy ENV3 is not sound because it is not positively prepared, justified, effective or consistent with national policy.

[1] <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/9090/lcm-np-final.pdf>

## Question 4

### Changes Sought

**Please Note** your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested change, as there will not normally be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation at publication stage. There is the opportunity to attach Word or PDF files before submitting your comment.

**After this stage, further submissions will only be at the request of the Inspector, based on the matters and issues identified for examination.**

**Please set out what change(s) to the Local Plan you consider necessary to make it legally compliant or sound. You will need to say why this change will make the Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording for any policy or text.**

Add the gap between the conurbation and the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent to the list of rural gaps identified in policy ENV3.

## Question 5

### Attendance at Examination Hearings

**If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate in the examination hearings?** Yes, I wish to participate at the examination hearings

### Question 5a

#### Participation at Examination Hearings

**Please note** the inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the examination hearings.

**If you wish to participate at the examination hearings, please outline why you consider it to be necessary?**

Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council represent the views of residents of the parish. The parish council have a detailed knowledge of the parish and a full understanding of the impact of the proposals contained within the local plan and can provide the inspector with local detail to inform the examination process.

#### Question 6

**Do you request to be notified that the Local Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination under section 22(3) of the regulations and to be notified of the adoption of the Local Plan?** Yes, I request to be notified

## Comment

<b>Agent</b>	Mrs Jo-Anne Garrick (1250825)
<b>Email Address</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Jo-Anne Garrick Ltd
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Consultee</b>	(1250826)
<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Event Name</b>	Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 (Regulation 19)
<b>Comment by</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council ( - 1250826)
<b>Comment ID</b>	DBLPPS158
<b>Response Date</b>	15/09/20 13:41
<b>Consultation Point</b>	APPENDIX C DARLINGTON'S HERITAGE ASSETS ( <a href="#">View</a> )
<b>Status</b>	Processed
<b>Submission Type</b>	Web
<b>Version</b>	0.7
<b>Question 1a</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan is Legally compliant?</b>	No
<b>Question 1b</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan sound?</b>	No
<b>Question 1c</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Cooperate?</b>	No

## Question 2

Do you consider that this part of the Local Plan is  Effective  
unsound because it is not: (tick all that apply)

## Question 3a

### Your Comments

**Please give details of why you consider that this part of the Local Plan is not legally compliant or unsound or fails to comply with the Duty to Cooperate.**

Within Low Coniscliffe there is a bronze age burial site, which is a scheduled monument. This should be included within appendix c.

## Question 4

### Changes Sought

**Please Note** your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested change, as there will not normally be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation at publication stage. There is the opportunity to attach Word or PDF files before submitting your comment.

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**Please set out what change(s) to the Local Plan you consider necessary to make it legally compliant or sound. You will need to say why this change will make the Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording for any policy or text.**

Inclusion of the Bronze Age Burial Site in Low Coniscliffe within Appendix C – Summary of Designated Assets, under the 'Scheduled Monuments' heading

## Question 5

### Attendance at Examination Hearings

If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate in the examination hearings?  Yes, I wish to participate at the examination hearings

## Question 5a

### Participation at Examination Hearings

**Please note** the inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the examination hearings.

**If you wish to participate at the examination hearings, please outline why you consider it to be necessary?**

Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council represent the views of residents of the parish. The parish council have a detailed knowledge of the parish and a full understanding of the impact of the proposals contained within the local plan and can provide the inspector with local detail to inform the examination process.

## Question 6

**Do you request to be notified that the Local Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination under section 22(3) of the regulations and to be notified of the adoption of the Local Plan?**

Yes, I request to be notified

## Comment

<b>Agent</b>	Mrs Jo-Anne Garrick (1250825)
<b>Email Address</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Jo-Anne Garrick Ltd
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Consultee</b>	(1250826)
<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Event Name</b>	Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 (Regulation 19)
<b>Comment by</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council ( - 1250826)
<b>Comment ID</b>	DBLPPS159
<b>Response Date</b>	15/09/20 14:42
<b>Consultation Point</b>	Policy H 3 Development Limits (Strategic Policy) ( <a href="#">View</a> )
<b>Status</b>	Processed
<b>Submission Type</b>	Web
<b>Version</b>	0.7
<b>Files</b>	LC&M Neighbourhood Plan - Settlement Boundary Background Paper
<b>Question 1a</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan is Legally compliant?</b>	No
<b>Question 1b</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan sound?</b>	No
<b>Question 1c</b>	

**Do you consider that the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Cooperate?** No

## Question 2

**Do you consider that this part of the Local Plan is unsound because it is not: (tick all that apply)** . Effective  
. Justified

## Question 3a

### Your Comments

**Please give details of why you consider that this part of the Local Plan is not legally compliant or unsound or fails to comply with the Duty to Cooperate.**

#### **Legal compliance**

To be legally compliant the local plan must meet a number of procedural tests. Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council (LC&MPC) consider that policies map 15 has not been prepared in accordance with the statement of community involvement (SCI).

One of the principles of the adopted SCI is that the council will ensure that involvement of the public and other stakeholders is effective. Paragraph 6.2 explains that the process of preparing the local plan will be transparent, so that everyone can see how the policies have developed. Despite this commitment, it is not clear how comments made on the previous drafts of the local plan have been considered by the council. It appears that the objections by LC&MPC to the proposed settlement boundaries for the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent have been ignored. LC&MPC believe the process is not transparent; therefore, the local plan has not been prepared in accordance with the SCI.

#### **Soundness**

To be considered 'sound' the local plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. LC&MPC consider that policy H3 and policies map 15 is not sound for the following reasons:

##### Justified

To meet this requirement, the local plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate, robust and credible evidence. The local plan should show how its policies and proposals help to ensure that the social, environmental, economic and resource objectives of sustainability will be achieved.

As part of the preparation of the LC&M neighbourhood plan[1], the parish council reviewed the settlement boundaries of the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent. The new settlement boundaries were informed by a settlement boundary methodology and evidence contained within a background paper[2]. The boundaries, which were tested at examination, were drawn to support the sustainable growth of the villages, taking into account extant permissions and establishing a logical shape to the edge of the villages.

The settlement envelopes proposed on policy map 15 do not appear to be supported by evidence. No details have been provided as to how they have been defined and no consideration has been given to the significant work undertaken by LC&MPC. The key omissions are the lack of inclusion of the properties within Merrybent that lie to the east of the A1(M) and housing sites that lie to the north west and south of the village. The proposed boundaries are therefore not justified.

##### Effective

To meet this requirement, the local plan must be deliverable over its plan period, embracing sound infrastructure delivery planning and based on effective joint working on cross boundary strategic priorities.

The lack of consistency between the boundaries shown within the neighbourhood plan and local plan will result in confusion and therefore implementation will be ineffective.

In conclusion, the proposed settlement boundaries for Merrybent on policies map 15 is not sound because they are not justified or effective.

[1] <https://tinyurl.com/y5eg6c2d> (LC&M Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2036)

[2] <https://tinyurl.com/y647jhye> (LC&M Neighbourhood Plan)

#### Question 4

##### Changes Sought

**Please Note** your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested change, as there will not normally be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation at publication stage. There is the opportunity to attach Word or PDF files before submitting your comment.

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**Please set out what change(s) to the Local Plan you consider necessary to make it legally compliant or sound. You will need to say why this change will make the Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording for any policy or text.**

The settlement boundaries for the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent on policies map 15 should be amended to reflect those within the made neighbourhood plan.

#### Question 5

##### Attendance at Examination Hearings

**If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate in the examination hearings?** Yes, I wish to participate at the examination hearings

##### Question 5a

##### Participation at Examination Hearings

**Please note** the inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the examination hearings.

**If you wish to participate at the examination hearings, please outline why you consider it to be necessary?**

Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council represent the views of residents of the parish. The parish council have a detailed knowledge of the parish and a full understanding of the impact of the proposals contained within the local plan and can provide the inspector with local detail to inform the examination process.

#### Question 6

**Do you request to be notified that the Local Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination under section 22(3) of the regulations and to be notified of the adoption of the Local Plan?** Yes, I request to be notified

#### Question 7

Please **upload any supporting documents** here. Please do not include any signatures or other personal data such as home addresses which you would not wish to see published on the Council's website.

LC&M Neighbourhood Plan - Settlement Boundary  
Background Paper

**Document Change Required**

Yes

**Action/Change to be made**

Consider altering development limits to match LC & M NP policies map (including the small development at Merrybent).

Prepare settlement boundary methodology.

## Comment

<b>Agent</b>	Mrs Jo-Anne Garrick (1250825)
<b>Email Address</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Jo-Anne Garrick Ltd
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Consultee</b>	(1250826)
<b>Company / Organisation</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<b>Event Name</b>	Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 (Regulation 19)
<b>Comment by</b>	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council ( - 1250826)
<b>Comment ID</b>	DBLPPS160
<b>Response Date</b>	15/09/20 14:43
<b>Consultation Point</b>	Map 4.1 Key Diagram ( <a href="#">View</a> )
<b>Status</b>	Processed
<b>Submission Type</b>	Web
<b>Version</b>	0.7
<b>Files</b>	<a href="#">EIA Screening Direction (1)</a>
<b>Question 1a</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan is Legally compliant?</b>	No
<b>Question 1b</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan sound?</b>	No
<b>Question 1c</b>	
<b>Do you consider that the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Cooperate?</b>	No

## Question 2

**Do you consider that this part of the Local Plan is unsound because it is not: (tick all that apply)**

- Positively prepared
- Justified
- Consistent with national policy

## Question 3a

### Your Comments

**Please give details of why you consider that this part of the Local Plan is not legally compliant or unsound or fails to comply with the Duty to Cooperate.**

This representation relates to policies map 9, sites 41 and 249 - however it is not possible to provide comment on the policies maps online.

#### **Legal compliance**

To be legally compliant the local plan must meet a number of procedural tests. Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council (LC&MPC) consider that the proposed allocation of sites 41 and 249 on policies map 9 have not been prepared in accordance with the statement of community involvement (SCI). In addition, that this does not fulfil the duty to cooperate.

One of the principles of the adopted SCI is that the council will ensure that involvement of the public and other stakeholders is effective. Paragraph 6.2 explains that the process of preparing the local plan will be transparent, so that everyone can see how the policies have developed. Despite this commitment, it is not clear how comments made on the previous drafts of the local plan have been considered by the council. It appears that the objections by LC&MPC to the proposed allocation of two strategic sites at Coniscliffe Park (site 41 and site 249) have been ignored. LC&MPC believe the process is not transparent; therefore, the local plan has not been prepared in accordance with the SCI.

In order to fulfil the duty to cooperate, the council must demonstrate that the duty has been undertaken appropriately. The council has not published a duty to cooperate statement or any information to set out how it has engaged with neighbouring local planning authorities on the approach to housing and other strategic matters. Paragraph 1.6.3 of the proposed submission local plan states that 'a full statement of the actions taken by the council under the duty to cooperate will be published in statements of common ground alongside the local plan'. These statements are not available for review or comment. The proposed submission local plan therefore fails to demonstrate how the duty has been met.

#### **Soundness**

To be considered 'sound' the local plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. LC&MPC consider that the proposed allocation of sites 41 and 249 on policies map 9 is not sound for the following reasons:

##### Positively prepared

To meet this requirement, the local plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, consistent with achieving sustainable development.

As explained within the LC&MPC response to policy H1, there are significant unresolved objections to the overall level of housing growth proposed. As a result of this vastly inflated housing figure, the local plan proposes to allocate an unnecessarily high level of housing sites.

It is clear, therefore that both the housing requirement for the borough and LC&M parish are not an objective assessment of development needs and therefore not positively prepared.

##### Justified

To meet this requirement, the local plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate, robust and credible evidence. The local plan should demonstrate how its policies and proposals help to ensure that the social, environmental, economic and resource objectives of sustainability will be achieved.

The need for the allocation of the two strategic sites at Coniscliffe Park has not been justified within the local plan or its supporting evidence base. The only justification for the sites appears to be to deliver the excessive housing requirement.

LC&MPC also submit that Coniscliffe Park has not been justified as the most appropriate location for housing development. It will be physically detached from the urban area, resulting in the merger of Darlington and Low Coniscliffe. This is in clear conflict with the vision, aims and objectives of the local plan and indeed policy SH1 (settlement hierarchy).

#### Effective

To meet this requirement, the local plan must be deliverable over its plan period, embracing sound infrastructure delivery planning and based on effective joint working on cross boundary strategic priorities. LC&MPC submit that the Coniscliffe Park strategic allocation is not effective for the following reasons:

The Secretary of State Screening Direction under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations regarding the proposed residential development at Coniscliffe Park concluded that the proposed developments would represent a major physical change in the locality, sufficient to indicate that they are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

As part of the preparation of the now made Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan (2019) [1], the parish council assessed the suitability of sites 41 and 249[2]. The conclusion for the assessment of site 41 was:

*'The landscape has a high agricultural value and provides for public amenity and the loss of high value rural and amenity landscape would be highly detrimental to the people of Darlington. The impact on existing road network would be highly detrimental. The National grid pylons split the site. Local schools and basic services would not be capable of providing places for such a major development. This development in this location is not sustainable.'*

The conclusion for the assessment of site 249 was:

*'The landscape has a high agricultural value and provides for public amenity and the loss of highly valued rural landscape would be extremely detrimental and significant. Local schools and basic services would not be able to provide for such a major development. The biggest concern is the existing road infrastructure in particular Carmel Road, Coniscliffe Road, Woodland Road and Staindrop Road being incapable of being modified to cope with the highly significant increase in traffic and resultant congestion, increased pollution therefore posing a risk to public health and safety. This development in this location is not sustainable.'*

#### Consistent with national policy

To meet this requirement, the local plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF.

As detailed in response to policy H1, the council has not provided evidence to justify the significantly inflated housing requirement figures. Robust justification is a requirement of national guidance. The identification of sites to deliver the inappropriate housing figures is therefore contrary to national policy and guidance.

Paragraph 117 of the NPPF requires planning policies to promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment. It requires the strategic approach of policies to make as much use as possible of previously developed land. It is submitted that the local plan has not demonstrated why previously developed land cannot be used to deliver housing, prior to the development of greenfield sites. Therefore, contrary to the NPPF.

Paragraph 170 of the NPPF is clear that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. It includes a number of criteria to explain how this can be achieved. This includes protecting sites of biodiversity value, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. In addition, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and its wider benefits, these benefits include that of agricultural land. The development of Coniscliffe Park will result in the loss of agricultural land and habitats for wildlife, therefore not according with paragraph 170.

In conclusion, the proposed identification of strategic sites at Coniscliffe Park (sites 41 and 249) on policies map 9 are not sound because they are not positively prepared, justified or consistent with national policy.

[1] <https://tinyurl.com/y5eg6c2d> (LC&M Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2036)

[2] <https://tinyurl.com/y647jhye> (LC&M Neighbourhood Plan)

#### Question 4

##### Changes Sought

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Removal of the strategic allocations (sites 41 and 249) at Coniscliffe Park from policies map 9.

#### Question 5

##### Attendance at Examination Hearings

**If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate in the examination hearings?** Yes, I wish to participate at the examination hearings

##### Question 5a

##### Participation at Examination Hearings

**Please note** the inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the examination hearings.

**If you wish to participate at the examination hearings, please outline why you consider it to be necessary?**

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#### Question 6

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#### Question 7

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EIA Screening Direction (1)

**Document Change Required**

Yes

**Action/Change to be made**

Challenge to Conniscliffe Park. Compliance with SCI. Different conclusions on landscape assessments.

# LOW CONISCLIFFE & MERRYBENT PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (2018-2036)

June 2019



## Foreword

Your Plan for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.

In December 2016 the Parish Council of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, as the Neighbourhood Planning Qualifying Body, decided to look at the feasibility of producing a Neighbourhood Plan for the whole of the Parish.

This Submission Draft Plan has been informed by vital feedback from the local community and prepared with a considerable amount of hard work undertaken by the Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

A great deal of early engagement has informed the preparation of this Submission Draft Plan, including: community drop in events, community questionnaires, formal consultation on the Pre-Submission Plan and many Steering Group meetings. The draft vision, objectives, planning policies and community actions have all been developed as a result of this early engagement. The planning policies are of particular importance, as in the future they will be used by Darlington Borough Council to manage development within the Parish.

We have worked with Darlington Borough Council to develop this Draft Plan and members of the Steering Group attended a Locality Neighbourhood Planning Networking event at Durham County Hall last year. The purpose of the Networking Event was to share the value of talking to other Neighbourhood Planning groups, take the opportunity to air our views, experiences and issues and to familiarise ourselves with resources that are available to support us.

In addition to obtaining the basic neighbourhood grant funding we have also been successful in obtaining additional financial help in the form of a Technical Support Grant to prepare a Housing Needs Study and consider opportunities for the preparation of Design Codes.

The Parish Council believe that this Neighbourhood Plan represents local needs and aspirations and should therefore be used to assess planning proposals in the Parish.

Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council would like to thank all those involved in the preparation of this document for their enormous effort and commitment to its production.

Margaret Ellerton  
Chair Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Neighbourhood Planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Communities can shape development in their areas through the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans. Policies within Neighbourhood Plans cannot block development or support less development than already committed in the Local Plan. What they can do is shape where that development will go and what it will look like.
- 1.2 Neighbourhood Plans can also cover issues which are not related to the use and development of land. They can provide a useful document in which a Town or Parish Council can establish priorities for action to improve their area. These are often referred to as ‘community actions’. The main purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan is to set policies for the use and development of land.
- 1.3 Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been: examined by an Independent Examiner; agreed at the referendum stage by the local community; and ‘made’ (brought into legal force) by the Local Planning Authority it becomes part of the statutory Development Plan. Planning law requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material planning considerations<sup>1</sup> indicate otherwise.

### Planning context

- 1.4 Neighbourhood Plans have to meet a number of ‘basic conditions’ to ensure they are legally compliant, they must:
- Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
  - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan;
  - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and
  - Be compatible with European obligations.

#### *National planning policy and guidance:*

- 1.5 National planning policy and guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) respectively.

#### *Local Plan:*

- 1.6 The preparation of the Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan (‘the Plan’) has been informed by the adopted Darlington Core Strategy (2011) and the saved policies of the Darlington Local Plan (1997). Regard has also been given to the evidence base that is being developed by Darlington Borough Council (DBC) alongside the emerging new Local Plan.
- 1.7 The Plan reflects and provides local detail to a number of policy areas contained within the current Local Plan for the area, including protection and enhancement of the historic and natural environment, protection and enhancement of community facilities and support for the rural economy and thriving communities. The Basic Conditions Statement, that accompanies this Submission Plan describes how the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.

#### *Sustainable development:*

- 1.8 The purpose of the planning system is to help achieve sustainable development as defined by the NPPF. This specifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be

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<sup>1</sup> Material Planning considerations are matters that should be taken into account in making a planning decision.

the basis for every plan and every planning decision. In brief, ‘sustainable development’ is about positive growth which delivers economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. The Basic Conditions Statement that accompanies this Submission Plan, explains how the implementation of the Plan is expected to contribute to sustainable development.

*European obligations:*

- 1.9 Neighbourhood Plans must be compatible with EU obligations. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a way of ensuring that the environmental implications of policies are taken into account before plans are brought into force. DBC provided a screening opinion, which is available on the DBC website<sup>2</sup>, to establish whether a SEA was required for the Plan. This concluded that a SEA was not required.
- 1.10 The main purpose of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process is to ensure that the plan will not result in significant damage to internationally important nature conservation sites. DBC provided a screening opinion and concluded that the Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on any European Sites. The Screening Opinion is available on the DBC website.

### **Background to the Neighbourhood Plan**

- 1.11 In December 2017 the Parish Council resolved to begin the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and established a Steering Group to lead the Plan preparation process; the Steering Group held their first meeting in January 2017. On 26 May 2017, the Parish of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent was designated as a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of Neighbourhood planning. The process of preparing the Plan began formally in May 2017 with a community launch event.
- 1.12 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, made up of local volunteers, has worked on behalf of the Parish Council to develop this Pre-Submission Draft Plan. Regular feedback on plan preparation progress is provided to the Parish Council at its meetings.
- 1.13 There have been two rounds of early engagement to obtain the views of the local community and stakeholders on the scope of the Plan:
- May 2017 – launch event and identification of issues and policy options for the Plan<sup>3</sup>; and
  - August 2017 – engagement on the vision and objectives for the Plan – a leaflet was sent to all households in the Parish and key stakeholders to ask for input to the draft vision and objectives.
- 1.14 This work informed the preparation of a Pre-Submission Draft Plan which was subject to consultation between 21 April and 2 June 2018. The draft Plan identified:
- The context in which the Plan has been prepared – an overview of the Parish and the **opportunities and challenges** for the Plan to address;
  - A **positive vision and objectives** for the future of the Neighbourhood Plan Area;
  - How the vision and objectives of the Plan will be **delivered through planning policies** i.e. **the policies that will be used to determine planning applications** within the Plan Area - providing a framework for sustainable development; and
  - How the vision and objectives of the Plan will be **delivered through community actions** i.e. measures which are **intended to encourage action and influence decisions** taken by relevant bodies.

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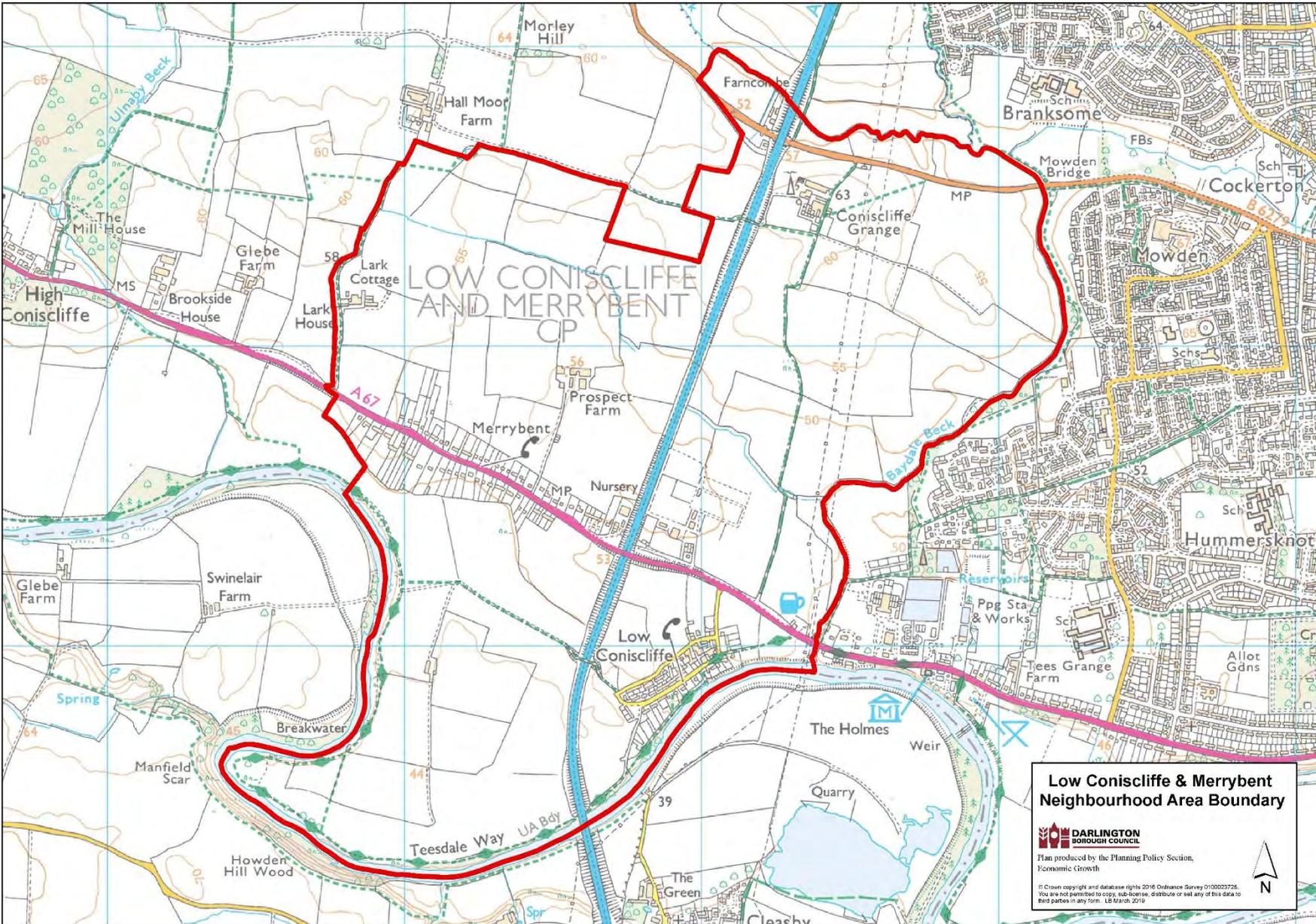
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-and-environmental-policy/neighbourhood-planning/>

<sup>3</sup> Feedback report available at [www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/](http://www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/)

- 1.15 This Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan is a revised version of the Pre-Submission Draft (April 2018). It is supported by a strengthened evidence base and has been modified to take account of the following:
- Representations received on the Pre-Submission Draft Plan; and
  - Independent advice provided through the Pre-Submission health check provided as part of the Government’s technical support programme.
- 1.16 The background documents that have informed the preparation of this Submission Draft Plan are available online at: [www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk](http://www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk)

### **Next steps**

- 1.17 The Plan must be subject to independent examination before it can proceed to referendum and approval. The purpose of the independent examination is to ensure that the legal requirements of plan preparation and consultation have been met and that the Plan meets the prescribed ‘basic conditions’, as set out in paragraph 1.4 above.
- 1.18 DBC will arrange the appointment of an independent Examiner. Prior to commencement of the independent examination, this Submission Plan will be publicised by DBC for a six-week period. It is expected that the independent examination will be conducted by way of written representations. The Examiner may choose to include a public session to inform their report, but this is not a requirement.
- 1.19 Once completed, the Examiner’s report will be published by DBC and must contain one of three recommendations to the local planning authority, that the plan should:
- Proceed to referendum, without modifications;
  - Proceed to referendum with minor modifications; or
  - Not proceed to referendum.



## 2. Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish – its history and future

### Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish – a brief history

- 2.1 Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish covers an area of 418ha, lying 3 miles (4.8km) to the west of Darlington. The southern boundary follows the natural watercourse of The River Tees and similarly the eastern boundary follows the Baydale Beck. The northern and western boundaries of the Parish are primarily a mix of field boundaries.

#### Low Coniscliffe

- 2.2 The earliest evidence of occupation in Low Coniscliffe is a possible burial mound, the remains of which, perhaps 4000 years old, has recently been found on the field to the East of Gate Lane at the entrance to the village of Low Coniscliffe. The mound dates from between 2400 BC and 1500 BC and shows that pastoral people of the time had developed an attachment to the Low Coniscliffe area.
- 2.3 The village of Low Coniscliffe dates back to the medieval times. The site of the Manor House is indicated on the oldest historic map dating from 1856-1865 and was located to the south west end of the present village in a field once known from 1066 to 1540 as Hallgarth in Low Coniscliffe. Earthworks 50 years ago revealed the Manor House and associated structures including a dovecote from the 15th-16th century. There is reputed to be another dovecote here, but the location is unknown.
- 2.4 It is recorded that Bishop Anthony Bek (Bishop of Durham), medieval knight, 1245 -1311, ordered that a tower be built in Coniscliffe. It was built between 1283 and 1310 and was probably on the site of the manor house. The precise site is believed to be at the south west end of the village, close to the River Tees and the A1 (M) to the west, where the earthwork enclosures of the medieval manor are still visible in the fields. It is recorded that in addition to the Manor House there were a further 12 houses and outbuildings on the site with 480 acres of arable land and 20 acres of meadow.
- 2.5 Due to the sparsity of properties and the farming nature of the village it was not uncommon, as with other small villages, that the practice to identify an individual property was by name and not number and this approach is clearly evident in Low Coniscliffe. Today there are 92 properties in Low Coniscliffe of which 26 are old, some dating back to the 16th century, many of these can easily be identified by their structure of river stone.
- 2.6 The name Gate Lane, on entering the village, comes from the turnpike gate that in 1762 stood on the A67 near the entrance to the village. In 1747, the Government granted permission for a turnpike trust to be established comprising of local wealthy people who took ownership of the road from Stockton to Barnard Castle. The trustees spent money on repairing the road and were then able to charge people for using it; a very early form of privatisation. The trustees collected their tolls at the turnpike gates. They also marked out their road with milestones which, after 1880, were replaced by metal mileposts. Consequently, the name Gate Lane was associated with the main access road through Low Coniscliffe and has remained such for over 250 years.
- 2.7 In the early 1800's the village was a farming community with six farms, of which four were located within the compact area of the village: Coniscliffe Grange, Low Coniscliffe East, Low Coniscliffe West and the Homestead. A large area of the village was covered with orchards

some of which were removed when the school and school house were built. Then in 1888 the Homestead farm was split into several lots and sold.

- 2.8 Low Coniscliffe today has more natural stone walling running throughout the village than any other in the Borough of Darlington. These walls are primarily constructed from river stone which was a natural and easily obtainable material locally, with many of the walls dating from the 17th century. They are found in numerous places within the village, separating individual properties from their neighbour and providing a barrier to the highway. The walls act as a stone chain, linking the various boundaries of individual properties within the oval highway which forms the ring of development of the village.
- 2.9 Many of the properties within Low Coniscliffe have an interesting history. The most obvious landmark before entering Gate Lane is on the A67 and is the Baydale Beck Inn. There has been an inn on the site for over 250 years, the original being called the Badle Beck Inn, built of river cobblestones from the Tees. It was part of the ancient manor of Coniscliffe built on the boundary of the Parish. During 1770, it was the haunt of Catton's Gang of thieves in addition to the famous Dick Turpin whose bedroom curiously had five access doors – presumably for a quick getaway. Another notorious regular was Sir William Browne, last of the Mosstroopers who was sentenced to death at Newcastle in 1743 for returning from transportation. Indeed, the inn had such a bad name that the landlord let it with 20 acres of land for £8 per annum.

### Merrybent

- 2.10 Merrybent is a linear village and lies along the A67. It had very few buildings until the beginning of the 20th Century but boasted many greenhouses for the Merrybent Nurseries. In 1870 the Merrybent and Darlington Railway was built as a branch line which left the Darlington and Barnard Castle Railway at Merrybent to carry stone from various quarries; it ran from Archdeacon Newton to Barton quarry in North Yorkshire. It was closed in 1878 when the company went bankrupt, but the line and quarries were re-opened by North Eastern Railway in 1890. The railway was abandoned in 1938, and later dismantled.
- 2.11 The bridge in Low Coniscliffe was destroyed by fire in 1952. This was replaced by a temporary bridge which was built adjacent to the site in the early 1960's to enable construction traffic, which were undertaking the building of the new A1(M), to traverse the river. The bridge was only strong enough to support the weight of one lorry and was demolished, when the concrete structure which followed the site of the old railway bridge was completed, shortly before the A1(M) opened on 14th May 1965.
- 2.12 Although the village of Merrybent was built mostly in the 20th century a strategic greenfield building site was identified by Darlington Borough Council in 2009 and a new housing development followed known as Merrybent Drive. The only significant older feature in Merrybent is the milepost on the A67 which is Grade II listed and dates back to the late 19th Century. It is constructed of cast iron painted white with raised sans-serif black painted letters.

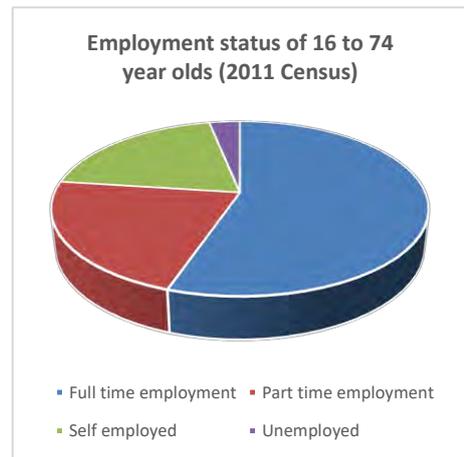
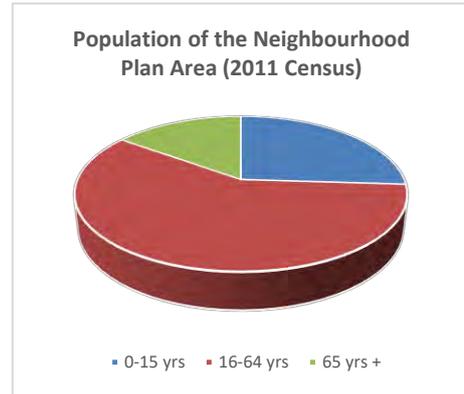
### **Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Today**

- 2.13 The Parish has a population of 716 (2011 census) with approximately: 59% aged 16-64, 26% aged 0-15yrs and 15% aged 65 or over. The 2011 census identified that there were 283 household spaces in the Parish. Almost all (96%) of the housing stock is either 'whole house' or 'bungalow'. Of the housing stock, 78.4% are either owned outright or with a mortgage, with 20% rented, the majority from the private sector. The average number of cars per household is

two, with 96% of households having access to either a car or van. In the age group 16-74, 73% are economically active, 53% full time, 21% part time, 19% are self-employed and unemployment is at 3%.

2.14 The Parish remains semi-rural, with strong links to Darlington for services such as schools, medical services and shops. An infrequent bus service links the Parish to Darlington to the east and High Coniscliffe, Piercebridge, Gainford, Winston, Staindrop and Barnard Castle to the west. Residents benefit from the rich environmental assets of the Parish including agriculture, trees, hedgerows, the River Tees, the Baydale Beck, the Teesdale Way and numerous bridleways passing through abundant forms of flora and fauna.

2.15 Large parts of the Parish area are in agricultural use, mainly arable grades 1 (2), with individual farmsteads scattered across the Parish. The only community facility within the Parish is the Baydale Beck Inn. Tourism is mainly focused on walking as The Teesdale Way passes through the Parish and fishing managed by Darlington Brown Trout; together with horse riding along the bridleways running through the Parish.



### Views of the local community

2.16 As part of the early engagement on the Plan we asked for feedback on what the main things were that people liked about the Neighbourhood Plan Area, comments included appreciation of:

- The rural area;
- Access to the natural environment including the river;
- Green spaces;
- Tranquillity;
- Wildlife;
- Historic environment – traditional village feel;
- Views;
- Community spirit;
- Low crime levels;
- Access to services and facilities.

2.17 Early engagement also provided feedback on the main things that the local community disliked about the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Comments included:

- Risks from large scale new development;
- Drainage and flooding;
- Lack of a village hall and play area;
- Traffic and parking;
- Litter and dog fouling.

- 2.18 As part of the early engagement the local community were also asked to identify what things they felt should be protected or supported within the Parish:
- The existing village environment – a need to avoid estate type housing;
  - Protect the rural setting of the villages;
  - Conserve and enhance the historic environment;
  - Green spaces;
  - Wildlife;
  - Access to the countryside;
  - Hedgerows and trees.
- 2.19 As part of the early engagement people were also asked what kind of development they felt was needed in the Parish. Comments included:
- Housing to meet the needs of older and younger generations;
  - Small developments whose design is sympathetic to house style and village layouts;
  - Infill development;
  - Village shop;
  - Community venue/village hall;
  - More facilities for children;
  - Green energy;
  - Traffic free cycle routes.
- 2.20 These issues have all helped to inform the Vision and Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan and the Planning Policies and Community Action which are set out in the remainder of the Plan.

### 3. Our Vision and Objectives for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent

3.1 The Vision and Objectives for the Plan have developed following consideration of key issues raised by residents in the community engagement event which took place in May 2017. Consultation on the draft Vision and Objectives for the Plan took place during August 2017. There was support from the local community and stakeholders for the proposed Vision and Objectives<sup>4</sup>.

#### The Vision

3.2 The Vision sets out what the Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan intends to achieve over the plan period to 2036, it informs all of the policies and community actions contained in the Plan.

Vision
<p><i>Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent villages will maintain their individual identities as sustainable, thriving communities, accessible to people of all ages. The Parish will remain a gateway to Darlington, but visually distinct and separate from the conurbation.</i></p> <p><i>New development will be of a scale and design which respects the rural setting of the Parish, conserves and enhances its unique rural and riverside environment, open spaces and heritage, for the benefit of current and future generations</i></p>

#### The Objectives

3.3 To deliver the Vision, five Objectives have been developed. The Objectives clearly relate to the issues identified through early engagement (see section 2). The planning policies and community objectives included within the Plan have been identified to deliver the Objectives.

Objectives
<p><b>Objective 1 – A Conserved and Enhanced Natural Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserving and enhancing the peaceful, tranquil and beautiful nature of the natural environment of the Parish;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 2 - A Rich Built Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that new development contributes positively to the built environment of the Parish by conserving and respecting the traditional character, scale, density and feel of buildings and places across the Parish;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 3 – Vibrant and Thriving Communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on the strong sense of community across the Parish by: supporting the provision of housing to meet identified needs and retaining and enhancing important community facilities and services;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 4 – A Strong and Diversified Economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting existing and the creation of new sustainable economic development, particularly agricultural and tourism sectors;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective 5 – Movement and Connectivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that the environmental quality of the Parish is protected by effectively managing traffic as well as supporting opportunities to improve sustainable travel.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Feedback is available online at [www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/](http://www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/)

- 3.4 The following section of the Plan sets out the draft planning policies which have been identified to deliver the objectives, with community actions identified in Annex 1.

## 4. Delivering the Vision and Objectives – Planning Policies

### Introduction

- 4.1 This section of the Plan sets out the **planning policies**, which together will support and deliver the Plan’s Vision and Objectives. The policies are grouped under the topics that support the Objectives of the Plan:
- A conserved and enhanced natural environment;
  - A rich built environment;
  - Vibrant and thriving communities;
  - A strong and diversified economy; and
  - Movement and connectivity.
- 4.2 The Policies Map illustrates geographically the proposed policies in the Plan.

### A conserved and enhanced natural environment

- 4.3 The natural environment of the Parish is enormously valued by the local community; this has been confirmed during early engagement on the Plan. There were significant levels of support from the local community for the need for the Plan to conserve and enhance the natural environment, landscape, tranquillity, habitats and local green spaces.
- 4.4 Plan Objective 1 recognises the importance of the natural environment of the Parish. It seeks to conserve and enhance the peaceful, tranquil and beautiful nature of the natural environment of the Parish, within its agricultural landscape setting.

### Landscape

- 4.5 In addition to the landscape of the Parish being highly valued by the local community it is protected by the strategic policies of the Local Plan, primarily Core Strategy policy CS14 which seeks to ensure that the distinctive character of the Borough’s landscape is protected. One of the key elements of the policy which is relevant to the preparation of the Plan is the identified need to protect and enhance the separation and the intrinsic qualities of the openness between settlements and between the different neighbourhoods within the main urban area.
- 4.6 The European Landscape Convention<sup>5</sup> recognises landscapes as an essential component of people’s surroundings. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF is clear that one of the ways the planning system can contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment is by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.
- 4.7 The Darlington Landscape Character Assessment (LCA - 2015)<sup>6</sup> provides a description and evaluation of the landscape of the Borough. The Darlington LCA identifies that the Parish lies within the Denton and Walworth Farmland; and Tees Valley character areas (see Appendix 1). Whilst it is acknowledged that the evidence which supports the emerging Darlington Local Plan may be updated, given the importance of landscape character to the local community, it was considered important to describe it in more detail within the Plan.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/home>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/1082706/Darlington-Landscape-Character-Assessment.pdf>

- 4.8 For each of the landscape character types the LCA defines landscape and visual sensitivity to built development. For the Denton and Walworth Farmland character area, which covers the majority of the Plan area and is located to the north of the A67, the following are identified:
- Strongly rural character with little modern development;
  - Locally prominent low hills;
  - Frequency of woodland plantations and shelterbelts;
  - Historic character and form of small villages, including local building materials and styles;
  - Remains of medieval settlement, and surviving historic dwellings and farm buildings; and
  - Long views across the landscape to the North York Moors, Yorkshire Dales and Pennines.
- 4.9 The defined landscape and visual sensitivity to built development within the Tees Valley character area, which covers the southern part of the Plan area, to the south of the A67, is:
- Tranquil character along much of the riverside;
  - Traditional settlement pattern of nuclear villages related to the river;
  - Extensive riparian woodland forms a significant habitat resource;
  - Riparian meadow habitats contribute to important wildlife corridor;
  - Important historical sites and monuments along the river; and
  - Strategic recreational corridor, with the Teesdale Way running the length of the area.
- 4.10 Informed by the evidence contained within the Darlington LCA, Policy LCM1 therefore seeks to ensure that new development will maintain and where appropriate enhance important elements of the natural landscape of the Parish. This approach will support the delivery of Plan Objective 1 by ensuring that new development contributes positively to the natural environment of the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

<b>Policy LCM 1: Landscape</b>	
i)	Development proposals should maintain and where appropriate enhance positive elements of the landscape character of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish, as defined in the Darlington Landscape Character Assessment or other relevant documents.
ii)	Applicants will be required where appropriate to demonstrate how the development proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Conserves and enhances the rural character and scale of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent villages as well as its farmsteads;</li><li>b. Has been informed by the context of the site and its surrounding landscape in terms of: height; scale; massing; orientation; and position;</li><li>c. Seeks to conserve important local landscape features such as mature hedgerows and field walls. Mature and established trees should be protected and incorporated into the development wherever possible;</li><li>d. Sits comfortably within the landscape, by taking account of the topography and natural features of the development site; and</li><li>e. Conserves traditional farm buildings through continued and appropriate new uses.</li></ul>

#### Tranquillity

- 4.11 Tranquillity is defined as freedom from noise and visual disturbance; this was identified by the local community as one of the important elements of the Parish that the Plan should seek to

protect, particularly with regard to noise, traffic and light pollution. The Darlington LCA also identified the importance of tranquillity, particularly around the Tees Valley character area which includes riverside and riparian woodland walks. The NPPF<sup>7</sup> highlights that planning policies can protect areas of tranquillity.

4.12 The nature of tranquillity means that it is not something that is easily measurable. However, for the purposes of identifying a methodology for defining, recording and mapping tranquillity, it has often been regarded as an environmental quality that can be assessed by reference to a series of indicators. In 2004, the Countryside Agency commissioned a consultation exercise to seek to understand people's perceptions, values and beliefs in relation to tranquillity<sup>8</sup>. This research highlighted a consistent response with regard to what was tranquil and what was not. Tranquillity was described as:

- Perceived links to nature and natural features – seeing, hearing and/or experiencing nature and natural features;
- Landscape – experiencing, particularly in visual terms, the landscape. Including, wild landscapes and rolling countryside as well as characteristics such as fields, moors, woodlands, flora and fauna, natural colours and open views and the sound of water;
- The importance of wildlife – seeing wildlife behaving naturally, hearing birdsong;
- Peace, quiet and calm – the absence of noise and the feeling of getting away from it all, including a need for solitude.

4.13 Similarly, when asked 'what is not tranquillity?' there was a high degree of consistency in the detractors that were listed:

- Presence of humans/too many people – certain behaviour/activities undertaken by people which created unwanted noise and disturbance;
- Negative impacts of various forms of transport, including vehicle noise;
- Negative impact of various forms of development including commercial and industrial development.

4.14 Whilst the Parish Council acknowledge that tranquillity is not something that is easily measurable, given the importance of the tranquillity of the Parish to the local community, Policy LCM 2 seeks to ensure that development proposals will not detrimentally affect the tranquillity of the Parish; this will support the delivery of Plan Objective 1. The purpose of the policy is not to restrict all development but to ensure that the impact of larger scale development, namely that which requires a Design and Access Statement<sup>9</sup>, is fully considered as part of the development management process.

<b>Policy LCM 2: Tranquillity</b>	
i)	Development which does not detrimentally affect the tranquillity of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish will be supported.
ii)	Where a Design and Access Statement is required this should demonstrate the impact of the proposed development on tranquillity, including noise, traffic and light levels.

<sup>7</sup> Paragraph 180

<sup>8</sup> Countryside Agency (2004) Countryside Quality Counts, Tracking Change in the English Countryside (CRN85)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-an-application#Design-and-Access-Statement>

Green Infrastructure

- 4.15 The NPPF defines green infrastructure as: ‘A network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities’. It is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. As a network it includes: parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include: streams, canals and other water bodies and features such as green roofs and walls. Green infrastructure plays an important role in creating ecological networks, providing open space, allowing for sustainable drainage, contributing to climate change adaptation, and providing attractive and safe environments for sustainable modes of transport.
- 4.16 The green infrastructure across the Plan area is varied and multifunctional. It consists of a number of different elements, including:
- Wildlife networks and corridors, such as: historic hedgerows, green frontages and woodlands; Merrybent community forest; footpaths and cycleways and other car free routes; the River Tees and Baydale Beck and other smaller watercourses; green frontages to residential properties and gardens; highway verges;
  - Open spaces, such as Merrybent Drive Green, Merrybent Green and Low Coniscliffe Green; and
  - Landscape corridors and linkages to the wider countryside.
- 4.17 Policy LCM 3 therefore seeks to protect and where practical improve and extend the green infrastructure network and provides a framework for the assessment of planning applications. This will assist with the delivery of Plan Objective 1 by seeking to ensure that new development contributes positively to the natural environment.

**Policy LCM 3: Green Infrastructure**

- i) Development proposals should seek to protect and where practical, improve and extend green infrastructure including using native species. When determining planning applications, consideration will be given to how development proposals:
- a. Protect and enhance green infrastructure assets, provide high quality links between existing assets and/or provide additional uses for multi-functionality;
  - b. Secure improved access to green infrastructure;
  - c. Create a sense of place by protecting and/or fully integrating high quality, green infrastructure into the proposed development to reflect the character of the Neighbourhood Plan area;
  - d. Integrate green infrastructure with sustainable drainage systems and the management of flood risk; and
  - e. Address the management and maintenance of new and existing green infrastructure throughout and beyond the plan period.
- ii) Proposals that would include the loss of part of the green infrastructure network should demonstrate that alternative provision, equivalent to or better than the green infrastructure proposed to be lost in terms of its quantity and quality, can be provided in equally accessible locations that maintain or create new green infrastructure connections.

### Green approach

- 4.18 The green approach to Low Coniscliffe along Gate Lane, which is the only access to the village, is very important to the local community. It is defined by mature hedgerows, trees and shrubs planted in the verges by the local community, providing a distinctive tunnelled and rural entrance. The NPPF<sup>10</sup> is clear that one of the ways the planning system can contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment is by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.
- 4.19 Policy LCM 4 therefore seeks to support proposals within the green approach to Low Coniscliffe where they do not adversely affect character and amenity. This policy will support the delivery of Plan Objectives 1 and 2, by ensuring that new development contributes positively to the natural and built environment of the Plan area.

#### **Policy LCM 4: Green Approach**

Development proposals affecting the green approach to Low Coniscliffe, as identified on the Policies Map, will be supported where they do not significantly adversely affect the character and amenity created by the grass verges, trees and hedgerows.

### Biodiversity

- 4.20 The Parish boasts a wide range of species and habitats<sup>11</sup>. There are areas of: woodland priority habitat which is predominantly along the River Tees, areas of deciduous woodland, as well as other areas of woodland, including the designated Merrybent Community Forest. The Low Coniscliffe Tees Bank Local Wildlife site lies between the River Tees and Low Coniscliffe. The Baydale Beck is also an important habitat, which is adjacent to an important and significant population of great crested newts. In addition, there are frequent sightings of various species of wildlife including: otter, water vole, deer, hedgehog, fox, badger, stoat/mink, hare and other mammals. Also, there are regular sightings of kingfisher, heron, red kite, jay, sparrow hawk, buzzard, sky lark, sand marten, swift, swallow, house martin, mallard, goosander, dipper, wagtail, cormorant, meadow pipit, treecreeper, greenfinch, rook, jackdaw, cuckoo and a variety of species of bats throughout the Parish.
- 4.21 The NPPF<sup>12</sup> is clear that in order to contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, the planning system should minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. In accordance with the NPPF, the Plan seeks to: promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations.
- 4.22 Policy LCM 5 will deliver Plan Objective 1 by planning positively for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment of the Parish.

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<sup>10</sup> Paragraph 170

<sup>11</sup> Information obtained from: Natural England (Magic Map) and the Environmental Records Information Centre North East

<sup>12</sup> Paragraph 170

**Policy LCM 5: Biodiversity**

- i) Development should protect and enhance biodiversity by seeking to ensure no loss or significant harm to biodiversity sites, protected species or their habitats.
- ii) Where development would result in the loss or significant harm to biodiversity, applicants will be required to demonstrate that the adverse impacts will be adequately mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for.

**Wildlife Corridors**

4.23 The NPPF highlights that to minimise impacts on biodiversity, planning policies should identify and map components of local ecological networks, this includes wildlife corridors<sup>13</sup>. A wildlife corridor is an area of habitat that connects wildlife populations and interacts with the wider landscape. They can be many things, such as rivers and burns, railway lines, cycle ways, ancient and/or species rich hedgerows.

4.24 There are a number of important biodiversity networks across the Plan area, including:

- River Tees embankment – an unspoiled riparian woodland landscape which is a strategic green corridor, rich in a variety of wildlife;
- Northern and southern boundaries of Merrybent – traversing the length of the village, wooded area and pastoral land providing a wildlife corridor for fox, hare and badgers;
- Baydale Beck, western embankment – running along the eastern boundary of the Plan area, a strategic green corridor which is rich in varieties of wildlife including newts and otters;
- A67 verges and embankments – mature hedgerows, trees and shrubs which are home to many species of wildlife, including bats;
- A67, north – mature hedgerows and trees which are home to many species of wildlife and provide hibernation sites for a local colony of newts;
- Coniscliffe Moor, public rights of way – dating back hundreds of years the routes cross the rural landscape and contain mature hedging and trees which are home to many species of wildlife and provide hibernation sites for a local colony of newts;
- North of Low Coniscliffe – includes an unbroken stretch of medieval stone walling and grassed verge, an important part of the green infrastructure of the Plan area.

4.25 Further details regarding the important biodiversity within the Plan area is set out within the Biodiversity Background Paper<sup>14</sup>. Policy LCM 6 will deliver Plan Objective 1, by seeking to ensure that new development contributes positively to the natural environment.

**Policy LCM 6: Wildlife Corridors**

Development proposals affecting a wildlife corridor, as defined on the Policies Map, should protect and enhance its biodiversity quality and connectivity. All development proposals should demonstrate how existing wildlife corridors have been taken into account and incorporated into their design. Development proposals should seek opportunities to create new corridors and habitats to reconnect isolated sites and facilitate species movement, where appropriate.

<sup>13</sup> Paragraph 170

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/>

### Local Green Space

- 4.26 Green spaces are a vital part of a vibrant and healthy community and are of great importance to the character and identity of a place. They are valued for a wide range of reasons including, visual amenity, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife. Uncontrolled changes to green spaces can irrevocably alter their special character or intrinsic value.
- 4.27 The NPPF<sup>15</sup> enables the Plan to designate areas of Local Green Space (LGS) for special protection, thereby preventing inappropriate new development on these sites other than in very special circumstances. LGS does not need to be publicly accessible, although the designation must not be applied to an extensive tract of land and the site must be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves. The land must be demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance.
- 4.28 The sites listed in Policy LCM 7 and shown on the Policies Map are proposed to be designated as LGS as they meet the respective criteria set out within national policy and guidance. A background paper has been prepared to outline the reasons why the sites are of particular importance to the character of the Plan area and explain the process that led to their proposed designation<sup>16</sup>.
- 4.29 The designation of LGS will assist with the delivery of Plan Objective 1 by seeking to plan positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure across the Plan area.

<b>Policy LCM 7: Local Green Space</b>	
i)	As shown on the Policies Map, the following areas are designated as Local Green Spaces due to their particular local significance or community value: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Merrybent Community Forest;</li><li>b. Medieval Manor, Dovecot and Tower - Low Coniscliffe;</li><li>c. Merrybent Drive Green;</li><li>d. Merrybent Green; and</li><li>e. Low Coniscliffe Green Space.</li></ul>
ii)	Inappropriate development on land designated as Local Green Space will only be permitted where very special circumstances can be demonstrated in accordance with national Green Belt policy.

### **A Rich Built Environment**

- 4.30 The distinctiveness of the Parish gives local people a sense of belonging and identity and a feeling of pride of place. Engagement on the Plan has identified that the built environment of the Parish is hugely valued by the local community.

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<sup>15</sup> Paragraphs 99 to 101

<sup>16</sup> [www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/](http://www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/)

- 4.31 Plan Objective 2 therefore seeks to ensure that new development maintains and enhances the many heritage assets of the Parish ensuring that it conserves and respects the traditional historic character, scale, density and feel of buildings and places.
- 4.32 The glossary of the NPPF defines the historic environment as:  
*‘All aspects of the environment resulting from interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora’.*
- 4.33 The built environment policies seek to provide a positive policy framework for the conservation and enjoyment of the unique historic environment of the Parish.

Design

- 4.34 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The NPPF<sup>17</sup> attaches great importance to achieving high quality and inclusive design through the planning process, this approach has been strongly supported through engagement on the Plan. As part of the preparation of the Plan, AECOM developed a ‘Design Principles Document’ (February 2018)<sup>18</sup> which aims to: improve the design quality and placemaking objectives of development schemes proposed in the Plan area; set out a series of urban design principles which should be taken into account by developers; and support the policies in the Plan.
- 4.35 Policy LCM 8 is cross cutting and will help to deliver all of the Plan Objectives. Good design is not only about creating visually attractive buildings that do not adversely impact on their neighbours, it is also about how people experience buildings and places. A well-designed building and place should be accessible to all potential users, where they should feel safe and secure. Embedding sustainable design is also important as it will improve energy efficiency; reducing both running costs and carbon emissions.

<b>Policy LCM 8: Design</b>	
i)	All new development in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish should conserve local distinctiveness by demonstrating high quality design which both respects the existing rural character and responds to the heritage and distinctive character of the area. Development will be supported where it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Maintains and where possible enhances the character of the locality, paying particular attention to the appearance, size, scale and density of the proposal;</li> <li>b. Uses materials which complement those of adjoining and surrounding buildings;</li> <li>c. Conserves the significance of heritage assets and their setting;</li> <li>d. Takes account of the topography and natural features of the site and considers the impact of the development when viewed from surrounding areas of countryside;</li> <li>e. Respects established building lines and creates boundaries and roof lines that are in keeping with the existing street scene;</li> <li>f. Demonstrates a commitment to sustainable design to minimise energy use;</li> </ul>

<sup>17</sup> Section 12

<sup>18</sup> [www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/](http://www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/)

- g. Provides adequate refuse and recycling storage, which is incorporated into the scheme to minimise visual impact;
  - h. Adopts the principles of sustainable drainage, where appropriate;
  - i. Ensures the development will not prejudice the amenity of its future occupiers or occupiers of adjacent properties in terms of overshadowing, loss of light, dominance, loss of privacy, noise or general disturbance;
  - j. Ensures the efficient and effective use of land, by encouraging the re-use of previously developed land and buildings where possible;
  - k. Ensures that lighting associated with the development will not have a significant effect on: dark skies, residential amenity or wildlife;
  - l. Will not result in unacceptable levels of noise, air or water pollution; and
  - m. Creates a safe, accessible and well-connected environment that meets the needs of its users.
- ii) Where a Design and Access Statement is required as part of a planning application, there should be a clear demonstration of how the proposal has responded to the above principles as an integral part of the design development process.

#### Local or community-led renewable energy generation

- 4.36 Many forms of renewable energy generation can currently be installed on existing properties under permitted development rights. Local or community-led renewable energy generation is small scale generation of heat and electric power by individuals, small businesses and communities, to meet their own needs. In accordance with the NPPF, the Plan supports local or community-led renewable energy generation whilst ensuring that any adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts.
- 4.37 Policy LCM 9 will support the delivery of Plan Objectives 1, 2 and 3 by ensuring new development conserves and enhances the natural and built environment of the Plan area and also supports vibrant and thriving communities.

#### **Policy LCM 9: Local or Community-led Energy Generation**

Local or community-led renewable energy generation proposals will be supported provided there are no significant adverse impact from the proposed development, either individually or cumulatively with existing development, on:

- a. Landscape character and sensitivity;
- b. Protected habitats and species;
- c. Designated and undesignated heritage assets and their settings; and
- d. Amenity due to noise, odour, dust, vibration or visual impact.

#### Heritage Assets

- 4.38 Heritage assets can either be designated or non-designated. Designated assets have statutory status within the Parish and include Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. A non-designated asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape of lesser significance.

- 4.39 The glossary of the NPPF defines a heritage asset as:

*'A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).'*

- 4.40 The NPPF is clear that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance<sup>19</sup>. Planning decisions affecting a heritage asset are required to be based on a sound understanding of the significance of the asset and the impact of the proposal on that significance<sup>20</sup>.
- 4.41 The Parish has a diverse heritage, incorporating three individual assets afforded protection through Grade II Listed Building status: Wellbank House, 55 and 57 Low Coniscliffe and a mile post at Merrybent. These heritage assets are important to both the character and appearance of the Plan Area and its community. The Heritage Assets Background Paper<sup>21</sup> provides details of the many undesigned heritage assets within the Parish including: The Baydale Beck Inn; the site of the Manor House; possible Burial Mound to the East of Gate Lane; Merrybent Railway; Squirrel Oaks; 1A Low Coniscliffe; Sunnyside; 7 Low Coniscliffe; The School House; The Old School; Durmast; The Barn on Gate Lane; The Cottage; Teesdale House; West Farm; Clove Cottage; Appletree Cottage; 27A Low Coniscliffe; Britton House; Orchard House; 31 Low Coniscliffe; 34-40 Low Coniscliffe; Old Mill Cottage; Hinde Cottage; Wood Lane; as well as riverstone walls, gateways and street furniture.
- 4.42 Engagement on the Plan identified strong support to ensuring the protection and enhancement of heritage assets across the Parish. Policy LCM 10 will therefore assist in the delivery of Plan Objective 2 by ensuring that new development conserves and respects the traditional historic character, scale, density and feel of buildings and places across the Parish.

<b>Policy LCM 10: Heritage Assets</b>	
i)	Where a development may impact on a heritage asset, applicants should provide information that describes the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposed development, including any contribution made by their setting.
ii)	In the determination of development proposals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Great weight will be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset and any harm or loss to its significance will require clear and convincing justification in accordance with national policy; and</li><li>A balanced judgment will be required to fully consider the effects of any development proposals affecting a non-designated heritage asset, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.</li></ol>

### **Vibrant and Thriving Communities**

- 4.43 The term 'community spirit' was a key feature of the feedback from the early engagement on the Plan as was the need to protect and enhance existing access to community facilities. The

<sup>19</sup> NPPF - paragraph 189 - 192

<sup>20</sup> NPPF – paragraph 192

<sup>21</sup> [www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/](http://www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/)

NPPF identifies that the planning system has an important role to play in creating healthy, inclusive communities. NPPG defines a healthy community as a good place to grow up and grow old in, a community which supports healthy behaviours and supports reductions in health inequalities.

- 4.44 Plan Objective 3 seeks to build on the strong sense of community across the Parish, in particular by: supporting the provision of small scale housing development to meet identified needs and retaining and enhancing important community facilities and services.

General location of new development

- 4.45 Policy LCM 11 defines settlement boundaries around the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent. These are the main centres of population in the Parish and where the focus of development will be over the plan period. A settlement boundary is the dividing line, or boundary between areas of built development and the open countryside. The purpose of settlement boundaries is to ensure the separate character of settlements is maintained, managing their expansion and controlling sporadic development in the open countryside. The approach of defining settlement boundaries is supported in the NPPF.
- 4.46 The Darlington Local Plan defines settlement boundaries around Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent villages and these have been reviewed through the preparation of this Plan.
- 4.47 The settlement boundaries, shown on the Policies Map, have been drawn to support the sustainable growth of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent villages, they take into account extant planning permissions and establish a logical shape to the edges of the villages, whilst supporting an appropriate level of new development. Irregular incursions into the open countryside have been avoided and the boundary has been drawn along features which are easily identified on the ground. Further details are set out within the Settlement Boundary Background Paper<sup>22</sup>.
- 4.48 The NPPF identifies that isolated new development in the countryside should be avoided, unless there are special circumstances<sup>23</sup>. Paragraph 78 of NPPF is clear that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will maintain or enhance the vitality of rural communities. The NPPF also identifies that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development.
- 4.49 Policy LCM 11 describes acceptable development in the open countryside, having regard to the principles established in national policy and guidance. Policy LCM 11 will support the delivery of Plan Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4.

<b>Policy LCM 11: General location of new development</b>	
i)	To promote sustainable development, the focus of development across the Parish should be within settlement boundaries of the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, as defined on the Policies Map.
ii)	New development outside the defined settlement boundaries as shown on the Policies Map will be supported where it: a. Is directly related to the business and operational needs of agriculture, forestry or other rural industries;

<sup>22</sup> [www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/](http://www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/)

<sup>23</sup> NPPF paragraph 79

- b. Is a sustainable visitor attraction that is related to the experience or interpretation of the countryside, or a sustainable leisure development which respects the character of the countryside, only where identified needs are not met by existing facilities within the settlement boundary;
- c. Will provide local services or community facilities which support the rural community;
- d. Is a house, the design of which:
  - i. Is truly outstanding or innovative and of the highest standard, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas;
  - ii. Reflects the highest standards in architecture;
  - iii. Significantly enhances its immediate setting; and
  - iv. Is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area;
- e. Comprises an appropriately designed extension to an existing building or buildings. The extension should be subservient to and respect the scale and appearance of the host building; or
- f. Involves the conversion of redundant rural buildings, the building should be structurally sound and its conversion achievable without significant extension to the original structure. The conversion should be in keeping with the character and appearance of the building and its setting.

### Housing

- 4.50 The NPPF states that Neighbourhood Plans should positively support the strategic policies for the area and should not promote less development than is required by the Local Plan<sup>24</sup>. As the Darlington Core Strategy covered the period to 2026 the policies on housing provision are largely out of date. Whilst the emerging Darlington Local Plan is currently being prepared, it has not reached an advance stage. Therefore, there is no up to date defined housing requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- 4.51 A key role of the Plan is therefore to provide a policy framework that will support the provision of a level and mix of new homes that will seek to meet the needs of residents across the Plan area. In order to inform this, as part of the Neighbourhood Planning Technical Support Package AECOM prepared a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)<sup>25</sup>. The HNA estimated the quantity of housing needed across the Plan area by considering five different sources:
- **The adopted Local Plan requirement (2011 Core Strategy)** – identifies a housing requirement of 8,675 homes for Darlington as a whole over the plan period 2004 to 2026. The proportional share for the Plan area equates to **50 dwellings between 2017 to 2036**;
  - **The emerging Local Plan (Strategic Housing Market Assessment)** – identifies an objectively assessed need for Darlington of 11,160 homes between 2011 and 2036. The proportional share for the Plan area equates to **65 dwellings between 2017 to 2036**;
  - **National household projections (2014 based)** – identifies the total number of households for Darlington as 283 from 2011 to 2031, which would equate to **19 new dwellings between 2017 and 2036**;
  - **Past dwelling completion rates (2001 to 2011 and 2011+)** - between 2001 and 2011 there was an increase of 79 homes in the Plan area, an annual increase of 8 homes. Between 2011 and 31 March 2016, no new dwellings were completed. Taking an average over the period 2001 and 2017 provides a figure of 4 dwellings per annum, equating to **76 new dwellings between 2017 and 2036**; and

<sup>24</sup> NPPF – paragraph 29.

<sup>25</sup> [www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/](http://www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/)

- **Draft standard national methodology (2017)** – based on the proposed approach the annual requirement would equate to 1 new dwelling per annum, **19 new dwellings between 2017 and 2036.**

- 4.52 The HNA therefore provided a range of scenarios to assist with the identification of a housing requirement for the Plan. The provision of the right type and mix of housing is critical to the continuation of most communities as viable settlements. In order to understand future needs, the HNA considers household tenure in the current stock as well as the population profile of the Plan area.
- 4.53 The Parish has a population of 716, with approximately 59% aged 16-64, 26% aged 0-15yrs and 16% aged 65 or over. Almost all of the housing stock, 283 dwellings, is either ‘whole house’ or ‘bungalow’, almost 80% are owned outright or with a mortgage and 20% rented, the largest majority from the private sector. With regard to household composition, the Plan area has a higher percentage of family households with dependent children (34%) than both Darlington (27%) and nationally (26%). In addition, a much lower percentage (20%) of one-person households than Darlington (32%) or nationally (30%)
- 4.54 The HNA identifies that the Plan area has an age structure that has undergone significant change in the period between the two censuses, with a strong orientation towards young families; those aged 44 and below are prominent. It also identifies that no households within the Plan area are on the housing waiting list.
- 4.55 In accordance with the NPPF, a key role of the Plan is to include a policy framework that will support the provision of a mix of new homes that will contribute towards meeting the defined needs of residents across the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Plan Objective 3 seeks to support the provision of affordable housing to meet identified needs.
- 4.56 In order to fully understand the capacity of the Plan area to deliver housing to meet needs whilst protecting the important natural and built environment of the area, the Steering Group developed a housing site assessment methodology. This considered all of the sites included within the Darlington Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2017)<sup>26</sup> and identified other potential new sites. This work has identified the potential for three small housing sites to be allocated in the Plan. The allocation of these sites will ensure that the Plan supports the sustainable growth of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent as the main settlements within the Plan area; delivering around 25 new homes and allowing an 8% increase in the number of properties within the Plan area.
- 4.57 The NPPF is clear that Local Planning Authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community, including housing for older people and vulnerable groups. Policy LCM 12 therefore aims to help create and maintain a balanced and sustainable community across the Parish. The Policy recognises that housing needs may change over time and therefore provides a positive and flexible policy framework to ensure updated evidence to be considered as part of the determination of planning applications.

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<sup>26</sup> [www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/](http://www.lowconiscliffeandmerrybentneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/consultation/)

### Policy LCM 12: Housing

- i) The following sites (with indicative capacities) are allocated for housing development as:
  - 1. North West Merrybent (12 dwellings);
  - 2. South East Merrybent (10 dwellings); and
  - 3. Central Low Coniscliffe (3 dwellings).
  
- ii) Proposals for new housing development within the settlement boundaries will be supported where:
  - a. It delivers house types, sizes and tenures to meet identified needs;
  - b. It is a high-quality design that respects local character and reinforces local distinctiveness;
  - c. The scale and design of the development is appropriate, respecting the character of the local area;
  - d. It provides private garden and amenity space proportionate to the size of the dwelling(s) and existing provision in the local area, where appropriate; and
  - e. It provides an appropriate level of off-street parking as part of the development.

#### Rural exception sites

4.58 The NPPF identifies that in rural areas, the planning system should be responsive to local circumstances and that housing development should be planned to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing through rural exception sites, where appropriate<sup>27</sup>. The glossary in the NPPF defines rural exception sites as:

*'Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding'*

4.59 Where there is a pressing need for affordable housing, which cannot be met in other ways, the provisions of homes through exception sites is a means of delivering the housing needs of the area. Such housing will be required to be affordable in perpetuity.

4.60 Policy LCM 13 therefore provides a positive framework to support the provision of affordable housing on small sites that would not normally be used for housing. However, there must be clear evidence of need for the affordable housing in the local community. The development would be required to remain affordable and available for local people, identified as being in local housing need. The criteria for allocating dwellings according to need under Policy LCM13 are provided by Compass (<https://www.compasscbl.org.uk>).

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<sup>27</sup> NPPF – paragraph 77.

**Policy LCM 13: Rural exceptions sites**

- i) The development of small scale rural exception sites for affordable homes will be supported where there is evidence of identified need in an up to date and robust housing needs study. The development should be:
  - a. Available to meet the needs of the local community identified as being in local housing need, who meet the allocation criteria set out within the Compass Allocations Policy;
  - b. Affordable in perpetuity;
  - c. Adjacent or well related to an existing settlement; and
  - d. An appropriate scale and in keeping with the form, character and landscape setting of the area in which the development takes place and does not significantly adversely impact on the natural or built environment.
- ii) The inclusion of market housing will only be permitted where it would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs.

Community services and facilities

- 4.61 Community infrastructure provides for the health and wellbeing, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community provided through a wide range of venues. Community infrastructure could include places of worship, schools, heritage venues, libraries, museums, cinemas, shopping centres, pubs and cafés, town squares, industrial and business premises, community centres (including health centres and hospitals), parks and open spaces, and other public venues.
- 4.62 Whilst the level of community facilities across the Parish are limited, they make an important contribution to the vitality and viability of the Parish, particularly the local public house – the Baydale Beck, the Low Coniscliffe Village Library and book exchange. Through early engagement on the Plan there was strong support expressed for the need to include a positive policy framework to support the development of new community infrastructure and protect existing facilities of benefit to the local community.
- 4.63 The NPPF is clear that the planning system should support the development of new community facilities and that valued community facilities should be retained where appropriate. However, planning permission is not always required to change the use of a building or land and this restricts the opportunity to examine the possibility of securing the continued use of a facility threatened with closure. Notwithstanding this, Policy LCM 14 will contribute towards the delivery of Plan Objective 3 which seeks to retain and enhance important community facilities.

**Policy LCM 14: Community services and facilities**

- i) Development proposals to enhance the provision of community services and facilities will be supported subject to the following criteria:
  - a. The proposal will not generate unacceptable noise, fumes, smell or other disturbance to adjoining properties;
  - b. The proposal will not have an adverse impact on highway safety; and

- c. Access arrangements and sufficient off-street parking can be satisfactorily

### Infrastructure

- 4.64 New development can bring significant benefits to the local community, including new homes and jobs. However, it can also have negative impacts, most notably where additional demand is placed on facilities and services which are already at or near capacity. Planning obligations, known as Section 106 agreements, may be used to secure infrastructure or funding from a developer. For example, a planning obligation may be used to secure a financial contribution towards improving existing recreational facilities. Whilst the infrastructure requirements created by new development will vary depending on the characteristics of each development, potential infrastructure that could be required or added to include: open space; public transport; medical facilities; and highway works beyond the application site.

#### **Policy LCM 15: Infrastructure**

New developments will be required to provide or contribute to the infrastructure requirements that are related to them. The necessary infrastructure, including improvements to existing infrastructure, should be made available to serve the development within an agreed timescale.

## **A Strong and Diversified Economy**

- 4.65 The NPPF is clear that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development by:
- Supporting the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
  - Promoting the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses;
  - Supporting sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and
  - Promoting the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

4.66 Plan Objective 4 therefore seeks to support the creation of new and existing sustainable economic development, particularly in the agricultural and tourism sectors.

#### Agriculture

4.67 Large parts of the Parish are in agricultural use, mainly arable farming with some grazing of sheep and cattle. There are three individual farmsteads across the area; Coniscliffe Grange, Prospect Farm and Lark House.

4.68 The NPPF<sup>28</sup> states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas, including the need to promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.

4.69 Feedback from early engagement on the Plan identified the importance of the farming community to the maintenance of the natural environment. Policy LCM 16 will support the delivery of Plan Objectives 1 and 3, as it will help to conserve and enhance the natural environment of the Parish and also support the agricultural industry.

#### **Policy LCM 16: Agriculture**

Proposals that will support the agricultural industry, including farm diversification schemes, will be supported within Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish where they will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on landscape character, heritage assets, the environment, infrastructure or residential amenity. The redevelopment, alteration or extension of historic farmsteads and agricultural buildings within the Parish should be sensitive to their distinctive character, materials and form.

#### Tourism and leisure

4.70 The NPPF requires planning policies to support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside.

4.71 Despite the historic and natural assets of the Parish, there is little tourism development. However, given the important natural environment, the Parish is very popular with walkers, day-trippers and for fishing. Policy LCM 12 therefore seeks to support appropriate facilities and accommodation for tourism and leisure across the Parish, whilst balancing this against the requirement to protect and enhance the distinctive and valued environment. The focus of new development should be within existing settlements; however, the policy acknowledges that given the nature of the tourism and leisure industry it may not always be possible to locate development within existing settlements. Policy LCM 17 will assist with the delivery of Plan Objective 4 as it will support new and existing tourism businesses.

#### **Policy LCM 17: Tourism and leisure**

- i) The development of new visitor attractions, leisure facilities and tourist accommodation, including the expansion of existing tourism and leisure businesses should be focused in existing settlements across Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish and will be supported where:

<sup>28</sup> Paragraphs 83 - 84

- a. The siting, scale, materials and design respect the character of the surrounding area, including any historic and natural assets;
  - b. The proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on amenity of adjacent uses; and
  - c. The proposal is acceptable in terms of highway safety.
- ii) In the open countryside, away from existing settlements and development, tourist attractions, leisure facilities and permanent tourism accommodation will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposed location is required to meet the needs of the business.
- iii) Tourism development proposed as part of a farm diversification scheme should ensure that the primary agricultural function of the farm is retained.

### **Movement and Connectivity**

4.72 The private car provides the principal mode of transport for residents of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, with 58%<sup>29</sup> of the working population travelling by car. The NPPF encourages a reduction in congestion and greenhouse gas emissions through the introduction of measures which promote a reduction in the number of journeys made by car. Whilst the preparation of transport policy at a local level is primarily a matter for the local planning authority, there are a wide range of areas where the Plan can have an influence on transport and movement: new development; public rights of way and access; parking and public transport.

4.73 As part of the early engagement on the Plan, local communities identified concerns over highway safety. Plan Objective 5 therefore seeks to ensure that the environmental quality of the Parish is protected by effectively managing traffic as well as supporting opportunities to improve sustainable travel.

#### Transport and New Developments

4.74 The NPPF identifies that planning policies should support a range of transport modes, with priority given to walking, cycling and public transport as well as consideration of disabled access.

4.75 Policy LCM 18 therefore identifies the key considerations for development proposals across the Neighbourhood Plan Area which reflects the feedback obtained through early engagement on the Plan. The policy will assist in the delivery of Plan Objective 5.

#### **Policy LCM 18: Transport and New Developments**

Proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the development:

- a. Will provide safe vehicular, cyclist and pedestrian access;
- b. Will not significantly impact on traffic flows on the highway network or that appropriate mitigation measures can be secured and are undertaken; and
- c. Makes satisfactory off-road parking provision.

#### Public Rights of Way

4.76 Public Rights of Way include footpaths, used by pedestrians only, and bridleways available to pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders. The Teesdale Way crosses the Parish along with

<sup>29</sup> 2011 Census

numerous Public Rights of Way which are used by the local community, dog walkers, ramblers, anglers and other visitors.

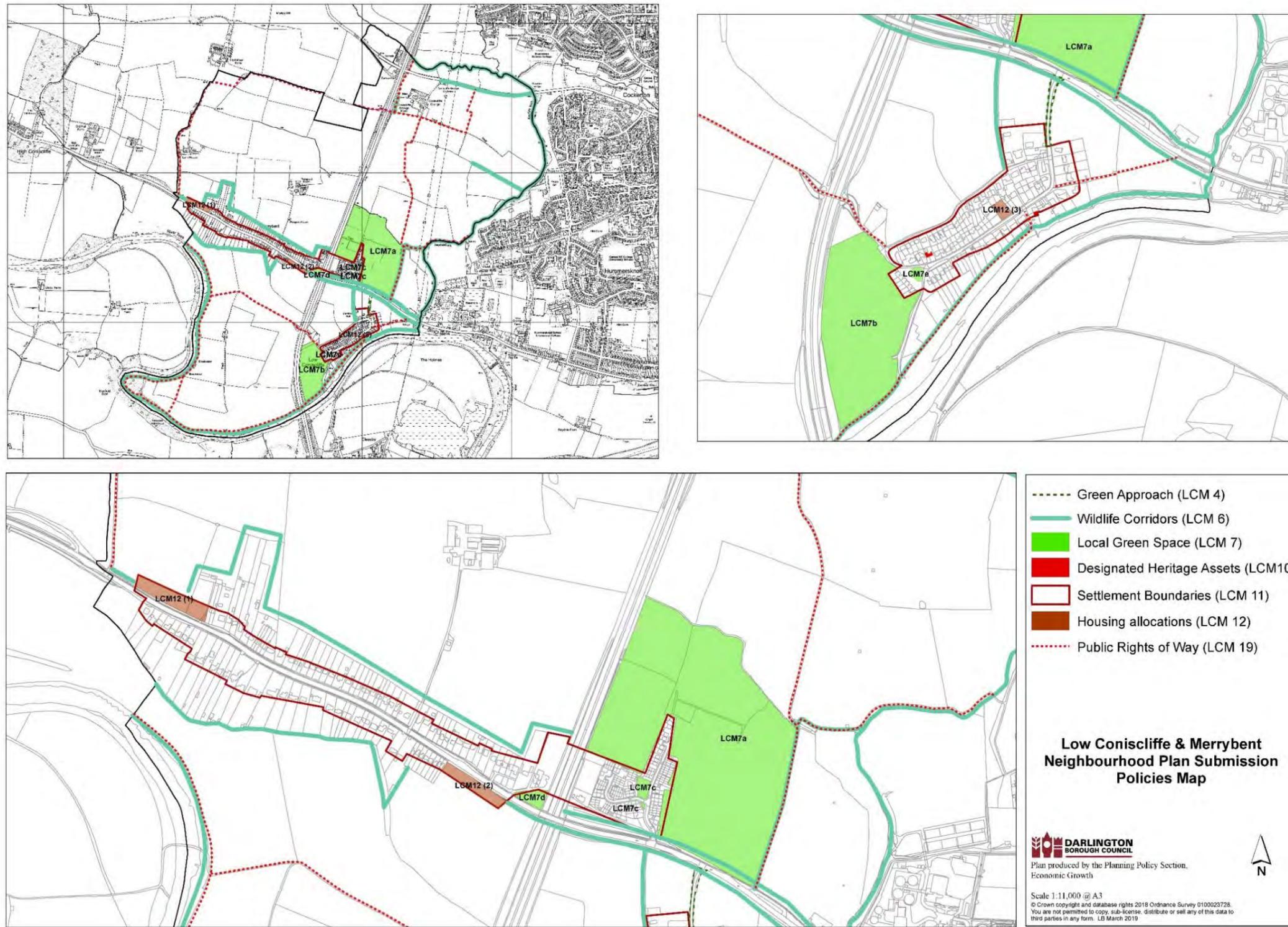
- 4.77 Policy LCM 19 therefore seeks to support proposals to improve and extend existing public rights of way as well as protecting existing routes. The policy will support the delivery of Plan Objective 5 which seeks to support opportunities to improve sustainable travel.

**Policy LCM 19: Public Rights of Way**

Proposals to create new or improve existing public rights of way, as identified on the Policies Map, will be supported. Proposals resulting in the loss of all or part of a public right of way, as defined on the Policies Map, will need to demonstrate:

- a. There is a clear and demonstrable justification for the loss of the route; and
- b. A suitable alternative route will be provided within an agreed timescale.

Annex 1: Policies Map





## Annex 2: Delivering the vision and objectives – Community Actions

A1.1 During the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, some areas of community concerns were identified that cannot be addressed through the planning system. However, as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process they can become ‘Community Actions’, which are supported by Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council. These proposals can be delivered in conjunction with other local organisations. Six Community Actions have been identified as part of the preparation of the Plan, these are described below.

### Community Actions

#### Coniscliffe Forest and Nature Reserve

##### **Community Action 1: Coniscliffe Forest and Nature Reserve**

To work with the Forestry Commission, Natural England, Darlington Wildlife Trust, Darlington Borough Council and local landowners to explore options to create Coniscliffe Forest and Nature Reserve.

A1.2 Given the wildlife value and community importance of the existing Merrybent Community Forest, the Steering Group have begun the process of developing a proposal to extend the existing forest and create a new local nature reserve. It is envisaged that the area will support a variety of wildlife and will provide a legacy for future generations.

#### Local History

##### **Community Action 2: Local History Interpretation**

To develop a programme to deliver a series of interpretation panels across the Plan to provide information to local residents and visitors on the many historic assets.

A1.3 The Plan area contains a wealth of designated and undesignated historic assets. To enhance understanding of these assets amongst both local residents and visitors a need has been identified to deliver a series of interpretation panels for installation across the Plan area.

#### Allotments

A1.4 The local community have expressed a need for the development of allotment sites within the Plan area.

#### Highway Safety and Traffic Management

##### **Community Action 4: Highway Safety and Traffic Management**

To work with Darlington Borough Council to implement measures which improve the safety of the highway network across the Plan area.

- A1.5 Through the preparation of the Plan the local community expressed concern over highway safety. The Parish Council consider there are opportunities to implement effective traffic management measures which will improve highway safety, particularly linked to the growing volume and speed of traffic, for example in 2016 the Parish Council purchased two visors as traffic calming measures.

### Public Transport

#### **Community Action 5: Public Transport**

To work with Darlington Borough Council, transport providers and other stakeholder to seek to develop innovative schemes which improve accessibility to key services and facilities.

- A1.6 The local community have raised concerns with regard to the access to public transport facilities to enable access to key services and facilities. Across the country there are many examples of innovative solutions which enhance rural community access to services and facilities. Options for the development of innovative rural transport schemes will be considered and discussed with Darlington Borough Council and where feasible will be delivered.

### Village Hall

#### **Community Action 6: Village Hall**

To work with local landowners and other stakeholders to research the feasibility of the development of a village hall within the Plan area.

- A1.7 The lack of local facilities has been raised by the local community as a negative element of living in the Plan area. The potential for a village hall to be developed has been identified as something which could be an important focal point for the local community.

## Glossary

### **Affordable housing:**

Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

### **Amenity:**

A positive element or elements that contribute to the positive character of an area, such as lack of noise and disturbance, openness, landscape, townscape, opportunities for recreation etc.

### **Asset of Community Value:**

A local authority maintained list of land in its area that is land of community value. A building or other land would be of community value if in the Council's opinion, its main use contributes to the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, and it is realistic for this to continue, (possibly involving a different community use of equal value). This is set out in section 87 of the Localism Act 2011.

### **Biodiversity:**

The degree of variation of life forms within a particular ecosystem. Biodiversity is a measure of the health of an ecosystem. Human activity generally tends to reduce biodiversity, so special measures often need to be taken to offset the impact of development on natural habitats.

### **Conditions (or 'Planning Conditions'):**

Requirements attached to a planning permission to limit or direct the manner in which a development is carried out.

### **Conservation Area:**

Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character, appearance or setting of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

### **Design and access statement:**

A concise report accompanying certain applications for planning permission and applications for listed building consent. Design and Access Statements can aid decision-making by enabling local planning authorities and third parties to better understand the analysis that has underpinned the design of a development proposal. Design and access statements are required for the following:

- Applications for major development (minerals, waste, 10 or more houses or housing sites more than 0.5ha, new building(s) greater than 1,000 square metres and sites of 1ha or more);
- Applications for development in a designated area (National Park, Conservation Area, World Heritage Site) where the proposed development consists of: one or more dwellings; or a building(s) with floorspace of 100 square metres or more;
- Applications for listed building consent

### **Development:**

Defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as "the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land." Most forms of development require planning permission

**Development management:**

The process through which a local planning authority considers a planning application and whether it should be given permission.

**Greenfield land or site:**

Land which has never been built on before or where the remains of any structure or activity have blended into the landscape over time.

**Heritage Asset:**

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

**Housing Needs Survey:**

A survey of households which assesses affordable housing needs across a defined area, looking at criteria such as housing conditions, overcrowding and household incomes and comparing these with housing costs and availability.

**Infill development:**

Building on a small site between existing buildings.

**Infrastructure:**

The physical entities (for example roads, railways, sewers, pipes, telecommunications lines) that are necessary for communities to function and move around.

**Landscape Character:**

The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.

**Landscape sensitivity:**

Normally refers to the ability of the landscape to absorb development, in relation to valued aspects of its character.

**Limited infilling:**

Infill development which is particularly small in scale, occupying a small gap between buildings – on the scale of one or two, rather than several dwellings/buildings.

**Listed building:**

A building of special architectural or historic interest. Graded I (highest quality), II\* or II.

**Material consideration:**

A matter that should be taken into account in making a planning decision such as sustainability, impact on residential amenity, design and traffic impacts.

**Open market residential development:**

Housing for sale or rent on the open market, without any restrictions regarding occupation or price.

**Planning obligation:**

Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, secured by a local planning authority through negotiations with a developer to offset the public cost of permitting a

development proposal. Sometimes developers can self-impose obligations to pre-empt objections to planning permission being granted. They cover things like highway improvements or open space provision.

**Previously Developed Land (PDL) or 'Brownfield' Land:**

Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

**Principal residence:**

Those occupied as the residents' sole or main residence, where the residents spend the majority of their time when not working away from home.

**Setting:**

The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

**Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA):**

An assessment of sites put forward as having potential for new housing, examining their constraints, marketability etc. and arriving at a possible yield of new houses (if any), with a view to achieving a five year supply of deliverable housing land.

**Appendix 1 Landscape Character information**

Character Area	Key characteristics	Sensitivity
<p><b>Denton and Walworth Farmland</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The area slopes from around 130m – 140m at its northern edge to between 70m – 50m along the A67;</li> <li>• Natural habitats are largely confined to woodlands, hedges and watercourses. There is very little development which is entirely non-rural in character;</li> <li>• The area is drained by a series of small becks which rise on Houghton Bank and flow either south into the Tees e.g. Piercebridge Beck, or south-east to join with the Cocker Beck that flows through Darlington to join the Skerne. The natural drainage pattern has been augmented in the past with ditches cut to drain the wetter carrs that form between higher ground;</li> <li>• There is a mix of arable and pastoral landholdings, generally divided into large fields which are more or less rectilinear. The winding courses of becks often define field boundaries, introducing irregularity to some areas;</li> <li>• Hedges of blackthorn and hawthorn are the dominant boundary type, though they vary in character. Often, they are continuous and clipped low, though some hedges are gappy and many have been removed altogether. In more intensive arable areas hedges have been replaced by wire fences;</li> <li>• More natural woodland, with frequent willow, occurs along the many becks in the area;</li> <li>• The many field boundary trees include oak and sycamore alongside the more common ash, though there are some areas where trees are notably absent, possibly reflecting different approaches to hedgerow management across landholdings;</li> <li>• Local wildlife sites include Denton Quarry in Limekiln Wood, and Ulnaby Beck;</li> <li>• Natural habitats are largely confined to woodlands, hedges and watercourses;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly rural character with little modern development;</li> <li>• Locally prominent low hills;</li> <li>• Frequency of woodland plantations and shelterbelts;</li> <li>• Historic character and form of small villages, including local building materials and styles;</li> <li>• Remains of medieval settlement, and surviving historic dwellings and farm buildings; and</li> <li>• Long views across the landscape to the North York Moors, Yorkshire Dales and Pennines.</li> </ul>

Character Area	Key characteristics	Sensitivity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The present villages in the area retain this strongly rural character, with many being constructed of locally quarried limestone;</li> <li>• Farmsteads are spaced across the area, retaining much local character alongside more functional buildings;</li> <li>• There is very little development which is entirely non-rural in character, though there is the suburban style ribbon settlement of Merrybent along the A67;</li> <li>• The A1, A67 and A68 are the major transport corridors in the area, but skirt this landscape leaving a network of smaller roads connecting the villages;</li> <li>• Merrybent and Darlington railway was built as a branch line of the Barnard Castle railway carrying stone from various quarries. It was closed in 1878. The A1M was built following the old track bed;</li> <li>• The Barnard Castle railway once passed through the area, its trackbed still in evidence;</li> <li>• A number of public footpaths and bridleways link the villages, and there is a long-term plan to reuse the railway line to provide access;</li> <li>• Locally, views are limited by topography and some areas are visually contained despite the low profiles of the gentle hills. Woodland contributes to this sense of enclosure, and where there are fewer trees the openness of the landscape is notable;</li> <li>• The landscape has a strongly rural character with a clear impression of the long use of the land for agriculture;</li> <li>• Though fringed by major roads, with the A1 having the most pervasive influence, the majority of this area is quiet and rural. There is very little overt modern development, and the sheltered valleys and woodlands provide tranquil sites within the intensively farmed landscape.</li> </ul>	
<b>Tees Valley</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This character area comprises the flat or gently sloping floodplain on the north bank of the River Tees and occasionally steeper incised valley sides, as it passes to the south of Darlington;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tranquil character along much of the riverside;</li> <li>• Traditional settlement pattern of nuclear villages related to the river;</li> </ul>

Character Area	Key characteristics	Sensitivity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The area is contained to the north by the A67 and A167, and further east is marked by the riverside settlements and then by the edge of the increasingly incised valley;</li> <li>• The land generally slopes very gently down from west to east, with the flow of the river. Several tributaries run through the area into the River Tees, including the River Skerne and smaller becks;</li> <li>• The area comprises enclosed farmland, under a mix of arable and pastoral cultivation. Field boundaries are generally hedges, though there are areas where only fences remain due to field amalgamation;</li> <li>• Hedges are predominantly of hawthorn, and while many are intact there are areas where substantial gaps appear in hedgerows. Ash and sycamore are the principal field boundary trees;</li> <li>• Field boundaries show the fossilised evidence of changes in the course of the Tees, clearly visible to the south of High Coniscliffe for example;</li> <li>• The river is lined with riparian woodland along most of its banks, forming the most significant area of woodland in the Borough;</li> <li>• There are multiple historic sites in this character area, linked to the reliable fertility of the floodplain and the strategic importance of the Tees;</li> <li>• This character area includes the small settlements of Piercebridge, High Coniscliffe, Merrybent, Low Coniscliffe, Hurworth Place, Hurworth-on-Tees, Neasham and Middleton One Row, each of which has its own distinctive character;</li> <li>• Buildings are generally constructed from limestone in the west, and from brick in the east;</li> <li>• In terms of semi-natural habitats, the River Tees and its wooded banks provides a rich series of habitats, with many sections protected as local wildlife sites. The area is an important green corridor for wildlife species. Riparian meadows also provide habitat, such as Janet’s Meadow local wildlife site at High Coniscliffe;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive riparian woodland forms a significant habitat resource;</li> <li>• Riparian meadow habitats contribute to important wildlife corridor;</li> <li>• Important historical sites and monuments along the river; and</li> <li>• Strategic recreational corridor, with the Teesdale Way running the length of the area.</li> </ul>

Character Area	Key characteristics	Sensitivity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Teesdale Way follows the north side of the river, linking villages and making use of several footbridges;</li> <li>• Several roads run parallel to the river Tees, generally being A-roads in the west and minor roads in the east. The A1(M) crosses the river just to the west of Low Coniscliffe: this and other main road bridges contribute noise of traffic to these localities. However, along much of the river there is very little development, and there are many intimate and secluded sections of the river banks which have a highly tranquil character.</li> </ul>	



# Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Housing Needs Assessment

December 2017

## Quality information

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Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
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2	01/11/2017	Internal QA		Jesse Honey	Associate Planner
3	20/11/2017	Provided comment and feedback		Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	
4	21/11/2017	Finalise report		Ivan Tennant	Principal Planner

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## Glossary of terms used in text

AH	Affordable Housing (NPPF definition)
AMH	Affordable Market Housing
DBC	Darlington Borough Council
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
GT	Gypsy & Traveller
GTAA	Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment
HNA	Housing Needs Assessment
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LCMPC	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
NP	Neighbourhood Plan
NPA	Neighbourhood Plan Area
NPG	Neighbourhood Plan Group
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
PRS	Private Rented Sector
RTF	Rural Town and Fringe
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment

# 1. Executive Summary

## Introduction

1. The 2011 Localism Act introduced neighbourhood planning, allowing parishes, town councils or neighbourhood forums across England to develop and adopt legally binding development plans for their neighbourhood area.
2. As more and more parishes, towns and forums seek to address housing growth, including tenure and type of new housing, it has become evident that developing policies need to be underpinned by robust, objectively assessed housing data.
3. In the words of the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), establishing future need for housing is not an exact science, and no single approach will provide a definitive answer. The process involves making balanced judgments, as well as gathering numbers and facts. At a neighbourhood planning level, one important consideration is determining the extent to which the neighbourhood diverges from the local authority average, reflecting the fact that a single town or neighbourhood almost never constitutes a housing market on its own and must therefore be assessed in its wider context.
4. The guidance quoted above on housing needs assessment is primarily aimed at local planning authorities preparing Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs), which are used to determine housing need at a local authority level. However, it helpfully states that those preparing neighbourhood plans can use the guidance to identify specific local needs that may be relevant to a neighbourhood, but that any assessment at such a local level should be proportionate.
5. Our brief was to advise on data at this more local level to help Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent NPG understand, among other matters, the type, tenure and quantity of housing needed to inform neighbourhood plan policies.

## PPG-Based Assessment

6. This objective and independent housing needs advice note follows the PPG approach where relevant. This ensures our findings are appropriately evidenced. The PPG advises that assessment of development needs should be thorough but proportionate and does not require planners to consider purely hypothetical future scenarios, only future scenarios that could be reasonably expected to occur.

## Summary of Methodology

7. Housing Needs Assessment at neighbourhood plan level can be focused either on quantity of housing needed, type of housing need, or both. In most cases, there is a need to focus on quantity where the housing target for the settlement being assessed is unclear, for example where the local authority has not set a specific target for the settlement, or where there is no local plan in place.
8. In the case of Client, the current adopted Development Plan, the Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Core Strategy adopted 2011), identifies an overall target of 8,675 additional dwellings for the town over the period 2004 to 2026. As a plan that post-dates the National Planning Policy Framework, this should be used as a guiding authority on housing numbers.

9. The rationale for this recommended approach is that neighbourhood plans need to meet a number of Basic Conditions to be 'made' by the LPA. One of these, Basic Condition E, requires the Neighbourhood Plan to be in 'general conformity with the strategic policies' of the Local Plan, in this case the Darlington Borough Council's Core Strategy. The Government's Planning Practice Guidance indicates that the level of housing development is likely to count as a strategic policy.<sup>1</sup>
10. In terms of the types of housing needed, there is generally more flexibility on what neighbourhood plans can cover. In order to understand the types of housing needed in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, we have gathered a wide range of local evidence and summarised it into policy recommendations designed to inform decisions on housing quantity and characteristics.
11. The planning period of neighbourhood plans, where possible, should always be aligned with the relevant local plan.

### Gathering and Using a Range of Data

12. The PPG states that:

*'no single source of information on needs will be comprehensive in identifying the appropriate assessment area; careful consideration should be given to the appropriateness of each source of information and how they relate to one another. For example, for housing, where there are issues of affordability or low demand, house price or rental level analyses will be particularly important in identifying the assessment area. Where there are relatively high or volatile rates of household movement, migration data will be particularly important. Plan makers will need to consider the usefulness of each source of information and approach for their purposes'.*

13. It continues:

*'Plan makers should avoid expending significant resources on primary research (information that is collected through surveys, focus groups or interviews etc. and analysed to produce a new set of findings) as this will in many cases be a disproportionate way of establishing an evidence base. They should instead look to rely predominantly on secondary data (e.g. Census, national surveys) to inform their assessment which are identified within the guidance'.*

14. Compared with the 2001 Census, the 2011 Census gathered data in a number of new categories and across a range of geographies that are highly relevant to planning at the neighbourhood level and helpful if a PPG-based approach is being used.
15. Like much of the data forming the housing policy evidence base, the Census information is quantitative. However, at a local level, qualitative and anecdotal data, if used judiciously, also has an important role to play, to a perhaps greater extent than at local authority level. We have gathered data from as wide a range of sources as practicable in order to ensure robustness of conclusions and recommendations arising from the analysis of that data. Feedback from the Neighbourhood Planning Group survey and our conversation with a local estate agent, John Ingham, helped ensure our conclusions were informed by a qualitative, local perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> See Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 2a-006-20140306

### Focus On Demand Rather Than Supply

16. Our approach is to provide advice on the housing required based on need and/or demand rather than supply. This is in line with the PPG, which states that *‘the assessment of development needs should be an objective assessment of need based on facts and unbiased evidence. Plan makers should not apply constraints to the overall assessment of need, such as limitations imposed by the supply of land for new development, historic under performance, viability, infrastructure or environmental constraints’*.
17. For this reason, we advise that the conclusions of this report should be assessed against supply-side considerations (including, for example, factors such as transport infrastructure, landscape constraints, flood risk and so on) as a separate and follow-on study<sup>2</sup>.

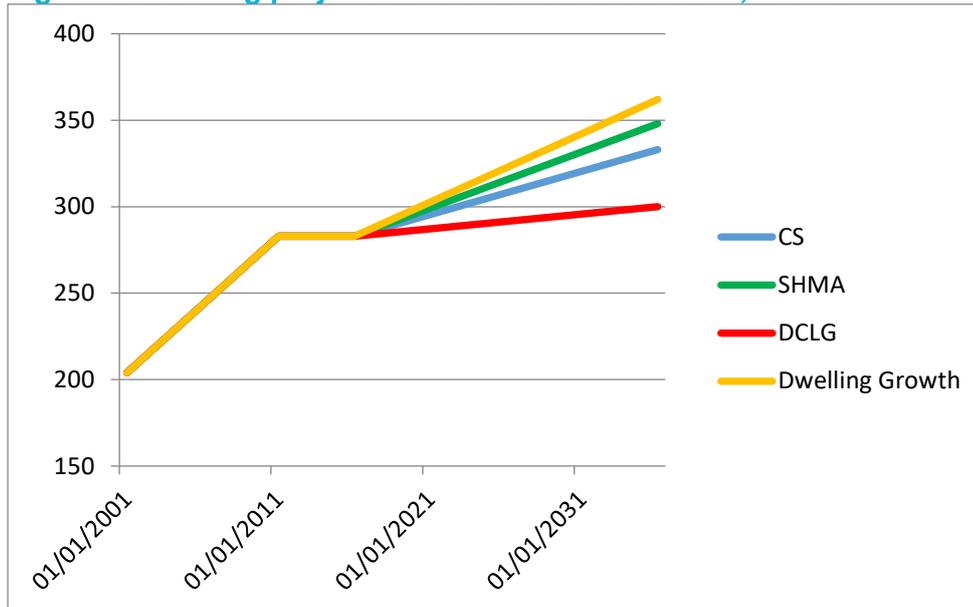
### Quantity of Housing Needed

18. Our assessment of a wide range of data sources identified five separate projections of dwelling numbers for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent between 2016 and 2036 based on:
- A figure derived from the adopted Local Plan for Darlington, the Core Strategy (which gives a total of **50 dwellings**;
  - A ‘proportionate share’ derivation from the SHMA, Objectively Assessed Need<sup>3</sup> (OAN); total of **65 dwellings** over the plan period (rounded to the nearest whole number), or **3 dwellings per annum**;
  - DCLG Household Projection of **17 dwellings over the plan period, or 1 dwelling per annum**
  - A projection forward of net dwelling completion rates 2001-2016 of **79 dwellings, or 4 dwellings per annum**
19. These dwelling number projections are illustrated in Figure 1 on the following page.

---

<sup>2</sup> Such an approach, clearly separating housing need assessment from dwelling capacity assessment, was endorsed by the Government for calculating housing need at local authority level in the ministerial statement and press release ‘Councils must protect our precious green belt land’ (DCLG, 4 October 2014, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/councils-must-protect-our-precious-green-belt-land>)

<sup>3</sup> The OAN includes the baseline demographic need, plus any adjustments made to official forecasts to account for projected rates of household formation post 2021, past suppression of the formation of new households, the effect of past under-supply, employment forecasts, market signals and affordable housing need (as set out in paragraph ID2a-004 of the NPPG).

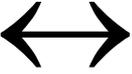
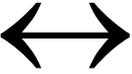
**Figure 1: Dwelling projections for the Client NP Area, 2016-2036**

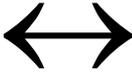
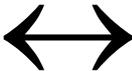
Source: Darlington Borough Council, SHMA 2015, DCLG, Aecom Calculations

20. In arriving at a final figure for homes that reflect demand in the NPA two issues need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, the number derived from dwellings completed in paragraph 18 (item 4) is supply constrained, meaning that the figures reflect the difficulty of actually delivering new homes on the ground as a result of environmental factors and standing policy- especially in the case of Low Coniscliffe, where no dwellings were completed in 2011 to 2016. This makes these figures less reliable as a guide to demand. Moreover, the SHMA, produced in 2015, offers the most considered and up-to-date source of evidence available as regards to housing need at district level such should be accorded substantial weight. However given the recent government consultation on the standard methodology for calculating housing need<sup>4</sup>, it is reasonable to assume the SHMA will require updating.
21. Secondly, it is necessary to take into account the influence of the factors set out in Table 1. We have applied our professional judgment on the scales of increase and decrease associated with each factor on a scale from one to three, where one arrow indicates 'some impact', two arrows 'stronger impact' and three arrows indicates an even stronger impact. Factors are in alphabetical but no other order.
22. In order to allow for the first of these factors, we have taken the mean of projections 1 and 2 only as the basis for our final estimate. **This produces a rounded figure of 58 homes.** Taking the second factor into consideration, we look at the balance of 'up' to 'down' arrows. Our study has noted a balance in favour of 'up' arrows of 4. However, given the nature of the NPA, and the low levels of housing stock meaning market signals with regards to prices and the volume of transactions can lead to a skewing of the data, it is recommended that the mean of projections 1 and 2 remains as the proposed OAN for the HNA.
23. Feedback from local Estate Agents indicates that "prices are generally strong and favourable given the location and types of housing available", and "the demand /supply of housing is in balance in the parish".
24. We have applied our professional judgment on the scales of increase and decrease associated with each factor on a scale from one to three, where one arrow indicates 'some impact', two arrows 'stronger impact' and three arrows indicates an even stronger impact. Factors are in alphabetical but no other order.

<sup>4</sup> Planning for the right homes in the right places : consultation proposals, DCLG, September 2017

**Table 1: Summary of factors specific to Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent NP with a potential impact on neighbourhood plan housing quantity**

Factor	Source(s) (detailed in Chapter 5)	Possible impact on future housing need	Rationale for judgement
<b>Employment trends</b>	Tees Valley Economic Assessment Paper 2016, Local Plan, Census 2001/11 Population, Housing and Employment Projections Paper (2013) County Durham		Given the local plan is proposing significant levels of new mixed employment development close to the NPA and there is already a significant proportion of the Neighbourhood Plan area that either travels a relatively short distance to work or mainly works at home, alongside Darlington's GVA increasing at a much faster rate than the rest of the North East, this could potentially drive up demand for housing in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.
<b>Housing transactions (Prices)</b>	Land Registry Price Paid Data for 2006-2016, SHMA (2015).		<p>Analysis of house prices for the NPA is to be treated with caution due to the low levels of stock. Only 139 transactions were recorded between 2007 and 2016. The average property price according to Land Registry data as at October 2017 was £200,167, which compares to the Darlington average of £207,000</p> <p>Overall, the average price of all housing types has increased by 18%; however this is based on one detached property transaction in 2017 skewing the data. If you exclude 2017 data, the average house price for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent has actually decreased by 19.5% from 2007 – 2016.</p> <p>In the Local Authority as a whole, prices have increased by 179% overall; although prices have actually decreased in the NPA 2006-2016, prices are still relatively high in the context of the borough in relation to semi-detached properties.</p> <p>As a result an assessment of a sideways arrow has been deemed appropriate.</p>
<b>Housing Transactions (Volume)</b>	Land Registry Price Paid Data for 2006-2016, Census 2001/2011 data, SHMA(2015)		<p>In the context of the NPA, housing transactions were dominated by high sales of semi-detached and terraced properties in 2007 and 2008 prior to the recession and very low numbers of sales post 2008, the majority of which are mainly detached properties.</p> <p>Local feedback from estate agents also confirms that the demand / supply of housing is in balance in the parish.</p> <p>As a result a sideways arrow is considered appropriate due to the relatively low levels of stock and low numbers of sales post 2008 within the NPA.</p>

Factor	Source(s) (detailed in Chapter 5)	Possible impact on future housing need	Rationale for judgement
<b>Migration</b>	Census data 2001, 2011		The percentage of people born outside of the UK is very low in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent (3.8%). Therefore, migration is not seen as a significant driver of increased housing demand in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent. As a result an assessment of one down arrow is seen as appropriate.
<b>Overcrowding</b>	Census data 2001, 2011		<p>Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent has seen a major increase of 78.6% in the number of households with more than 0.5 and up to 1.0 persons per room, and an increase of 24.7% in the number of people up to 0.5 per room.</p> <p>However, there has been no change in those households with over 1.0 persons per room, which contrasts with the borough-wide data which recorded decreases of 8.8% of houses containing over 1.0 and up to 1.5 person per room and a more significant decrease of 22.4% of properties with over 1.5 persons per room.</p> <p>Therefore, the NPA does not seem to suffer from overcrowding issues</p>
<b>Concealment</b>	Census data 2001, 2011		ONS data shows that there are 3 concealed families in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, or 1.4% of families; this is slightly higher than the figure for Darlington (1.0%), however it is lower than the average for England as a whole (1.9%). This does not indicate that concealed families (and therefore unmet additional demand for housing in the area from those already living there) is a significant issue for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.
<b>Rate of development</b>	Darlington BC, Land Registry Data/AECOM Calculations		The rate of development is very low; since 2011 there haven't been any new dwellings completed. An assessment of three up arrows has therefore been deemed appropriate due to this low level of provision, especially in a context of anticipated increasing need across the HMA. As a result, overall housing need, which is a combination of past, present and future demand, is likely to be exacerbated by an unresponsive housing market.

**Table 2: Summary of local factors specific to Client NP with a potential impact on housing Type**

Factor	Source(s) (see Chapter 4)	Possible impact on housing needed	Conclusion
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Factor	Source(s) (see Chapter 4)	Possible impact on housing needed	Conclusion
<b>Affordable Housing (AH)</b>	Census, SHMA studies, Housing Waiting List data	<p>At the borough level in 2013, the lower quartile affordability ratio stood at 5.3.</p> <p>There was an increase of 1,100 families claiming housing benefit between 2008-09 and 2014-15 who lived in Private Rented accommodation, compared to a rise of 200 families in social housing.</p> <p>Overall there were 346 households overall on the housing waiting list in Bands 1 and 2 as at September 2017, but none of these were within the NPA.</p>	<p>This indicates an affordability crisis for those on lower incomes, in 2013 the lower quartile house price was £81,000 whilst the average house price in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent was £253,875</p> <p>Shared ownership is a plausible route to home ownership for those on low incomes, for example first time buyers.</p> <p>The value of entry level market properties generates a compelling argument for discounted market sales housing and affordable private rent housing. These tenures are suitable for newly forming households.</p> <p>The evidence we have gathered does not support LC&amp;MPC developing its own AH policy, but does suggest Local Plan policy should be assertively implemented within the NPA.</p> <p>Build to Rent should be included in the housing mix, to acknowledge the growing role this takes in providing housing to those on modest incomes.</p>
<b>Demand/ need for smaller dwellings</b>	Census, Land Registry Price Paid Data	<p>One person households currently form around 21% of all households and, while they have shown limited growth in recent years, they are forecast to grow strongly in the district in the period to 2039.</p>	<p>In part, this stems from the ageing population, and is therefore likely to be an issue for the NPA given the strong representation of older age groups.</p>
<b>Demographic Change</b>	Census, SHMA studies	<p>Over the decade 2001 – 2011, the increases in the younger generation are significant. Numerically these increases are significant as well, in terms of the 0-15 age band the increase was an additional 118 persons, whilst in the 25-44 age group the increase was 82 persons, which, in the context of the overall NPA (715 persons) is significant.</p> <p>At the district level there is projected to be an increase to the proportion of those</p>	<p>The NPA has experienced a significant increase in the age groups 0-44. The NPA has a strong orientation towards family life; those age groups of 44 and below are predominant.</p> <p>At a borough level, significant changes in the proportion of those aged 65 and above are projected; and this is likely to be reflected in the NPA as current family households mature into those of older couples and singles as their children set up households of their own, many of whom will do so outside the area.</p> <p>In arriving at an appropriate level of housing for older people of different types, we have applied the Housing Learning and Improvement Network's suggested numbers per 1,000 of the 75+ population. The projections show an estimate of the increase in the numbers of older</p>

Factor	Source(s) (see Chapter 4)	Possible impact on housing needed	Conclusion
		<p>aged 65-84 of around 60% by 2036, and for those aged 85 and over the forecast is between 160% and 170%.</p>	<p>people aged 75+ of 58 (97-39). This will result, over the plan period, in a need for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. additional conventional sheltered housing units = <math>60 \times 5.8\% = 3</math> (rounded)</li> <li>2. additional leasehold sheltered housing units = <math>120 \times 5.8\% = 7</math> (rounded)</li> <li>3. additional 'enhanced' sheltered units, split 50:50 between those for rent and those for sale = <math>20 \times 5.8\% = 1</math> (rounded)</li> <li>4. additional extra care housing units for rent = <math>15 \times 5.8\% = 1</math> (rounded)</li> <li>5. additional extra care housing units for sale = <math>30 \times 5.8\% = 2</math> (rounded)</li> <li>6. additional specialist dementia care homes = <math>6 \times 5.8\% = 1</math> (rounded)</li> </ol> <p>Note that there is no obligation for these all to be provided within the parish itself and specialist dwelling need is likely therefore to be split between the parish and the rest of the district, taking account of the fact that [Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent] is unlikely to be able to provide many of the specialist housing types needed within its own boundaries- although there could be the potential for these to be provided within Darlington itself, taking account of its higher levels of accessibility to services and facilities.</p>
<p><b>Family-sized housing</b></p>		<p>At 34% families with children form the largest household type in the NPA.</p> <p>The NPA has seen an increase in the last decade in smaller and medium sized family homes that are forecast to be in greatest need over the plan period.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood plan policy could play an active role to ensure the mix of dwelling sizes addresses the community need for smaller dwellings of 1-3 rooms as well as family dwellings of 5-6 rooms over the Plan period.</p>

### Recommendations for next steps

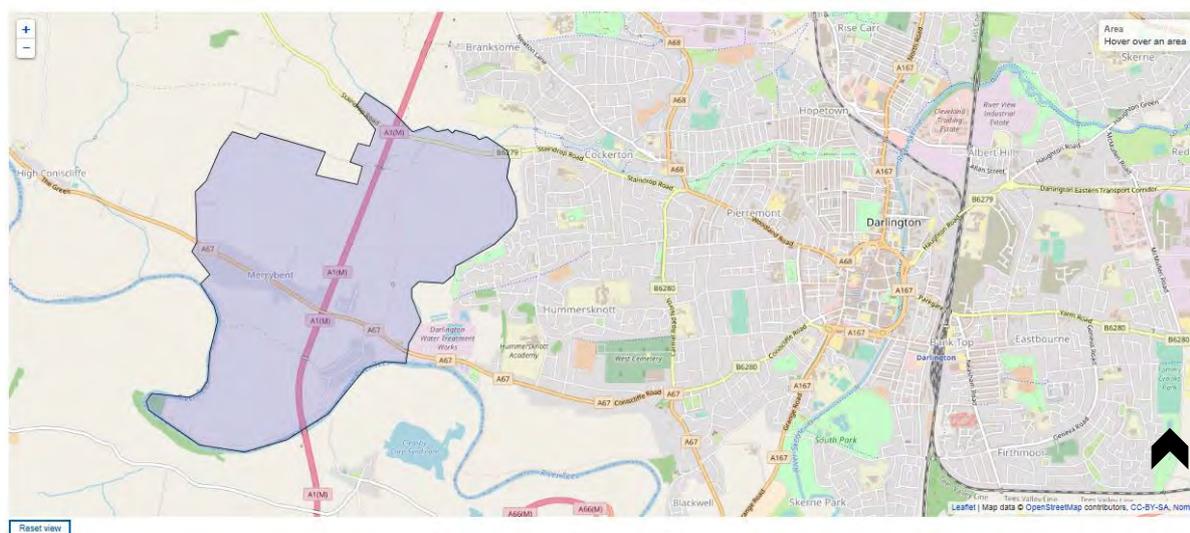
25. This neighbourhood plan Housing Needs Assessment has aimed to provide Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Planning Group with evidence on housing trends from a range of sources. We recommend that the parish should, as a next step, discuss the contents and conclusions with DBC with a view to agreeing and formulating draft housing policies, in particular the appropriate approach to identifying the level of need for new housing in the NP area, bearing the following in mind:
- Neighbourhood Planning Basic Condition A, that it has regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State; Condition D, that the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development; and Condition E, which is the need for the neighbourhood plan to be in general conformity with the adopted strategic development plan;
  - the views of Darlington Borough Council – in particular in relation to the housing need figure that should be adopted;
  - the views of local residents;
  - the views of other relevant local stakeholders, including housing developers;
  - the numerous supply-side considerations, including local environmental constraints, the location and characteristics of suitable land, and any capacity work carried out by Darlington Borough Council, including but not limited to the SHLAA; and
  - the recommendations and findings of this study.
26. Recent changes to the planning system, forthcoming changes to the NPPF, as well as the implementation of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, will continue to affect housing policies at a local authority and, by extension, a neighbourhood level.
27. This advice note has been provided in good faith by AECOM consultants on the basis of housing data and national guidance current at the time of writing (alongside other relevant and available information).
28. Bearing this in mind, we recommend that the steering group should monitor carefully strategies and documents with an impact on housing policy produced by Darlington Borough Council or any other relevant body and review the neighbourhood plan accordingly to ensure that general conformity is maintained.
29. At the same time, monitoring ongoing demographic or other trends in the factors summarised in Tables 1 and 2 would be particularly valuable.

## 2. Context

### 2.1 Local context

30. Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent is a village within the borough of Darlington in County Durham. The Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA) boundary follows the Parish council boundary, which follows the natural watercourse of the Baydale Beck to the east, the River Tees to the south, and part of the west. The remainder of the western boundary and the northern boundary follow field boundaries.

Figure 2: Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan Area



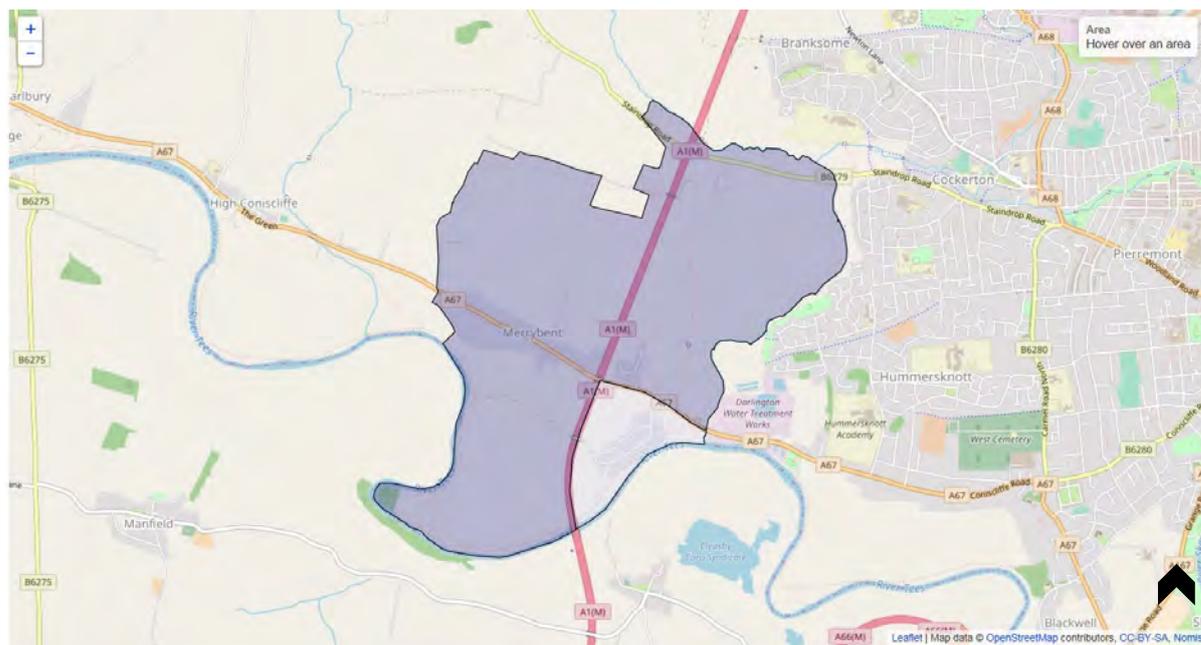
Source ONS

31. The NPA is bisected by the A1 (M) which runs north to south, whilst the A67 runs east to west. In terms of rail travel, there are no rail stations within the NPA, although Darlington station on the East Coast mainline is around 3 miles from the centre of the NPA, and is approximately 10 minutes by car, and 25 minutes by bus, therefore transport connections by rail for longer journeys are good.

### 2.2 Census Geography

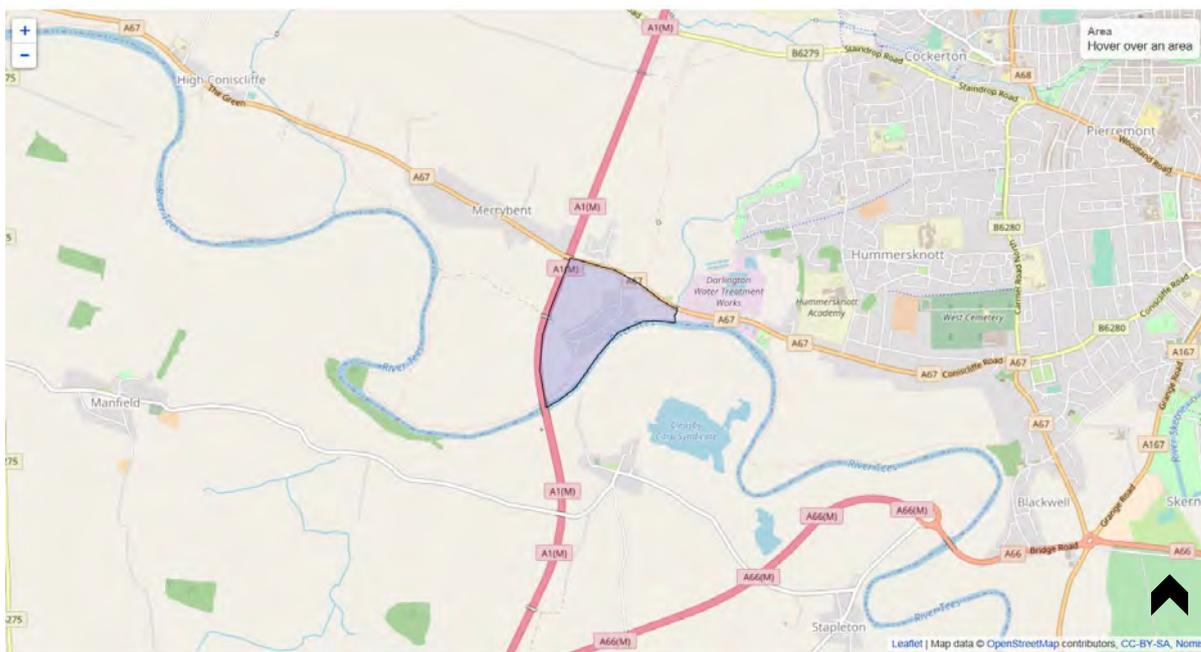
32. For the purposes of this study, data was downloaded from both the 2001 and 2011 censuses to contribute to an assessment of the housing needs in the area. Whilst the 2011 Census data can be filtered down to the Parish level, thereby ensuring exact accuracy, 2001 Census data is grouped according to a series of other geographical areas or units rather than parishes, which are known as Output Areas (OAs), Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), and Medium Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs). As such, to find the appropriate 2001 Census data for the entire parish, a combination of two output areas were used as illustrated in figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3 – Census 2001 Output Area 00EHNP0008



Source ONS

Figure 4 – Census 2001 Output Area 00EHNP0009



Source ONS

## 2.3 Planning policy context

33. In line with the Basic Conditions of neighbourhood planning, Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) are required to be in general conformity with the adopted strategic local policies. Consequently, there is a requirement for the relevant Local Plan to be reviewed as part of this HNA.
34. The Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Local Plan consists of a Core Strategy that was adopted on 6th May 2011. The Core Strategy sets out the strategic planning framework for DBC, including Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent. Significantly for the purposes of the

HNA, the Core Strategy call for sites includes a strategic allocation that lies within the NPA. Consequently, two joint planning applications have been submitted for this site for approximately 1500 dwellings.

35. The overall housing figure for Darlington Borough as expressed in the core strategy is a minimum of 8,675 dwellings from 2004 to 2026.
36. Policy 10 of the Core Strategy 'New Housing Development' breaks down the housing additions over the next 15 years and state where this development will occur, supporting urban concentration with regeneration of the whole of Darlington to 2026. Other relevant policies in the Core Strategy are Policy CS11 'Meeting Housing Needs'. This states that new housing and conversion and adaptation of existing dwellings will be required to contribute to achieving an overall balanced housing stock to meet local needs and aspirations, particularly the needs of an ageing population and increasing affordable housing.
37. Policy CS11 also includes a threshold for affordable housing, which is set at up to 30% for all development of 15 dwellings (or 0.5ha) or more within the main Urban area and 5 dwellings (or 0.2ha) or more outside of it. Overall, the Core Strategy includes a target of 675 affordable homes between 2011 and 2026. Along with affordable housing provision, policy CS11 sites that housing for people with disabilities, housing for the elderly and detached family housing in all appropriate locations should be provided.

### 3. Approach

#### 3.1 Research Questions

38. Housing Needs Assessment at neighbourhood plan level can be focused either on quantity of housing needed, type of housing need, or both. In most cases, there is a need to focus on quantity where the housing target for the settlement being assessed is unclear, for example where the local authority has not set a specific target for the settlement, or where there is no local plan in place.

#### 3.2 Quantity

39. It is therefore necessary to arrive at an estimate for the required housing growth relying on a number of reliable sources; these are:
- A number derived from the Local Plan;
  - The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) - proportional share drawn from Objectively Assessed Need (OAN);
  - Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) household projections; and
  - Net dwelling completion rates 2001-2016.
40. In addition to the question of quantity, is it important to break this down to enable policy to be developed that reflects community need. This question relates to the tenure, type, size of dwellings together with the requirement for 'specialist' housing suited to the needs of niche groups. The key research questions can be summarised as follows:
- RQ1: Given the Local Authority's housing targets, what is an appropriate **housing target** for the LCMNDP?*
  - RQ2: What **affordable housing tenures** (social housing, affordable rented, shared ownership, intermediate rented) should be included in the housing mix?*

iii) RQ3: *What **market housing tenures** should be included in the housing mix?*

iv) RQ4: *What **type** (terrace, semi, bungalows, flats and detached) **and size** (number of habitable rooms) of housing is appropriate?*

V) RQ5: *Given recent and forecast demographic changes and affordability issues, which are the **key groups in the community** and which of these is in particular need?*

### 3.3 Study Objectives

41. The objectives of this report can be summarised as:

- Collation of a range of data with relevance to housing need in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent relative to DBC;
- Analysis of that data to determine patterns of housing need and demand; and
- Setting out recommendations based on our data analysis that can be used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan's housing policies.

42. The remainder of this report is structured around the objectives set out above. Chapter 4 sets out conclusions and recommendations based on our data analysis that can be used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan's housing policies.

### 3.4 Relevant Data

#### 3.4.1 SHMA

43. The PPG states that neighbourhood planners can refer to existing needs assessment prepared by the local planning authority as a starting point. As Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent NPA is located within the Darlington Housing Market Area, we therefore turned to the Darlington Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2015, henceforth SHMA) which covers the housing market area and informs emerging housing policies at a local authority level, including affordable housing policy.

44. The SHMA draws upon a range of data including population projections, housing market transactions and employment scenarios to derive the objectively-assessed housing need. As such, it contains a number of points of relevance when determining the degree to which the housing needs context of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent itself differs from the authority-wide picture.

45. The SHMA raises a number of concerns over the accuracy of the population and household data from ONS, and applies a number of scenarios with regards to population and household projections to take account of this concern.

### 3.5 RQ1: Given the Local Authority's housing targets, what is an appropriate housing target for the LCMNDP?

46. We have estimated the quantity of housing needed in NPA according to four different sources; these are:

1. Local Plan (LP)
2. SHMA - proportional share drawn from OAN
3. DCLG Household projections
4. Net dwelling completion rates 2001-2011
5. Net dwelling completion rates 2011-2015

These calculations are set out below.

### Local Plan

47. The Core Strategy (2011) puts forward a housing requirement for 8,675 for the borough over the Plan Period between 2004 and 2026. The proportional share may be calculated for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent NPA based on the proportion of homes in the NPA. At the time of the last Census there were 283 dwellings in the NPA, or 0.58% of all homes in the borough. Therefore, **50 homes** (0.58% of 8,675) homes would be allocated as the 'fair share' of the borough target.
48. In arriving at a final total for the Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent NP, however, it is important for the HNA to take into consideration the number of dwellings built in the NPA between 2011 and 2016. In the case of the Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent NPA, there were nil completions during this period; therefore a housing target for the LCMNP that is in conformity with emerging district policy remains **50 dwellings (50 - 0) between 2017 and 2036 or 3 homes per year (rounded)**.

### SHMA

49. It is important to remember that the SHMA presents a demand-side only, or 'unconstrained' assessment of need (often identified as Objectively Assessed Need, or OAN<sup>5</sup>), as opposed to a final housing target. The final housing target will, by contrast, take into account a number of other supply-side factors, including for example the availability of land, viability, infrastructure and environmental constraints.
50. The SHMA presents an appropriate starting point for deriving need at the NPA level, because it is the most up-to-date evidence available. It takes into account the latest population and household projections, as set out in the 2014 Sub-National Population Projections (SNPP) on which the Household Projections are based, which the PPG guidance suggests should be taken as a 'starting point' in determining need at the local authority level.
51. However, the SHMA (2015) expresses doubts over the validity of the ONS projections with regards to Darlington. It states that:
- *2012 based SNPP and current mid-year estimates (MYE) identify that the population growth which occurred between 2001 and 2011 has now stopped and that the population of Darlington has fallen since 2011. This is very unlikely and implies that any projections based on data produced since 2011 are likely to be under-estimating the projected population growth.*

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<sup>5</sup> The OAN includes the baseline demographic need, plus any adjustments made to official forecasts to account for projected rates of household formation post 2021, past suppression of the formation of new households, the effect of past under-supply, employment forecasts, market signals and affordable housing need (as set out in paragraph ID2a-004 of the NPPG). This is sometimes described as 'policy off' because it does not take account of final policy responses as a result of taking into account capacity, environmental and infrastructure constraints.

- *The population and household growth figures from 1991 to 2001 and then from 2001 to 2011 are both unlikely to be correct. Instead, the indications are that, along with many other areas such as Luton and Southend on Sea, the 2001 Census under-estimated the number of households and population of Darlington. This would imply that using data trended between the official 2001 and 2011 Census figures would over-estimate the projected growth in population.*
52. The SHMA then considers three new models for driving population projections for Darlington as follows:
- *Using the official population and migration estimates from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses to derive 10 year trends and projecting these forward. This is our standard approach, but because of our concerns in this case we have labelled it the High-trend scenario;*
  - *Using the official population and migration estimates from the 1991 and 2011 Censuses to derive 20 year trends and projecting these forward. This gives lower figures than the 10 year trend model, but the figures are still much higher than 2012 based SNPP. We have labelled this as the Low trend scenario.*
  - *Using the now superseded ONS mid-year population estimates from 2001 to 2011 to derive 10 year trends and projecting these forward. We have labelled this as the mid-trend scenario.*
53. The SHMA then goes on to discuss the logic behind applying the mid-trend scenario as the preferred approach, as ‘*collectively the now superseded mid-year population estimates produced between 1991 and 2011 come(s) very close to tracking the population growth between that time.*’
54. The 2015 SHMA identifies an OAN for Darlington over the period 2011 - 36 of 11,160 homes.<sup>6</sup> To calculate the NPA’s ‘fair share’ of this target, it is again possible to use Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent NPA proportion of all housing in the borough (0.58%). This produces a figure of **65 dwellings** (rounded). As explained in para. 66 , there were nil completions in the NPA during the period 2011 to 2016, which means the housing requirement based on the SHMA remains as **65 dwellings over the plan period, or 3 per year** (rounded).

### **DCLG Household Projections**

55. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) periodically publishes household projections. The NPPG recommends that these household projections should form the starting point for the assessment of housing need.
56. However, as we have seen in the assessment of the SHMA, there are significant doubts over the accuracy of the ONS projections with regards to Darlington. Nevertheless, for completeness we apply the HNA methodology to these projections, but will attach less weight to these when arriving at an estimate of housing need for the NPA.
57. The most recent (2014-based) household projections were published in July 2016<sup>7</sup>, and extend to 2039. Although population projections are only available at a local authority level, a calculation of the share for the NPA is nevertheless possible by using the household projections based on the NPA’s household numbers in the 2011 Census.

<sup>6</sup> SHMA, 2013, page 259

<sup>7</sup> See 2014-based DCLG Household Projections live tables at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-household-projections>

58. At the 2011 Census, Darlington Borough had 46,670 households and the NPA 268 households, or 0.57% of the total (rounded).
59. In the 2014-based household projections, the projection for Darlington is for 49,687 households in Darlington by 2031. Assuming it continues to form 0.57% of the borough's total households, the NPA's new total number of households would be 283 (rounded); therefore 15 new households would form in the NPA between 2011 and 2031 (or a rate of growth of 0.75 households per year).
60. Number of households does not, however, equate precisely to number of homes, with the latter slightly higher in most places. The NPA is no exception; in the 2011 Census, there were 268 households but 283 homes. This gives a ratio of 0.95 households per home. In the case of NPA, then, **a projection of 15 new households translates into a need for 16 (15 /0.95) homes** (rounded to the nearest whole number).
61. These figures are based on the assumption that 2014-based government projections for household growth at the Local Authority level are accurate. As the annual mid-year population estimates have now been released for 2016, the 2014-based household projections may need to be 'rebased' for accuracy. The mid-2016 population estimates give the actual number of people in the NPA at that point, meaning the difference between the estimated and the previously projected number of households can be taken into account in future projections.
62. The 2014-based household projections were based on the 2014-based Sub-National Population Projections, which estimated that by 2016 there would be 105,500 people in Darlington. The mid-2016 Estimates show that based on the latest information there were estimated to be 105,646 people, which is higher than the projections by 146 people. Assuming average household sizes remain constant (in 2011 there were an average of 2.26 people per household, obtained by dividing population by number of households) this equates to 65 more households across the borough.
63. Taking 49,752 (49,687 + 65) as our revised household number at 2031, this equates to 284 households in the NPA (rounded), producing a revised growth in the number of households between 2011 and 2031 of 16. Taking into account the disparity between household numbers and dwelling numbers (16/0.95), this produces a figure of 17 homes. Therefore **a re-based household projections-derived dwellings requirement is 17 dwellings, or 1 dwelling per annum (rounded) per over the plan period.**
64. This projection is an entirely unconstrained, theoretical figure comprising a relative proportion of the overall projected increase, and thus does not take into account political, economic, demographic or any other drivers that might have influenced, or may in future influence, the Local Plan distribution across the District and hence any difference between this figure and a future Local Plan-derived figure.

### **Home growth 2001 – 2011**

65. Consideration of home growth 2001-2011 provides a projection based on the rate of delivery of net new homes between the two censuses. As we have seen, there was an increase of 79 homes in the NPA between these two dates, **or an average annual rate of increase of 8 homes (rounded)**. Multiplying this annual figure by the number of years remaining within the plan period from 2017 onwards **produces a gross need for 152 homes.**

### **Home growth since 2011**

66. It is also helpful to consider a projection based on the rate of delivery of net new homes since the last census (2011), using data gathered and monitored by the LPA. Between 1st April 2011 and the 31st March 2016, there have been nil new dwellings completed<sup>8</sup>. These peaks and troughs reflect the susceptibility of the development industry to fluctuations in demand and costs of development, along with the rural nature of the NPA. If we take the average over the period 2001 and 2017 and apply this over the plan period this provides a **figure of 4 dwellings per annum** (79 /17).

### *The standard methodology*

67. On September 14th, 2017, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published “Planning for the right homes in the right places: consultation proposals” (the consultation proposals), a consultation on a new proposed Standard Methodology for Assessing Housing Need (SMAHN) for arriving at an OAN for housing for individual local authorities, thus avoiding both the expense of producing complex SHMAs and the disagreements surrounding their methodologies. DCLG has stated that “this consultation sets out a number of proposals to reform the planning system” including “how neighbourhood planning groups can have greater certainty on the level of housing need to plan for”.<sup>9</sup>

68. Whilst the document is currently being consulted on at the time of this HNA report, it is important to consider the implications of this emerging policy guidance for potential housing need calculations in the NDP. Therefore, what follows is an assessment of the NPA’s housing need based on the new proposed methodology which, should the policy be put in place in its current form, will be the preferred figures for housing need in the area. This projection is included for information only, bearing in mind that the consultation makes clear that LPAs will have the option of using alternative methods of calculating their OAN, so long as the number they arrive at exceeds that produced by the new standard methodology.

69. Proposed updates to the PPG include a requirement that LPAs provide a housing need figure to neighbourhood planning groups, and that they may do this by making a reasoned judgement based on the settlement strategy and housing allocations in their plan, so long as the local plan provides a sufficiently up-to-date basis to do so.<sup>10</sup> The starting point for using the SMAHN for the neighbourhood level is therefore whether the current Local Plan was adopted before or after the introduction of the NPPF.

70. In the case of DBC, the Core Strategy was adopted in 2011, and is therefore out-of-date, and does not provide a reliable basis for arriving at a housing needs figure for the NPA. The indicative assessment using the SMAHN formula is 177 dwellings per annum for DBC. This is a fall on the current figure of 388 dpa set out in the Core Strategy of around 54%, and suggests there should be a decrease of 3,158 dwellings over the Plan Period from 2011 to 2026, or a new target of 2,655.

71. As this total is a decrease on the current adopted housing figure, the proposed 40% cap on any increase is not applicable. Given the Local Plan is not up-to-date, it is necessary to use the Government’s proposed formula for arriving at a housing needs figure for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent in these circumstances.

*“The proposed formula is simply to take the population of the neighbourhood planning area and calculate what percentage it is of the overall population in the local*

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<sup>8</sup> Email from Darlington Borough Council, 12/10/17

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-right-homes-in-the-right-places-consultation-proposals>

<sup>10</sup> DCLG, [planning for the right homes in the right places: consultation proposals](#), page 31

*planning authority area. The housing need figure in the neighbourhood planning area would then be that percentage of the local planning authority's housing need.”<sup>11</sup>*

72. Building on this proposed approach, we can estimate that the annual requirement for NPA, based on the proportion of the population of DBC falling into the NPA (at the time of the 2011 Census the population of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent was 716 and that of DBC 105,564, the proportion of the borough total living in the NPA is therefore 0.68%) would be **1 dwelling per annum** (rounded), or **22 dwellings** by the end of the plan period to 2033 (taking 2011 as a base year).

### 3.6 RQ2: What affordable housing tenures (social housing, affordable rented, shared ownership, intermediate rented) should be included in the housing mix?

73. The provision of affordable housing is critical to the continuation of most communities as viable settlements; it needs however to be understood in relation to other tenures. The PPG states that HNAs should investigate household tenure in the current stock and recent supply, and make an assessment, based on a reasonable interpretation of the evidence gathered, whether continuation of these trends would meet future needs or whether, on account of significant misalignments between supply of housing falling into different tenure types and local need/demand, policies should support a change to the profile of tenure within the NPA's housing stock.<sup>12</sup>

#### 3.6.1 Definitional issues

74. It is necessary at this stage of the study to make clear the distinction between affordable homes as planning terminology and the more colloquial meaning of the phrase. In the course of this study, we refer to Affordable Housing, abbreviated to 'AH'. We mean by this those forms of housing tenure that fall within the definition of Affordable Housing set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): social, affordable rented and various forms of intermediate housing. To distinguish this from the colloquial definition, we refer to the latter as Affordable Market Housing (AMH).

75. In this paragraph we briefly review the proposed reforms to the definition of AH set out in the Government's Housing White Paper published in February 2017. These reforms make clear the Government's commitment to home ownership but recognised the important role of affordable rent for those not currently seeking home ownership. The changes proposed would broaden the definition of affordable housing, supporting 'present and future innovation by housing providers in meeting the needs of a wide range of households who are unable to access market housing'. This would include '*products that are analogous to low cost market housing or intermediate rent, such as discount market sales or innovative rent to buy housing. Some of these products may not be subject to 'in perpetuity' restrictions or have recycled subsidy*'.

76. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 made provision for a new simplified definition of affordable housing as '*new dwellings...to be made available for people whose needs are not adequately served by the commercial housing market*'<sup>13</sup>. Secondary legislation is required to implement this definition, necessitating further parliamentary debate<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places, pp. 32

<sup>12</sup> PPG Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: 2a-021-20160401

<sup>13</sup> Housing and Planning Act 2016, part 6, section 159 (4)

<sup>14</sup> Section 159(2) of the Act inserts '(3ZB) No regulations may be made under section 106ZB [which contains the updated definition of affordable housing] unless a draft of the instrument containing the regulations has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, each House of Parliament'

77. The Housing White Paper<sup>15</sup> confirms that a revised definition of AH will be brought forward through changes to the NPPF later this year, proposing a definition as *'housing that is provided for sale or rent to those whose needs are not met by the market (this can include housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership)'* and which *'meets the criteria'* for one of the following models<sup>16</sup>:

- **Social rented housing**, defined as housing owned by local authorities and private registered providers with guideline target rents determined through the national rent regime. It may be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements, as agreed with the local authority or Homes and Communities Agency;
- **Affordable rented housing**, defined as housing let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households eligible for social rented housing. Affordable rent is controlled at no more than 80% of the local market rent including service charges where applicable;
- **Starter Homes**, as defined in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and subsequent secondary legislation with an income restriction of £80,000 outside London. These homes are expected to provide a new low cost market housing product for first time buyers between the ages of 23 and 40 with a mortgage, sold for no more than 80% of open market value and capped at £250,000 outside London;
- **Discounted market sales housing**, sold at a discount of at least 20% below market value with provision to remain at a discount for future eligible households. Eligibility is to be determined with regard to local incomes and house prices;
- **Affordable private rent housing**, made available for rent at a level which is at least 20% below local market rent, with provision to ensure that rent remains at a discounted level or alternative affordable housing provision is made if the discount is withdrawn. This is viewed as particularly suited to the provision of affordable housing in Build to Rent schemes; and
- **Intermediate housing**, defined to include discounted market sales and affordable private rent housing – as outlined above – and other housing that is 'provided for sale and rent at a cost above social rent, but below market levels'.

78. A transition period is proposed to enable a review of local policies, with the revised definitions intended to apply from April 2018. The Government also intends to introduce a requirement for sites of 10 units or more to ensure that at least 10% of all homes are affordable home ownership products, including Starter Homes, shared ownership homes and homes available for discount market sale.

79. The evidence assembled to answer RQ2 seeks to populate a series of 'key indicators'; these are the age structure of the population, household composition and income both now and how they are forecast to change in future years. Through a consideration of these trends and how they relate to each other, it is possible to arrive at recommendations as to how not only the tenure of housing in the plan area, but also type and size should be governed through planning policy.

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<sup>15</sup> DCLG (2017) Fixing our Broken Housing Market (para A.120)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid (p100)

### 3.6.2 Current tenure profile

80. Before we present this data, it is necessary to present a picture of tenure in the NPA at the moment. Table 3 presents Census data from 2011 that shows the predominant tenure is one of owner occupation, with the private rented sector also representing a significant element of the tenure profile of the NPA.

**Table 3; Tenure (households) in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, 2011**

Tenure	Low Coniscliffe& Merrybent	Darlington	England
Owned; total	78.4%	64.9%	63.3%
Shared ownership	0.7%	0.4%	0.8%
Social rented; total	0.4%	15.5%	17.7%
Private rented; total	19.4%	18.2%	16.8%

*Source: Census 2011, AECOM Calculations*

81. Table 4 provides a longitudinal assessment of tenure in the NPA recorded in Census data from 2001 and 2011; this allows consideration of any changes that have taken place. This shows that in the context of the NPA there has been a substantial uplift in privately rented dwellings (increasing from 11 homes in 2001 to 52 homes in 2011), and a more modest uplift in owner occupied dwellings. The significant fall in percentage terms relating to social rented properties is due to the extremely low numbers of this stock across the period, there were 3 social rented properties in 2001 and only 1 in 2011.

**Table 4: Rates of tenure change in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, 2001-2011**

Tenure	Low Coniscliffe& Merrybent	Darlington	England
Owned; total	16.7%	0.3%	-0.6%
Shared ownership	0.0%	21.9%	30.0%
Social rented; total	-66.7%	-5.6%	-0.9%
Private rented; total	372.7%	142.4%	82.4%

*Source: Census 2011, AECOM Calculations*

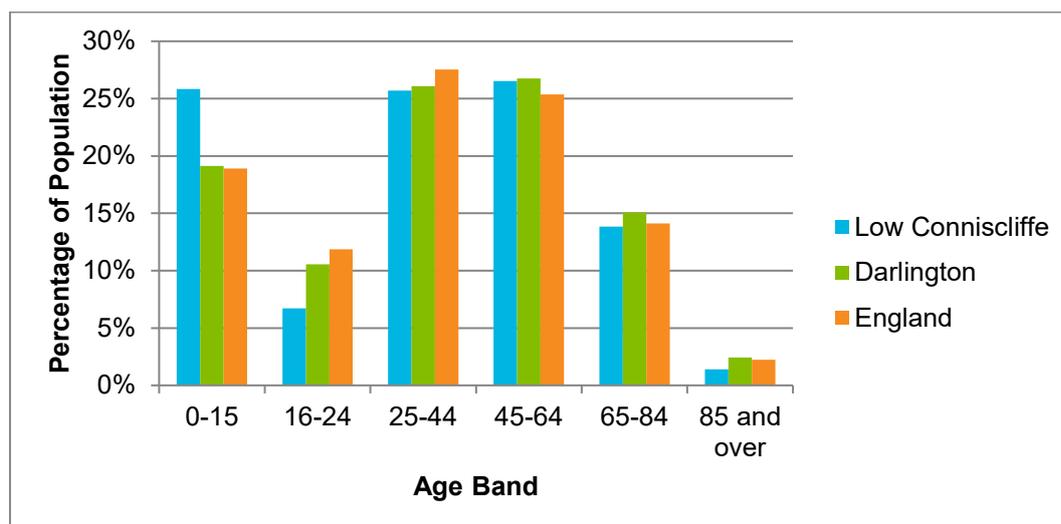
82. Of those residents that completed the previously mentioned householder survey carried out by LCMPC, only 6% referred to affordable housing in their answer against the question "What kind of development do you think is needed in the area."

### 3.6.3 Age Structure

83. Having established the tenure profile of the NPA, we now review the age structure, household composition, and income indicators in turn.

84. With regards to the age structure profile of the NPA, the following chart presents 2011 census data which shows that the NPA has a significantly higher percentage of people in the 0-15 years age group than both Darlington and England, a slightly higher percentage of people aged 45 -64 then England (but slightly lower than Darlington overall), and has an equivalent percentage of those aged 65-84 when compared to the national figure. The NPA does have a lower percentage of those aged 16-24 then either Darlington or England, and similarly has a lower percentage of those aged 85 or more.

**Figure 5: Age bands in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, Darlington, England 2011**



Source: Census 2011

85. The NPA age profile is supported further by Table 5, which shows the rates of age changes in the NPA between the 2001 and 2011 census. The increases in the younger generation are significant when compared to the Darlington and England figures which suggests that an increase in the number of young family households moving into the area between 2001 and 2011. Numerically these increases are significant as well; in terms of the 0-15 age band, the increase was an additional 118 persons, whilst in the 25-44 age group the increase was 82 persons, which, in the context of the overall NPA (715 persons) is significant. There were increases in the 65-84 and 85 and over age bands at a higher rate than either Darlington or England, with an additional 16 persons and 4 persons respectively.

Table 5: Rates of age change in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, 2001-2011

Age group	Low Coniscliffe & Merrybent	Darlington	England
0-15	176.1%	2.1%	1.2%
16-24	41.2%	18.5%	17.2%
25-44	80.4%	-0.7%	1.4%
45-64	6.7%	16.5%	15.2%
65-84	19.3%	8.3%	9.1%
85 and over	66.7%	28.4%	23.7%

Source: Census 2011, AECOM Calculations

86. Taking the demographic data into account, it is apparent that the NPA has experienced somewhat of a change in the age of its population between 2001 and 2011. The data shows that the NPA is predominantly home to people under the age of 64, with a significant increase in the age groups 0-15, and 25-44.

### 3.6.4 Household Composition

87. With regards to household composition, Table 6 presents the analysis of the NP area when compared to Darlington and the national picture. In terms of one person households, the NPA has a much lower percentage (20.9%) than either Darlington as a whole (32.4%) or the national percentage (30.2%). The NPA also has a significantly lower percentage (10.1%) of 'other' one person households than Darlington (19.2%) and England (17.9%).

88. When compared to Darlington, the NPA has a higher percentage of one family households, (74.3% vs 62.9%), and a higher percentage of both one family households with no children (24.3%) than Darlington (18.5%) and England (17.6%). In addition the NPA has a higher percentage of one family households with dependent children (33.6%) than both Darlington (27.1%) and the national figure (26.5%).

**Table 6: Household Composition, Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, 2011**

Household Composition		Low Coniscliffe& Merrybent	Darlington	England
One person Household	Total	20.9%	32.4%	30.2%
	Aged 65 and over	10.8%	13.1%	12.4%
	Other	10.1%	19.2%	17.9%
One family only	Total	74.3%	62.9%	61.8%
	All aged 65 and over	11.2%	8.3%	8.1%
	With no children	24.3%	18.5%	17.6%
	With dependent children	33.6%	27.1%	26.5%
	All children non dependent	5.2%	9.1%	9.6%
Other household types	Total	4.9%	4.7%	8.0%

**Source: Census 2011, AECOM Calculations**

89. Figure 6 is reproduced from Figure 15 of the 2015 SHMA. This shows the population projections by 5 year age groups applying the scenarios set out in paragraph 52 over the period 2011 to 2036. The projections range from 122,000 to 128,900, depending on the scenario applied. However, in arriving at a projection, the SHMA states that there is ‘a strong case to be made for both the 1991-2011 migration model and the unadjusted MYE model. Given that these two models produced very similar results we consider that it is appropriate to take the mid-point of the two estimates.’

**Figure 6 Population projections 2011-36 by gender and 5 year age cohort for the Darlington Borough based on High, Mid and Low trend migration scenarios. (Note: All figures presented unrounded for transparency, but should only be treated as accurate to the nearest 100)**

Age	2011			2036 10-years 2001-2011			2036 20-years 1991-2011			2036 Unadjusted MYE Migration		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Aged 0-4	3,318	3,247	6,565	3,754	3,582	7,336	3,495	3,335	6,830	3,556	3,393	6,950
Aged 5-9	3,230	2,916	6,146	3,734	3,553	7,286	3,476	3,308	6,785	3,537	3,366	6,903
Aged 10-14	3,074	3,117	6,191	3,719	3,578	7,297	3,472	3,342	6,815	3,531	3,398	6,928
Aged 15-19	3,324	3,120	6,444	3,633	3,442	7,075	3,408	3,226	6,635	3,462	3,277	6,739
Aged 20-24	2,927	3,103	6,030	3,305	3,349	6,653	3,089	3,123	6,213	3,140	3,176	6,317
Aged 25-29	3,170	3,369	6,539	3,989	4,001	7,990	3,736	3,731	7,467	3,796	3,795	7,591
Aged 30-34	3,194	3,243	6,437	3,864	3,734	7,598	3,604	3,469	7,073	3,666	3,531	7,197
Aged 35-39	3,229	3,513	6,742	3,943	3,837	7,779	3,664	3,556	7,220	3,730	3,622	7,352
Aged 40-44	3,745	3,876	7,621	4,140	4,040	8,180	3,845	3,750	7,595	3,914	3,818	7,732
Aged 45-49	4,015	4,022	8,037	4,024	4,019	8,043	3,758	3,767	7,525	3,821	3,827	7,647
Aged 50-54	3,548	3,719	7,267	3,662	3,732	7,394	3,447	3,538	6,985	3,498	3,584	7,082
Aged 55-59	3,169	3,156	6,325	3,381	3,439	6,820	3,210	3,293	6,503	3,251	3,328	6,578
Aged 60-64	3,284	3,386	6,670	3,320	3,536	6,856	3,180	3,413	6,593	3,214	3,442	6,656
Aged 65-69	2,631	2,656	5,287	3,672	3,849	7,521	3,543	3,734	7,277	3,573	3,762	7,335
Aged 70-74	2,106	2,374	4,480	3,595	3,790	7,385	3,491	3,693	7,184	3,516	3,717	7,232
Aged 75-79	1,611	1,973	3,584	2,856	3,230	6,087	2,785	3,158	5,944	2,802	3,175	5,978
Aged 80-84	1,051	1,571	2,622	2,118	2,487	4,605	2,072	2,435	4,507	2,083	2,447	4,531
Aged 85+	834	1,763	2,597	2,854	4,131	6,985	2,797	4,034	6,831	2,810	4,057	6,868
<b>Total</b>	<b>51,460</b>	<b>54,124</b>	<b>105,584</b>	<b>63,563</b>	<b>65,329</b>	<b>128,892</b>	<b>60,074</b>	<b>61,907</b>	<b>121,981</b>	<b>60,899</b>	<b>62,716</b>	<b>123,615</b>

Source: SHMA 2015, DWP

90. Further analysis of this table allows the projected increases to be represented by the wider age bands similar to the census (There was no age band for 0-15, although it was possible to analyse an age band of 0-14) and for the increases to be represented by percentages for Darlington as a borough. This shows that although there are relatively small increases across all age bands from 0-44, significant increases are projected across the 65-84 and 85+ age bands. Even taking into account the concern over the accuracy of the ONS data, it is clear that there are significant changes in the population structure projected for Darlington during the next twenty years.

**Table 7 – Change in Age bands from 2011 to 2036, Darlington**

Age group	2036 10 years trend 2001-2011 % change from 2011 census	2036 20 years trend 1991- 2011 % change from 2011 census	2036 Unadjusted MYE Migration % change from 2011 census
0-14	15.96	8.08	9.94
15-24	10.05	3.00	4.67
25-44	15.39	7.37	9.27
45-64	2.88	-2.45	-1.19
65-84	60.26	55.96	56.99
85 and over	168.96	163.03	164.46

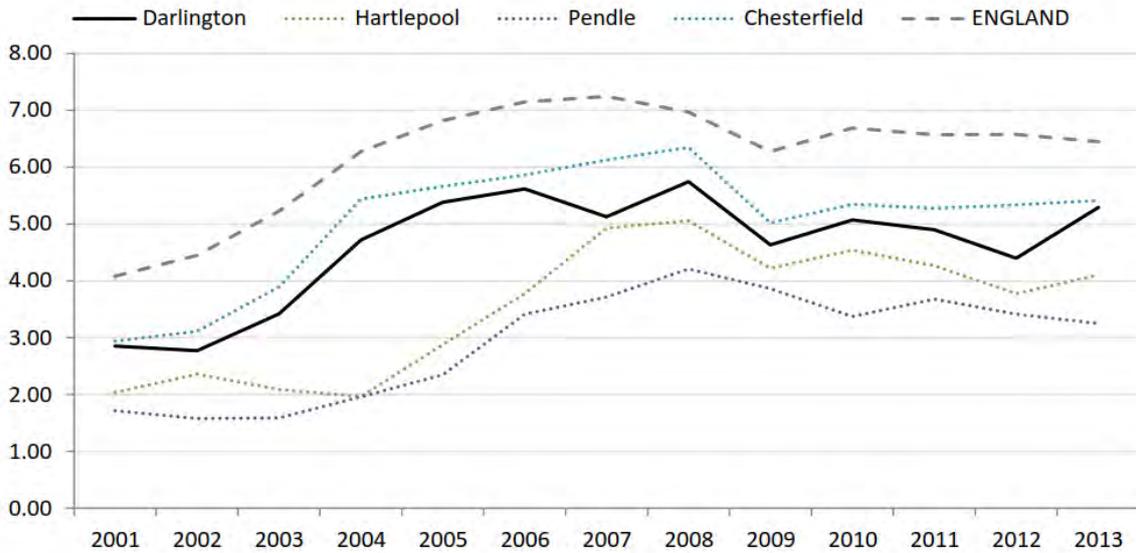
*Source: SHMA 2015, DWP, Aecom Calculations*

91. Bringing the evidence relating to household composition together, we have identified Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent as having an age structure that has undergone significant change in the period between the two censuses. The NPA has a strong orientation towards young families; those aged 44 and below are predominant.
92. At a Borough level, significant changes in the proportion of those aged 65 and above are projected; and this is likely to be reflected in the NPA as current family households mature into those of older couples and singles as their children set up households of their own, many of whom will do so outside the area.

### 3.6.5 Affordability

93. To understand need for AH in the NPA it is necessary to identify that proportion of the population who are unable to access AMH without subsidy. To do this, we consider two primary indicators: firstly, affordability of housing expressed as a multiple of household income, known as the 'Affordability Ratio'; secondly, 'Income Thresholds.' The latter denotes the maximum share of a family's income that should be spent on accommodation costs if enough resources are to remain to cover other needs, as well as discretionary spending.
94. Affordability considers the relationship between price of a good, and the resources available to purchase it. In the context of housing, a useful (though crude) indicator that provides an understanding of this relationship is the Lower Quartile Affordability Ratio (LQAR); this produces a number that expresses lower quartile house-prices as multiple of lower quartile household income. This is helpful both as a way of understanding the extent to which those on lower incomes can access affordable market housing (AHM) for sale and the relative affordability of housing in the NPA compared to other places.
95. Below, we reproduce SHMA figure 48 as figure 7, which shows how Darlington compares with other comparable districts and the national ratios, and how affordability has fluctuated since 2001. The dip in 2008-2009 reflects the effect of the financial crisis on the housing market. At a LQAR of 5.3, housing in the borough was the second least affordable in the data set when the national figure is discounted. The average lower quartile house price in Darlington in 2013 was £81,000.

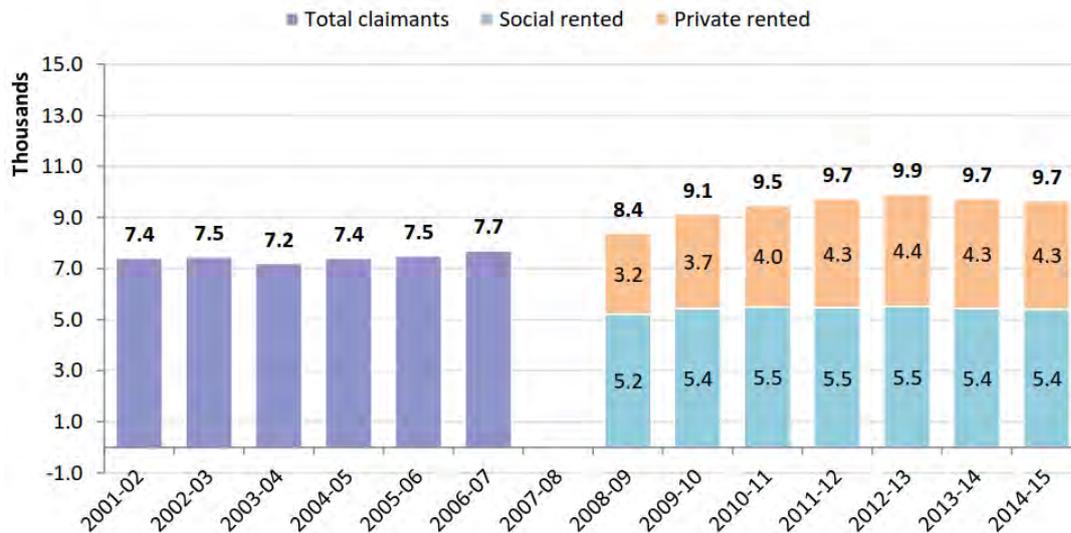
**Figure 7 Ratio of Lower Quartile House Price to Lower Quartile Earnings**



Source: SHMA (2015), derived from DCLG. Note: HMA figure derived using population weighted average of Local Authority Data

96. Figure 8 shows that overall, the number of claimants receiving housing benefit in Darlington increased from 8,400 in 2008-9 to 9,700 in 2014-15. Within this increase, it is noticeable that the levels of claimants has remained relatively stable in social rented tenure, increasing from 5,200 in 2008-09 to 5,400 in 2014-15; however there was a much more significant increase in the number of claimants in private rented accommodation, which experienced an increase of 1,100 families between 2008-09 and 2014-15. This increase in claimants in private rented accommodation reflects the low levels of social housing developments in the relevant period.

**Figure 8 Number of claimants in receipt of housing benefit by tenure**



Source: SHMA 2015, DWP

### 3.6.6 Affordable Housing Waiting List

97. Information provided by DBC on their Affordable Housing Waiting List shows that overall as at September 2017, there were 1,519 households registered across the 4 different bands. Bands 1 and 2 are considered as representing those in priority need. Band 1

represents those losing homes through regeneration, those who meet the criteria to be classed as statutory homeless, people who need to move on urgent medical grounds, or need to move on welfare grounds, etc. whilst Band 2 is for those in 'high housing need', and include those who are classed as non-priority homeless, those who need to move due to a high medical need, those who are 3 or more bed spaces short of requirements, along with people who need to move on hardship grounds etc. Within the NPA, there were nil households registered in any bands, however there is no social housing stock within the NPA, and therefore there is no expressed demand<sup>17</sup>. As with other HNAs, the focus is on those households that are in the greatest need. In this instance that is reflected in those households within bands 1-2. This reduces the figure to 346 households overall.

98. As identified above, the Core Strategy adopted an affordable housing target of 675 dwellings in Darlington. If the NPA had been expected to take a proportionate share of this target, based on its percentage of total dwellings in Darlington at the time of the 2011 census (0.58%), this would indicate that roughly 4 affordable units should be delivered during the Core Strategy plan period (2011-2026). To put this into context, no new market dwellings were completed in the period between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2016.

99. In terms of overall need at the local authority level, the SHMA indicates that Darlington has a net need for 4000 affordable homes per annum during the period 2011 and 2036, or 160 affordable dwellings per annum. Between 2011 and 2015 there were 368 affordable dwellings delivered within Darlington<sup>18</sup>. If the starting point of this requirement is taken from 1st January 2016 and ends on the 31st December 2036, subtracting the affordable housing delivered since 2011 leaves an overall figure of 3,632 dwellings remaining. This equates to a residual annual affordable housing requirement of 182 dwellings per annum. This requirement is a lot higher than the target in the Adopted Core Strategy, although it is acknowledged that the SHMA represents an unconstrained assessment of need, rather than a constraint-derived target from a policy document.

100. If the NP area was to deliver a proportionate element of this total based on its percentage of total dwellings in Darlington at the 2011 census (0.58%), this would indicate a requirement for roughly 21 affordable units to be delivered between 2016-2036 in the NP area. It is important to note this figure represents an unconstrained assessment, and that the various supply side considerations would need to be factored into a final target, if the NP were to adopt one.

101. The following points summarise the key indicators:

- Tenure is predominantly owner occupation (78%) with private rented (19%) accommodation making up almost all the remaining tenure profile of the NPA;
- In terms of age structure, there was a significant increase in those aged 44 or below during 2001 and 2011;
- 74% of households are one family households;
- 33% of households are households with dependent children;
- One person households make up 21% of the NPA;
- There are significant increases projected in those aged 65 or more at a borough level;
- The affordability ratio in Darlington in 2013 was 5.3;
- There were zero households within the NPA on the council's affordable housing waiting list as at September 2017.

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<sup>17</sup> Email from Darlington Borough Council, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017

<sup>18</sup> Darlington Borough Council Housing Report 2015, Annual Monitoring Report Housing Factsheets, email from DBC Planning officer 17/10/17.

### 3.6.7 Market Segmentation

102. Bringing together the evidence from our consideration of affordability, age structure and household composition, in line with PPG, we have sought to identify the different market segments in the population of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent. We then use this understanding to put forward recommendations for policy relating to Affordable Housing as well as and size and tenure of dwelling.
103. In order to understand the terminology surrounding size of dwellings, it is important to note the number of rooms recorded in the Census excludes kitchen, bathrooms and toilets. In the market segments table that follows, 'dwelling size' should be translated as follows:
- 1 room = Bedsit
  - 2 rooms = flat/house with one bedroom
  - 3 rooms = flat/house with 2 bedrooms
  - 4 rooms = flat/house with 2 bedrooms and 2 reception rooms, or 3 bedrooms and 1 reception rooms
  - 5 rooms = flat/house with 3 bedrooms and 2 reception rooms
  - 6 rooms = house with 3 bedrooms and 3 reception rooms or 4 bedrooms and 2 reception rooms
  - 7+ rooms = house with 4, 5 or more bedrooms
104. The table below indicates the different market segments, and the degree to which they are a growing, stable or declining group within the local population. One 'up' arrow indicates this group is growing modestly in the NPA; two 'up' arrows indicates strong growth, three 'up' arrows suggests very rapid growth in years to come. Where segments are falling in numbers, or not growing, neutral or down arrows are shown.
105. It is important to note that, as we have seen, the market is good at picking up growth trends in the market. For this reason, policy intervention is only justified in the case of market failure (where the market is unable, for reasons of viability, or there are incentives, deliberate or otherwise, that drive the market not to respond to trends). Examples include the failure of the market to provide homes to those on low incomes and the under-supply of dwellings for the elderly.
106. Similarly, because the market likely has the capacity to deliver the homes required for the majority of residents (either through for-sale dwellings or for-rent), policy intervention is normally only required where the evidence is both compelling and the circumstances it describes serious. This is because policies carry both costs and risks; they can distort the market, preventing it from providing homes or encouraging a position of market equilibrium in which homes are accessible to target markets.

### 3.6.8 Arrows analysis

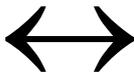
107. Our conclusions as regards those market segments that are forecast to grow in size must take a lead from the data presented in the SHMA that supports an OAN of 446 dpa. As we have seen, this is premised on the basis that a greater number of young people will need to be housed in future years than the unadjusted 2014 household projections suggest. With this in mind, in addition to the significant increase in families in the parish between 2001 and 2011, we foresee a requirement of dwellings of 5 rooms to address their needs.
108. Taking into consideration the forecast of strong growth in solo households, it is appropriate for planning also to support dwellings of 1-3 rooms in size.

109. In terms of tenure, there is no social housing in the parish, and tenure is made up by owner occupation (78%) and private rented (19%).

110. This analysis is supported by feedback from local estate agents, who comment that there has been an increased demand for terraced / townhouse properties in the past decade, which are typically between 3 and 5 rooms in terms of the definitions provided above.

**Table 8: Market Segments**

Market segments	Income range	Tenure	Presence in Plan Area	Size of home
Young family where parents are aged 24-44 with 1+ children aged 0-15	Median	PRS, shared equity, AMH	↑ ↑	5 rooms
Professional Head of Household Young family where parents are aged 24-44 with 1+ children aged 0-15	Mean	AMH, Market Housing (MH)	↑ ↑	5 rooms
Professional Head of Household family where parent are aged 44-64 with non-dependent children living at home	>Mean (equity rich)	Market Housing	↔	6+ rooms
Lone parent (with 1+ children)	Lower Quartile (equity poor)	Social Housing	↔	3 rooms
One person household aged under 65	Median (equity poor)	PRS, shared equity, DMH	↑	2 rooms
One person household aged 65+ with wealth	Median (equity rich)	Market Housing	↑	2-3 rooms
One person household aged 65+ without wealth	Lower Quartile (equity poor)	PRS	↑	2 rooms
Young couple no children	>Mean (equity poor)	Market Housing, Shared Equity, DMH	↑	4+ rooms

Market segments	Income range	Tenure	Presence in Plan Area	Size of home
Concealed households	Lower Quartile (equity poor)	Social Housing		1-3 rooms

### 3.7 RQ3. What type of market housing (private rented and housing for sale) should be included in the housing mix?

#### 3.7.1 For sale housing

111. Given the very limited quantity of affordable housing in the NPA, the needs of the great majority of the people will be served by the market. People on higher incomes will be able to access a variety of market dwellings; their choices will be driven principally by how much they can afford to spend, the extent to which old age is driving their choice of home as well as personal taste.
112. The operation of the market is the best means of addressing the demand for different types of housing for sale. It is important planning policy does not place unnecessary burdens on the market preventing its ability to respond to demand; this is after all the principal way equilibrium is achieved in the housing market and house price growth kept in check. In this way the notion of viability is essential. It is important not to deter development in the context of clear housing need; to do so will not only frustrate the delivery of new housing but also may deprive the community of resources for infrastructure improvements.

#### 3.7.2 Private Rented Sector

113. As we have seen, there is evidence of growing demand for private rented accommodation in the NPA, and this tenure forms around a fifth of the existing housing stock. The reason for the strength of this demand is that, for those households unable to access market housing to buy, and who do not qualify for affordable housing, private rented housing is the only remaining option.
114. Given the trends identified in this HNA, Low Coniscliffe should support build to rent (BTR) development, which may include an element of affordable housing, depending on demand and is likely to be brought forward by specialist developers funded by institutional investors. This will provide accommodation that is likely to be of consistently higher quality than is available through the traditional small private landlord.
115. The Housing White Paper proposed a number of modifications to the definition of affordable housing for planning purposes. One of these is Affordable Private Rent Housing (APRH); this is housing made available for rent at a level which is at least 20 per cent below local market rent. It is envisaged such housing would be delivered as part of BTR schemes.
116. Bringing our consideration of housing need driven by affordability (RQ's 2 & 3) together, the following key findings emerge:
- The current tenure profile of the NPA means there is little, if any accommodation for those on low incomes, given that the bulk of the housing stock is in owner occupation. This suggests that those households ineligible for AH, but who

cannot afford market housing may struggle to access housing suitable for their needs, meaning they may have to move out from the area.

- The LQAR for Darlington as a whole in 2013 was 5.3, suggesting that any market housing, whether 'affordable' or otherwise, isn't accessible to households on average incomes.
- Notwithstanding the extremely limited availability of shared ownership dwellings detected in Census 2011, this tenure is a plausible route to home ownership for those on low incomes, for example first time buyers.
- The value of entry level market properties compared to affordability ratios generates a compelling argument for discounted market sales housing and affordable private rent housing. These tenure types are particularly suitable for newly forming households.
- The evidence we have gathered does not support LC&MPC developing its own AH policy, but does suggest Local Plan policy should be assertively implemented within the NPA.
- Finally, of the market housing coming forward, Build to Rent should be included in the housing mix, to acknowledge the growing role this tenure has in providing housing to those on modest incomes.

### 3.8 RQ4: What type (terrace, semi, bungalows, flats and detached) and size (number of habitable rooms) of housing is appropriate?

117. As identified earlier in this study, PPG recommends a consideration of the existing housing provision and its suitability, having regard for demographic shifts in age and household composition as well as affordability, to address future as well as current community need. For this reason, we start with a consideration of the existing housing stock.

118. In Table 9 we present the range of dwelling types in the NPA; the majority of dwellings are detached properties, with semi-detached and terraces also representing significant levels of stock. There are a very small number of flats.

**Table 9 Accommodation type (households) in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent**

Dwelling type		Low Coniscliffe & Merrybent	Darlington	England
Whole house or bungalow	Detached	44.9%	17.3%	22.4%
	Semi-detached	30.0%	37.6%	31.2%
	Terraced	20.8%	31.2%	24.5%
Flat, maisonette or apartment	Purpose-built block of flats or tenement	2.1%	11.1%	16.4%
	Parts of a converted or shared house	0.7%	2.2%	3.8%
	In commercial building	1.1%	0.8%	1.0%

*Source: Census 2011, AECOM calculations*

119. Turning to size of dwellings, tables 10 and 11 show the range of dwelling sizes in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent and how the overall housing stock has changed in the decade between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses. Firstly, we note that 91% of all dwellings had five rooms or more in 2011. Bearing in mind the Market Segments analysis earlier, this suggests the housing stock is partially aligned with future need, given the increased size of dwellings over the reporting period.

**Table 10 Accommodation type (rooms) in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, changes 2001- 2011**

Number of Rooms	2001	2001	2011	2011
	Low Coniscliffe	Darlington	Low Coniscliffe	Darlington
1 Room	0	167	0	154
2 Rooms	0	722	0	736
3 Rooms	3	3214	3	3831
4 Rooms	18	8789	10	9393
5 Rooms	36	11884	30	12139
6 Rooms	56	10130	86	10265
7 Rooms	29	3722	49	4781
8 Rooms or more	58	3681	50	2876
9 Rooms or more			40	2495

Source: Census 2011, AECOM calculations

120. Table 11 expresses Table 10 as percentages, bringing out the changes that have taken place in dwelling size between the Censuses. From this we can see there has been a sharp increase in the number of larger family homes of 6, 7 and 8 rooms or more, and a significant fall in homes of 4 rooms. This increase in larger family sized homes corresponds with the changes in the age structure of the HNA, although there is concern over the future requirements for an ageing population and the lack of smaller properties.

**Table 11: Rates of change in number of rooms per household in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, 2001-2011**

Number of Rooms	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	Darlington	England
1 Room	0.0%	-7.8%	-5.2%
2 Rooms	0.0%	1.9%	24.2%
3 Rooms	0.0%	19.2%	20.4%
4 Rooms	-44.4%	6.9%	3.5%
5 Rooms	-16.7%	2.1%	-1.8%
6 Rooms	53.6%	1.3%	2.1%
7 Rooms	69.0%	28.5%	17.9%
8 Rooms or more	55.2%	45.9%	29.8%

Source: Census 2011, AECOM calculations

### 3.9 RQ5: Given recent and forecast demographic changes and affordability issues, which are the key groups in the community and which of these is in particular need?

#### 3.9.1 Sheltered and extra-care housing

121. Given the significant forecast increases in people aged 75+, it is appropriate for policy to provide support for a significant quantum of sheltered<sup>19</sup> and extra care<sup>20</sup> housing as part of the delivery of new housing. Table 12 below identifies the growth in the population of over 75s between 2011 and 2031.

**Table 12: Change in the population of over 75s between 2011 and 2031**

Age band	2011			2031		
	Population (Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent)	Population (Darlington)	Percentage of population	Population (Darlington)	Population (Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent)	Projected 75+ population (Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent)
All ages	716	105564	0.68	107,200	729	
75+	39	8,722	0.45	14300	13.34	97

*Source: 2014-based Sub-national population projections, DCLG and Census 2011 (ONS) AECOM calculations*

122. In arriving at an appropriate level of housing for older people of different types, we have applied the Housing Learning and Improvement Network's suggested numbers per 1,000 of the 75+ population<sup>21</sup>. The table above shows an estimate of the increase in the numbers of older people aged 75+ of 58 persons (97-39). This will result, over the plan period, in a need for:

- additional conventional sheltered housing units = 60 x 5.8% = 3 (rounded)
- additional leasehold sheltered housing units = 120 x 5.8% = 7 (rounded)
- additional 'enhanced' sheltered units, split 50:50 between those for rent and those for sale = 20 x 5.8% = 1 (rounded)

<sup>19</sup> Sheltered housing (also known as retirement housing) means having your own flat or bungalow in a block, or on a small estate, where all the other residents are older people (usually over 55). With a few exceptions, all developments (or 'schemes') provide independent, self-contained homes with their own front doors. There are many different types of scheme, both to rent and to buy. They usually contain between 15 and 40 properties, and range in size from studio flats (or 'bedsits') through to 2 and 3 bedroomed. Properties in most schemes are designed to make life a little easier for older people - with features like raised electric sockets, lowered worktops, walk-in showers, and so on. Some will usually be designed to accommodate wheelchair users. And they are usually linked to an emergency alarm service (sometimes called 'community alarm service') to call help if needed. Many schemes also have their own 'manager' or 'warden', either living on-site or nearby, whose job is to manage the scheme and help arrange any services residents need. Managed schemes will also usually have some shared or communal facilities such as a lounge for residents to meet, a laundry, a guest flat and a garden. Source: <http://www.housingcare.org/jargon-sheltered-housing.aspx> (accessed 11/04/17)

<sup>20</sup> New forms of sheltered housing and retirement housing have been pioneered in recent years, to cater for older people who are becoming more frail and less able to do everything for themselves. Extra Care Housing is housing designed with the needs of frailer older people in mind and with varying levels of care and support available on site. People who live in Extra Care Housing have their own self-contained homes, their own front doors and a legal right to occupy the property. Extra Care Housing is also known as very or enhanced sheltered housing, assisted living, or simply as 'housing with care'. It comes in many built forms, including blocks of flats, bungalow estates and retirement villages. It is a popular choice among older people because it can sometimes provide an alternative to a care home. In addition to the communal facilities often found in sheltered housing (residents' lounge, guest suite, laundry), Extra Care often includes a restaurant or dining room, health & fitness facilities, hobby rooms and even computer rooms. Domestic support and personal care are available, usually provided by on-site staff. Properties can be rented, owned or part owned/part rented. There is a limited (though increasing) amount of Extra Care Housing in most areas and most providers set eligibility criteria which prospective residents have to meet. <http://www.housingcare.org/jargon-extra-care-housing.aspx> (accessed 11/04/17)

<sup>21</sup> Housing LIN (2011) Strategic Housing for Older People: Planning, designing and delivering housing that older people want, available online at: [http://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_library/Resources/Housing/SHOP/SHOPResourcePack.pdf](http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/SHOP/SHOPResourcePack.pdf)

- additional extra care housing units for rent =  $15 \times 5.8\% = 1$  (rounded)
- additional extra care housing units for sale =  $30 \times 5.8\% = 2$  (rounded)
- additional specialist dementia care homes =  $6 \times 5.8\% = 1$  (rounded)

123. Note that there is no obligation for these all to be provided within the parish itself and clearly in some cases, such as providing a single specialist dementia care dwelling, it would not be economically feasible to do so. As such, these 58 specialist dwellings need not be thought of as all needing to be provided within the neighbourhood plan housing target- rather, there will be some overlap between these dwellings and the target, depending on the number that could be provided within the parish itself.

124. This specialist dwelling need is likely therefore to be split between the parish and the rest of the district, which will enable the elderly to live either within or as close to the parish as possible, taking account of the fact that Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent is unlikely to be able to provide many of the specialist housing types needed within its own boundaries- although there could be the potential for these to be provided within Darlington itself, taking account of their higher levels of accessibility to services and facilities, which will help in the recruitment and retention of specialist care staff and enable economies of scale (e.g. a centralised dementia care unit or enhanced sheltered development serving a widely dispersed rural population from a single location).

### 3.9.2 Retirement villages

125. Projects that involve the delivery of multiple homes satisfy the desire on the part of many older people to live in an environment with people facing similar challenges; retirement villages are often a cost-effective means of delivering sheltered and extra care housing together with the facilities and services these settlements imply. Given the relatively small number of houses identified in the overall NP housing requirement and the numbers of units that result from the LIN analysis, it is not considered would be appropriate to consider this approach to the delivery of housing for the elderly in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.

### 3.9.3 Senior Co-housing

126. Co-housing has been identified as being particularly suited to the needs of older residents. It offers a way for a group of people with similar interests and needs to come together to create an environment suited specifically to their requirements. Moreover, it can be designed to help address one of the most important issues for older people: isolation and loneliness. A number of successful case studies exist of both projects developed specifically with the needs of older people in mind, and others that encourage multi-generational housing, such as Featherstone Lodge in Forest Hill<sup>22</sup> and LILAC in Leeds. In the first example, the design facilitated the creation of public areas that encouraged social interaction between members of the community; moreover, a 'common house' was built in the grounds of the scheme that provided a shared space in which people could come together for meeting and shared activities.

### 3.9.4 Multi-generational homes

127. Multi-generational living has been identified as a possible solution not only for older people, but for all generations where it makes financial sense to share accommodation, particularly younger people who are struggling to set up their own households. This gives rise not only to designs for new homes, but conversions to existing dwellings, introducing internal subdivisions and peripheral extensions to create internal layouts that balance the

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.featherstonecohousing.co.uk/> (visited 12/04/17)

private needs of different generations with the benefits of over-lapping, shared communal spaces.<sup>23</sup>

128. The phenomenon of the aging population has an up-side; with increases in the quality of health-care, older people are able to live active lives for longer, the so-called 'third age' after retirement when people still want to live fully active lives. Within a household or community where tasks and facilities are shared, they are in a good position to take on both voluntary and paid work, for example looking after grandchildren or taking care of the elderly.

### 3.9.5 Lifetime Homes

129. Many local authorities incorporate policy into their Local Plans requiring a proportion of new homes to be built according to 'lifetime homes' principles; these are ordinary homes incorporating a number of design criteria that can be universally applied to new homes at minimal cost, for example parking that makes getting in and out of the car as simple and convenient as possible and ensuring movement in hallways and through doorways should be accessible to a wide range of people, including those using mobility aids or wheelchairs, and those moving furniture or other objects.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.9.6 'Right-sizing'

130. As we have identified earlier, there is a need for a greater number of the type of dwellings that facilitate 'right-sizing' for older people. It is important to note, this does not necessarily imply moving to a smaller home. Many older people have the wealth (and the choice that comes with it) to create a home suited to having visitors and accommodating care staff, who may need to make over-night stays.

131. For this reason, it is important to recognise that different ages have different needs, thus in the provision of housing, choice is critical, catering for those with relatively modest requirements, to those who are more dependent on help. The provision of choice that responds to need is part of creating a smoothly operating local housing market in which older people are able move out of family homes when they wish, thus freeing up these properties for others.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.9.7 Planning flexibility

132. Planning policy can be mobilized to help properties to become more adaptable in the context of an increasingly elderly population. This includes allowing the conversion of conventional dwellings or groups of dwellings (for example terraced housing) into multiple homes, particularly where additional features are included to address 'lifetime homes' criteria and to encourage interaction with the wider community. This can incorporate bigger community open space as a result of joining up different gardens.<sup>26</sup> This is not dissimilar to the practice of 'alley-gating' where alleyways between the backs of terraced housing have been gated off, and turned into shared community spaces.

### 3.9.8 Lifetime neighbourhoods

133. Creating an environment in which older people feel both welcome and comfortable does not end at the front door. Research exists that considers life-time neighbourhoods, in which the public realm is designed to address the needs of older people, and activates the benefits they can bring in supporting local businesses and encouraging improved public realm for everyone, for example providing more greenery and more walkable, better connected places.

<sup>23</sup> RIBA, *Silver Linings, The Active Third Age and the City*, Page 17-18

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/pages/about-us.html>

<sup>25</sup> Housing LIN, *New Approaches to Housing for Older People*, June 2014, page 6

<sup>26</sup> Gobber, S, *A Bright Grey Future*, Urban Design Group Journal, Spring 2016, page 29

134. Given the expanded role of neighbourhood planning around design outlined in the Housing White Paper of 2017<sup>27</sup>, a compelling notion is that of ‘the amplification of impact of micro-environmental features’ to describe the particular way in which we become more sensitive to the ordinary, smallest features of urban space as we age. This places a particular emphasis on care and reflection in how we design, for example paths and public seating; this, in turn, calls for the participation of older people in the process of design.
135. Design approaches exist that provide a starting point for locally informed policy development in this area, these include Manchester’s Design for Access 2 and the work of Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors (IDGO); IDGO have identified material features that make everyday negotiation of urban space that much easier for older people; these include wide and flat tarmac footways, easy transition level changes, clear, simple and visible signage, frequent warm and supportive seating and well-maintained, safe and open toilets.<sup>28</sup>
136. In addition, the notion of ‘pensioner play-grounds,’ ‘green-gyms,’ community gardens and various forms of guerrilla gardening (for example the Edible Todmorden project) encourage active use of public space and facilities on the part of an older demographic.

### 3.9.9 Age-friendliness

137. Since the millennium, policy at the international level has been directed towards a more holistic appreciation of what an ‘age-friendly’ urban environment looks like. It has been remarked this should extend beyond physical installations, such as public seating and access to WCs, but embrace means mobilising civic agency among older group to forestall incipient marginalisation, enabling them to continue to make a full and active contribution to community life.<sup>29</sup>
138. In 2006 the World Health Organisation (WHO) began developing the ‘Age-Friendly Cities’ movement, now a worldwide network of over 200 member cities around the world. They have produced a guide that offers a way of analysing the city from the perspective of older people, using a framework of inter-related domains: transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, communication and information, civic participation and employment, health and community services.
139. Considering the housing domain, the WHO study identifies a check list of attributes necessary to foster a sense of belonging and well-being among older people. In addition to affordability and designing accommodation with the needs of older people in mind, the adaptability of dwellings is important, for example their capacity to accommodate chair-lifts that enable older people to continue to live in two-storey homes<sup>30</sup>.
140. The WHO also identified access to services, particularly those that become increasingly important as people get older, such as places of worship and community centres.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, optimising well-being has much to do with being able to maintain links with existing networks, which is best achieved by enabling people to remain in their existing communities for as long as possible. In the Australian city of Melville, for example, small clusters of senior’s housing with small gardens are made available throughout the city, so that older people are not isolated from the community and particularly from children.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> HMG, [Fixing our broken housing market](#), page 29

<sup>28</sup> RIBA/Age UK, [An Alternative Age-Friendly Handbook](#), page 54/55

<sup>29</sup> RIBA/Age UK, [An Alternative Age-Friendly Handbook](#), page 16

<sup>30</sup> World Health Organisation: [Global age-friendly cities: a guide](#), page 32

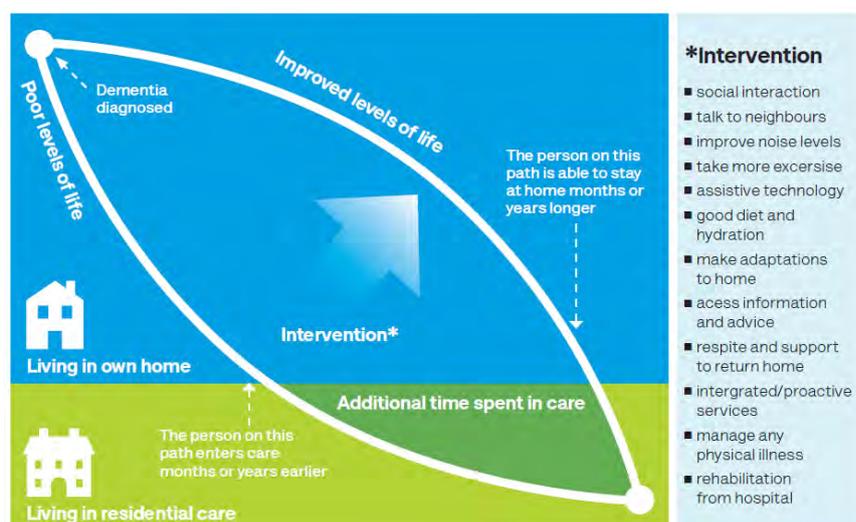
<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, page 33

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, page 35

### 3.9.10 Housing for people with dementia

141. Enabling people with dementia to live in their own homes for longer is critical to their quality of life as a result of the familiarity of surroundings and the help with retaining memories this facilitates<sup>33</sup>. The challenge with this is two-fold; firstly the lack of appropriate adaptations in properties and, secondly, the support required to ensure a home is safe and suitable.
142. Selwood Housing in the South West has pioneered approaches that help overcome these, for example the installation of property exit sensors to inform a monitoring centre when tenants leave their home and then not return within a pre-determined time.
143. In figure 9 below we reproduce a chart showing the impact that early and appropriate intervention can have on the prospect of people with dementia remaining in their own home for longer.

**Figure 9: Dementia care chart**



Source: Dementia Services Development Centre, 2013

### 3.9.11 The role of the Local Authority

144. As suggested above, it is appropriate for the neighbourhood group to work closely with the LPA to develop policy and approaches to addressing the need for housing for elderly people in the area. The LPA is under an obligation through national policy to address the needs of older people,<sup>34</sup> it is therefore appropriate they should play the strategic role in co-ordinating new efforts by housing providers, adult care services, primary care and health trusts, private and third sector organisations to meet the housing needs of older people across the district.

## 4. Market Signals

145. The PPG highlights the importance of taking market signals into account when assessing housing need, given they provide an indication of the balance between demand and supply. This is particularly important to consider given the significant and well-documented changes in the housing market over recent years, which were exacerbated by the economic downturn and subsequent issues in obtaining mortgage finance. The PPG states:

<sup>33</sup> Alzheimer's Society, Dementia-friendly housing charter, page 13

<sup>34</sup> NPPF, para 50

*‘The housing need number suggested by household projections (the starting point) should be adjusted to reflect appropriate market signals, as well as other market indicators of the balance between the demand for and supply of dwellings. Prices rising faster than the national/local average may well indicate particular market undersupply relative to demand.’<sup>35</sup>*

146. These market signals relate to trends discernible within the housing market, and broader economic trends that have an impact on it.

147. The PPG goes on to assert that where there is evidence of an imbalance in supply and demand, an uplift in planned housing numbers – compared to those derived solely from household projections – is required in order to increase the supply of housing to meet demand and tackle affordability issues:

*This includes comparison with longer term trends (both in absolute levels and rates of change) in the: housing market area; similar demographic and economic areas; and nationally. A worsening trend in any of these indicators will require upward adjustment to planned housing numbers compared to ones based solely on household projections.*

*In areas where an upward adjustment is required, plan makers should set this adjustment at a level that is reasonable. The more significant the affordability constraints (as reflected in rising prices and rents, and worsening affordability ratio) and the stronger other indicators of high demand (e.g. the differential between land prices), the larger the improvement in affordability needed and, therefore, the larger the additional supply response should be.’<sup>36</sup>*

148. In discussions with Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish Council and DBC as to the appropriate levels of market dwellings in the Plan Area it will necessary to consider factors that suggest either an uplift or reduction. This study considers the following market signals:

- Employment trends;
- Housing Market (Prices);
- Housing Market (Volume);
- Overcrowding; and
- Rate of Development (changes in housing stock).

## 4.1 Employment Trends

149. Local employment trends can greatly influence housing need as employment opportunities can stimulate demand in the NPA. On the other hand, a relative lack of growth can negatively affect house prices as dwellings located far from employment opportunities may be less attractive to those in full time work. It is therefore important to establish the employment sphere of influence experienced by the residents of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Parish.

150. Table 13 shows that Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent is quite similar to Darlington as a whole in terms of employment activity, although it has slightly higher economically active people (73% of the NPA population compared to 69.7% of the population of Darlington). This higher figure is mainly due to self-employed residents who make up 13.8% unlike only 7.3% of people in Darlington who are self-employed. The level of the population who

<sup>35</sup> [http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments/methodology-assessing-housing-need/#paragraph\\_019](http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments/methodology-assessing-housing-need/#paragraph_019)

<sup>36</sup> [http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments/methodology-assessing-housing-need/#paragraph\\_020](http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments/methodology-assessing-housing-need/#paragraph_020)

are unemployed (1.8%) is significantly lower than it is in Darlington (5.2%) and the rest of England (4.4%). There is a higher proportion of retired residents within Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent (19.5%) compared to Darlington (15.9%). Alongside this, there is a significantly lower percentage of people who are long term sick or disabled (0.2%) compared to Darlington (4.9%) and the rest of England (4.5%).

**Table 13: Economic activity in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, 2011**

Economic category		Low Coniscliffe & Merrybent	Darlington	England
Economically active	Total	73%	69.7%	69.9%
	Employee: Full-time	39%	39.6%	38.6%
	Employee: Part-time	15%	15.1%	13.7%
	Self-employed	13.8%	7.3%	9.8%
	Unemployed	1.8%	5.2%	4.4%
	Full-time student	3.3%	2.5%	3.4%
Economically inactive	Total	27%	30.3%	30.1%
	Retired	19.5%	15.9%	13.7%
	Student	2.4%	3.6%	5.8%
	Looking after home or family	2.8%	4.0%	4.4%
	Long-term sick or disabled	0.2%	4.9%	4.1%
	Other	2%	1.9%	2.2%

Source: ONS Census 2011, AECOM Calculations

**Population, Housing and Employment Projections Paper (2013) – The County Durham Plan**

151. This paper outlines the key issues that County Durham needs to address regarding housing, population and employment. Figure 10 shows how the productivity gap (measured by Gross Value Added) has grown across the UK, the North East and County Durham over the period 2004 to 2011. However, it highlights that Darlington is one of the best performing boroughs within the North East region, performing close to the national average. The core strategy aims to continually supply diverse land for employment, prioritising Darlington Town Centre and Town Centre Fringe. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that this level of development will offer potential future employment opportunities to the residents within the NPA and increase the demand for the area.

**Figure 10: GVA per head 2004 to 2011**

Area	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Hartlepool and Stockton	14,331	14,686	15,142	15,666	15,788	15,491	15,998	16,194
South Teesside	13,059	13,641	14,324	14,821	14,861	14,405	14,804	14,843
Darlington	16,526	17,194	18,257	19,513	20,070	19,509	19,612	19,592
County Durham	10,692	11,137	11,774	12,317	12,488	12,232	12,572	12,661
Northumberland	15,711	16,502	17,308	18,083	18,224	17,720	18,222	18,313
Tyneside	15,711	16,502	17,308	18,083	18,224	17,720	18,222	18,313
Sunderland	14,811	15,636	16,283	16,905	16,837	16,252	16,643	16,763
North East	13,674	14,257	14,935	15,569	15,694	15,294	15,723	15,842
UK	17,845	18,682	19,617	20,643	21,026	20,472	21,023	21,368

Source: Population, Housing and Employment Projections Paper (2013), Durham County Council

Tees Valley Economic Assessment Paper 2016 – Tees Valley Combined Authority

152. This paper is the core statistical document relating to economic development in Tees Valley. The document is updated annually and the structure and composition reflects emerging priorities for the Tees Valley. It helps inform local authorities' Local Plans and strategy documents, by being more diverse in the nature and scale of jobs compared to other areas of the North East. Darlington's economy grew by 11.7%, which is more than the UK average since the pre-recession base point. Therefore, if this growth continues across the borough the demand for housing in the area could increase, especially with the NPA area being so close to Darlington Town Centre as an employment focus.

**Figure 11: GVA Trends**

Indicator	2008 Pre-recession Base Point	2012	2013	2014	2015	Darlington Trend (2012 to latest data)	Better/Worse or Same (2012 to latest data)	National Trend (2012 to latest data)	Most Recent Local Data – Direction of Travel
GVA per annum <sup>1</sup>	£2,078m	£2,240m	£2,298m	£2,502m	n/a <sup>2</sup>	Darlington economy grew by 11.7%	↑	UK GVA grew by 8.9%	↑
GVA per hour worked <sup>3</sup>	86.7	90.3	93.4	92.5	n/a	Grew by 5.8%	↑	UK = 100 Grew by 0.1%	↓
GVA per head	£20,607	£22,301	£21,806	£23,745		Grew by 6.5% per head	↑	Grew by 7% per head	↑

Source: Tees Valley Economic Assessment Paper 2016<sup>37</sup>

153. Census data as shown in Table 14 indicates that 55.4% of those who are economically active in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent tend either to commute less than 10km (39.5%) or work mainly at or from home (15.9%). The significant difference is that the percentage of people commuting 10 to 30km and over 30km to work in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent is higher than the average for Darlington and the rest of

<sup>37</sup> <https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/TVCA207-SEP-Document-Full-WEB.pdf>

England. This is also true for the average distance travelled to work being 24.2km for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, whereas this figure is lower for Darlington (15.7km) and England (14.9km).

**Table 14: Distance to work, 2011**

Location	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	Darlington	England
Less than 10km	39.5%	57.5%	52.3%
10km to less than 30km	26.5%	20.3%	21.0%
30km or more	11.0%	7.2%	8.0%
Work mainly at or from home	15.9%	8.5%	10.3%
Other	7.2%	6.5%	8.5%
Average distance travelled to work	24.2km	15.7km	14.9km

*Source: ONS, Census 2001 and 2011. AECOM calculations*

154. Looking at employment and commuting trends in the borough in future (and therefore within the travel to work area for the vast majority of commuters), the latest Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan (2016) considers that growth in Darlington will continue due to the new station investment that will increase the area's attractiveness to businesses. In addition, the Tees Valley combined authorities' role as a focus for growth within the LEP Strategic Plan would also continue to offer residents within the NPA access to a wide variety of job offers. Given the local plan is proposing significant levels of new mixed employment development close to the NPA and there is already a significant proportion of the Neighbourhood Plan area that either travel a relatively short distance to work or mainly work at home, as well as Darlington's GVA increasing at a faster rate than the national average (Figure 11), this could potentially drive up demand for housing in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.

## 4.2 Housing Transactions: Prices

155. The PPG advises that house prices should be used as an indication of the strength of demand for housing, and adequacy of supply to meet demand. The PPG states house prices can be used to provide a 'market-base' enabling: 'the identification of areas which have clearly different price levels compared to surrounding areas'. The findings provide information about differences across the area in terms of the price people pay for similar housing, market 'hotspots', low demand areas and volatility.<sup>38</sup>

156. To assess the housing market in the Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent NPA, data from the Land Registry was analysed. This data provides price paid, housing type and date of transaction information, which allows housing market trends to be identified. Data was downloaded for the period of January 2007 to September 2017, as this was considered a sufficiently long time frame to establish trends, is presented annually in the figure below. To replicate the NPA area, relevant postcode data was filtered down to the parish level, such that only postcodes within the parish were included in the selection of Land Registry Data used for the analysis.

157. Table 15 and figure 12 illustrate that the stock, and resulting sales, of the NPA is almost exclusively detached, semi-detached and terraced properties. The sales data review therefore is focused on three main types of properties. Detached properties saw a decrease in price post 2008 recession, and then slowly rose to a peak in 2014, with fluctuations in price from 2014-2017. These significant differences in the average prices are due primarily to the relatively small levels of sales transactions within the NPA. The situation is similar with semi-detached properties, which have fluctuated throughout the

<sup>38</sup>Housing and economic development needs assessment PPG, Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 2a-011-20140306

whole reporting period, with the peak sales prices recorded in 2013 and lowest in 2009 and 2016. The trend for terraced properties across the reporting period show that prices have not yet rebounded to those from the pre-recession period in 2007. Again, the lowest recorded prices were in 2009.

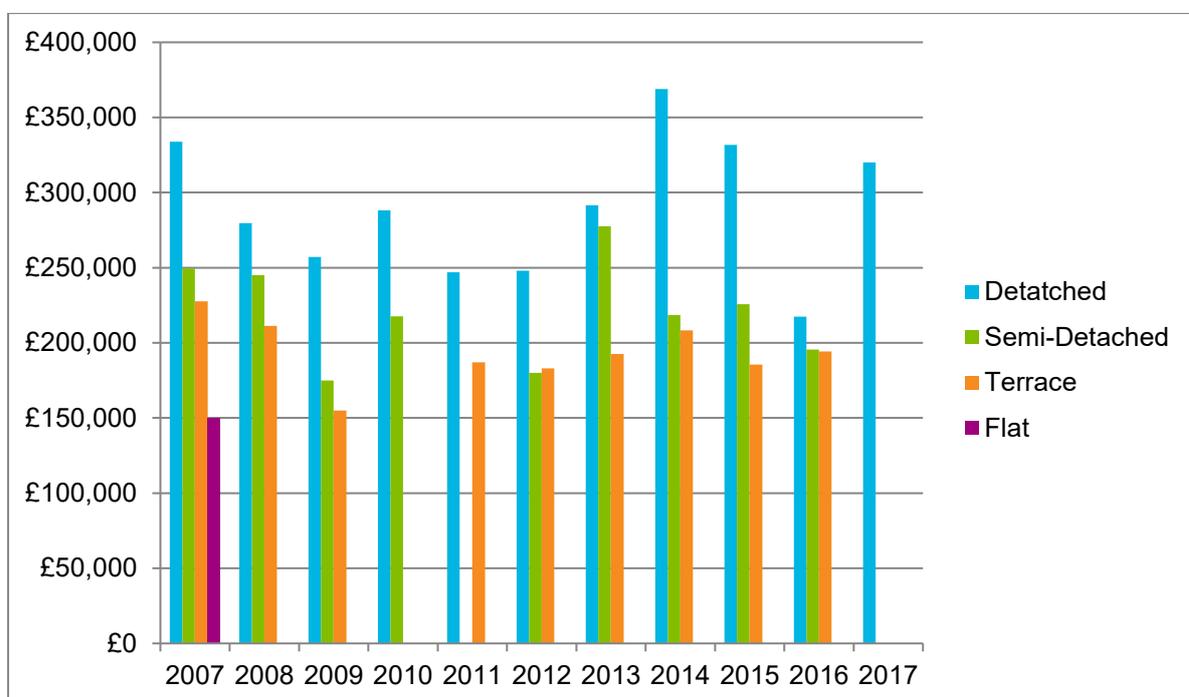
158. Overall, the average price of all housing types has increased by 18%; however this is based on one higher detached property transaction in 2017 skewing the data. If you exclude 2017 data from this the average house prices for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent has actually decreased by 19.5% from 2007 – 2016. Again, this number is derived from a higher number of semi-detached and terrace house sales and a lower number of detached sales in 2016.

**Table 15: Average house prices by type, 2007 to 2017, Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Detached	333,875	279,646	257,137	288,125	247,000	248,112	291,625	369,000	331,687	217,500	320,000
Semi-Detached	249,452	244,968	175,000	217,700	N/A	180,000	277,500	218,500	225,750	195,600	N/A
Terraced	227,721	211,239	155,000	N/A	187,000	183,000	192,500	208,333	185,500	194,250	N/A
Flats	N/A										
All Types	270,349	245,285	195,712	252,913	217,000	203,704	253,875	265,278	247,646	217,500	320,000

Source: Land Registry PPD, AECOM calculations

**Figure 12: Average House Prices by Type, 2007 to 2017, Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent**



Source: Land Registry PPD, AECOM calculations

159. Further analysis is presented in Table 16, which sets out a comparison of prices in 2007 and 2017, alongside the percentage difference between the NP area and Darlington as a whole. This shows that in terms of all property types, prices are now considerably higher in Darlington than the NPA.

160. The values associated with the terraced category of property are to be treated with caution, due to the nature of the property and the very low stock in the NPA compared with Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent overall.

**Table 16 – Comparison of House Prices 2007 and 2017**

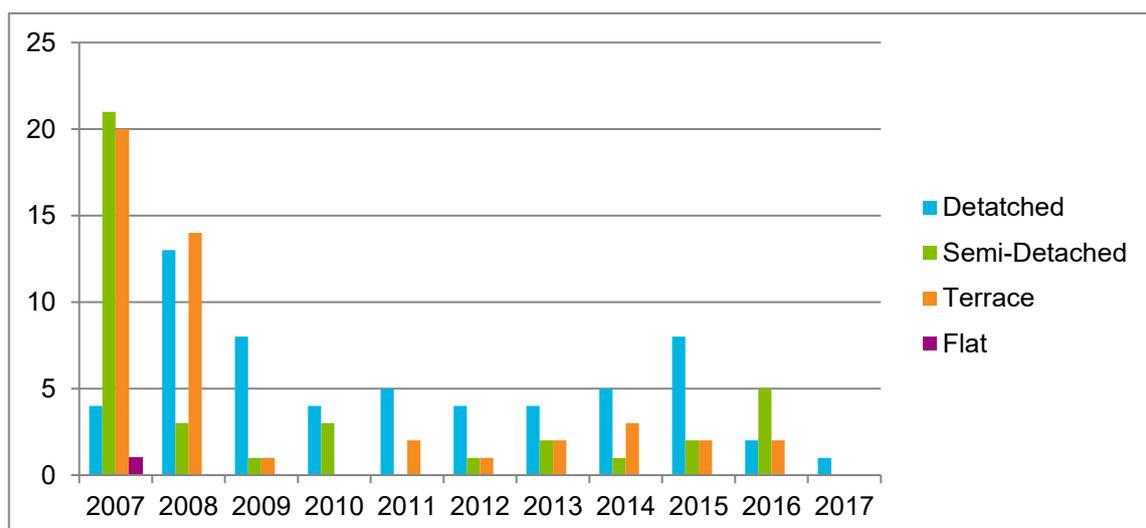
	Prices in January 2007			Prices in October 2017		
	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	Darlington	% difference 2007	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	Darlington	% difference 2016
Detached	£333,875	£234,375	-35%	£217,500	£281,459	25%
Semi-Detached	£249,452	£143,927	-54%	£195,600	£191,393	2%
Terraced	£227,721	£106,549	-72%	£194,250	£166,980	15%
Flats	£150,000	£131,303	N/A	N/A	£128,298	N/A
<i>All Types</i>	£245,182	£210,098	-13%	£200,167	£207,000	17%

*Source: Land Registry PPD, AECOM calculations*

### 4.3 Housing Market (Volume)

161. Figure 13 depicts the relative proportions of different housing typologies sold in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent between 2007 and 2017. This graph represents the same Land Registry data discussed in the previous section, separated out by housing type. This graph shows the effects of the national recession, which reflects the housing transactions within the NPA as they have struggled to recover throughout the post-recession period. Sales are generally low in volume across the whole period (139) due to the relatively low housing stock in the NPA and development of one site could skew the figures. However, housing transactions in 2015 recovered slightly before falling again in subsequent years. Housing sales are small in volume due to relatively low housing stock in the NP area, meaning, for example a single development site has great potential to skew the figures.

**Figure 13: Different house types and sales in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent 2007-2017**



*Source: Land Registry PPD, AECOM calculations*

162. Another approach to benchmarking whether sales volumes indicate inflated or depressed demand across different housing types is to compare the proportion of sales of each type of housing (excluding any new builds, which would introduce supply side factors) with the proportion of the existing housing stock that falls into each category.

This allows conclusions to be drawn about whether the sale of homes of each type is occurring proportional to their availability, or whether there is unmet demand.

163. This comparison is presented in table 17, with figures for the housing stock in Darlington Borough as a whole presented alongside for reference. The table reinforces the predominance of detached and semi-detached properties in the NPA. The NPA has a significantly higher proportion of detached properties than the borough, whilst the proportion of semi-detached properties is lower. Given the relatively small housing stock numbers, any interpretation of the data should be treated with caution; however, given the nature of the stock, there is little if any choice at all with regards to terraced housing or flats within the NPA. The only type of property where sales outstrips stock is terraced properties.

**Table 17 – Proportion of sales and stock by house type**

	SALES Low Coniscliffe & Merrybent	STOCK Low Coniscliffe & Merrybent	STOCK Darlington
Detached	45%	45%	17%
Semi-Detached	23%	30%	38%
Terraced	31%	21%	31%
Flats	1%	4%	14%

*Source: Census 2001/2011, Land Registry PPD, AECOM Calculations*

#### 4.4 Migration

164. Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent parish has experienced a significant growth in population from 2001 to 2011 by 52.3% according to census data, whilst Darlington Borough experienced a significantly lower level of growth (7.9%). This growth could be seen as a key driver in demand for additional housing within the NPA. This needs to be considered in the context expressed in the SHMA concerning potential under-reporting of the population in the 2001 census.

165. This large population growth is set against low levels of migration into both the NP area and the wider borough. Table 19 shows that the percentage of people born outside of the UK is very low in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent (3.8%). Therefore, migration is not seen as a significant driver of increased housing demand in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.

**Table 18: Population by Age Group, 2001, 2011**

Age group	2001	2001	2011	2011
	Low Coniscliffe & Merrybent	Darlington	Low Coniscliffe & Merrybent	Darlington
0-15	67	19,795	185	20,207
16-24	34	94,407	48	11,149
25-44	102	27,727	184	27,524
45-64	178	24,253	190	28,245
65-84	83	14,670	99	15,889
85 and over	6	1,986	10	2,550
All	470	97,838	716	105,564
Percentage Growth			52.3%	7.9%

*Source: Census 2001/2011, AECOM Calculations*

**Table 19: Country of birth and length of residence, 2011**

Place of birth	Population breakdown	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	Darlington	England
Born in the UK	Total	96.2%	94.8%	86.2%
Born outside the UK	Total	3.8%	5.2%	13.8%
	EU	1.8%	2.6%	3.7%
	Other	2%	2.6%	9.4%

Source: Census 2001/2011, AECOM Calculations

**Table 20: Length of residence of those born outside of the United Kingdom**

Length of residence in the UK	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	Darlington
Less than 2 years	1%	0.6%
2-5 years	0.4%	1%
5-10 years	0.6%	0.9%
10 years or more	1.8%	2.6%

Source: Census 2001/2011, AECOM Calculations

#### 4.5 Overcrowding and concealed families

166. Another indicator of demand in the housing market is shown by the prevalence (or lack) of overcrowding in the NPA. This is because demand for housing in the area can manifest itself in the over-occupation of housing stock. Increased demand does not always result in an increase in supply as supply is relatively inelastic.

167. One of the most reliable indicators of overcrowding is the 'persons per room' data collected at household level during the Census. The relative proportion of households occupying different amounts of space in the NPA and its district is shown in Table 21, which demonstrates that Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent has seen a major increase of 78.6% in the number of households with more than 0.5 and up to 1.0 persons per room, and an increase of 24.7% in the number of people up to 0.5 persons per room. However, there has been no change in those households with over 1.0 persons per room, which contrasts with borough wide data which recorded decreases of 8.8% of houses containing over 1.0 and up to 1.5 persons per room and a more significant decrease of 22.4% of properties with over 1.5 persons per room. Therefore, the NPA does not seem to suffer from overcrowding issues and there is an overall increase in the number of homes with less than 1.0 persons per room.

**Table 21: Trends in number of persons per room in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, 2001-2011**

Persons per room	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	Darlington	England
Up to 0.5 persons per room	24.7%	13.7%	7.9%
Over 0.5 and up to 1.0 persons per room	78.6%	0.9%	7.0%
Over 1.0 and up to 1.5 persons per room	0.0%	-8.8%	27.3%
Over 1.5 persons per room	0.0%	-22.4%	2.5%

Source: Census 2001/2011, AECOM Calculations

168. A second indicator of overcrowding is the prevalence of concealed families within the NPA. ONS data shows that there are 3 concealed families in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, or 1.4% of families; this is slightly higher than the figure for Darlington (1.0%),

however it is lower than the average for England as a whole (1.9%). This does not indicate that concealed families (and therefore unmet additional demand for housing in the area from those already living there) is a significant issue for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.

**Table 22: Concealed families in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, 2011**

Concealed families	Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent	Darlington	England
All families: total	214	30,966	14,885,145
Concealed families: total	3	308	275,954
Concealed families as % of total	1.4%	1.0%	1.9%

Source: Census 2011, AECOM Calculations

## 4.6 Rate of Development

169. Table 23 shows the net number of dwellings completed in each of the past five years, as well as the cumulative total. The data shows clearly that the rate of development in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent is very low, as no dwellings have been completed within the NPA since 2011. The extremely low rate of development reflects the rural nature of the NPA.

**Table 23: Completions in Tollerton, 2011-2016**

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Net completed dwellings	0	0	0	0	0
Cumulative net completed dwellings	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Darlington Borough Council

170. Having reviewed the market signals data, the following points are considered to summarise the main issues:

- Given the local plan is proposing significant levels of new mixed employment development close to the NPA and there is already a significant proportion of the Neighbourhood Plan area that either travels a relatively short distance to work or mainly works at home, alongside Darlington's GVA increasing at a much faster rate than the rest of the North East, this could potentially drive up demand for housing in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent;
- Analysis of house prices for the NPA is to be treated with caution due to the low levels of stock. Only 139 transactions were recorded between 2007 and 2016. The average property price according to Land Registry data as at October 2017 was £200,167;
- The stock is dominated by high sales of semi-detached and terraced properties in 2007 and 2008 prior to the recession and very low numbers of sales post 2008, which are mainly made up of detached properties;
- Large population growth in the context of the NPA between 2001 – 2011;
- Analysis does not indicate that concealed families (and therefore unmet additional demand for housing in the area from those already living there) is a significant issue for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent; and
- The rate of development is very low; since 2011 no new dwellings have been completed.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1 Overview

**Table 24: Summary of factors specific to Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent with a potential impact on neighbourhood plan housing quantity**

Factor	Source(s) (detailed in Chapter 5)	Possible impact on future housing need	Rationale for judgement
<b>Employment trends</b>	Population, Housing and Employment Projections Paper (2013) – The County Durham Plan, Tees Valley Economic Assessment Paper 2016, Local Plan, Census 2001/11		Given the local plan is proposing significant levels of new mixed employment development close to the NPA and there is already a significant proportion of the Neighbourhood Plan area that either travels a relatively short distance to work or mainly works at home, alongside Darlington's GVA increasing at a much faster rate than the rest of the North East, this could potentially drive up demand for housing in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.
<b>Housing transactions (Prices)</b>	Land Registry Price Paid Data for 2006-2016, SHMA (2015).		<p>Analysis of house prices for the NPA is to be treated with caution due to the low levels of stock. Only 139 transactions were recorded between 2007 and 2016. The average property price according to Land Registry data as at October 2017 was £200,167, which compares to the Darlington average of £207,000</p> <p>Overall, the average price of all housing types has increased by 18%; however this is based on one detached property transaction in 2017 skewing the data. If you exclude 2017 data, the average house price for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent has actually decreased by 19.5% from 2007 – 2016.</p> <p>In the Local Authority as a whole, prices have increased by 179% overall; although prices have actually decreased in the NPA 2006-2016, prices are still relatively high in the context of the borough in relation to semi-detached properties.</p> <p>As a result an assessment of a sideways arrow has been deemed appropriate.</p>
<b>Housing Transactions (Volume)</b>	Land Registry Price Paid Data for 2006-2016, Census 2001/2011 data, SHMA(2015)		<p>In the context of the NPA, housing transactions were dominated by high sales of semi-detached and terraced properties in 2007 and 2008 prior to the recession and very low numbers of sales post 2008, the majority of which are mainly detached properties.</p> <p>Local feedback from estate agents also confirms that the demand / supply of housing is in balance in the parish.</p> <p>As a result a sideways arrow is considered appropriate due to the relatively low levels of stock</p>

Factor	Source(s) (detailed in Chapter 5)	Possible impact on future housing need	Rationale for judgement
<b>Migration</b>	Census data 2001, 2011		<p>and low numbers of sales post 2008 within the NPA.</p> <p>The percentage of people born outside of the UK is very low in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent (3.8%). Therefore, migration is not seen as a significant driver of increased housing demand in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent. As a result an assessment of one down arrow is seen as appropriate.</p>
<b>Overcrowding</b>	Census data 2001, 2011		<p>Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent has seen a major increase of 78.6% in the number of households with more than 0.5 and up to 1.0 persons per room, and an increase of 24.7% in the number of people up to 0.5 per room.</p> <p>However, there has been no change in those households with over 1.0 persons per room, which contrasts with the borough-wide data which recorded decreases of 8.8% of houses containing over 1.0 and up to 1.5 person per room and a more significant decrease of 22.4% of properties with over 1.5 persons per room.</p> <p>Therefore, the NPA does not seem to suffer from overcrowding issues</p>
<b>Concealment</b>	Census data 2001, 2011		<p>ONS data shows that there are 3 concealed families in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent, or 1.4% of families; this is slightly higher than the figure for Darlington (1.0%), however it is lower than the average for England as a whole (1.9%). This does not indicate that concealed families (and therefore unmet additional demand for housing in the area from those already living there) is a significant issue for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.</p>
<b>Rate of development</b>	Darlington BC, Land Registry Data/AECOM Calculations		<p>The rate of development is very low; since 2011 there haven't been any new dwellings completed. An assessment of three up arrows has therefore been deemed appropriate due to this low level of provision, especially in a context of anticipated increasing need across the HMA. As a result, overall housing need, which is a combination of past, present and future demand, is likely to be exacerbated by an unresponsive housing market.</p>

**Table 25: Summary of local factors specific to Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent with a potential impact on neighbourhood plan housing characteristics**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Source(s) (see Chapter 4)</b>	<b>Possible impact on housing needed</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>Affordable Housing (AH)</b>	Census, SHMA studies, Housing Waiting List data	<p>At the borough level in 2013, the lower quartile affordability ratio stood at 5.3.</p> <p>There was an increase of 1,100 families claiming housing benefit between 2008-09 and 2014-15 who lived in Private Rented accommodation, compared to a rise of 200 families in social housing.</p> <p>Overall there were 346 households overall on the housing waiting list in Bands 1 and 2 as at September 2017, but none of these were within the NPA.</p>	<p>This indicates an affordability crisis for those on lower incomes, in 2013 the lower quartile house price was £81,000 whilst the average house price in Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent was £253,875</p> <p>Shared ownership is a plausible route to home ownership for those on low incomes, for example first time buyers.</p> <p>The value of entry level market properties generates a compelling argument for discounted market sales housing and affordable private rent housing. These tenures are suitable for newly forming households.</p> <p>The evidence we have gathered does not support LC&amp;MPC developing its own AH policy, but does suggest Local Plan policy should be assertively implemented within the NPA.</p> <p>Build to Rent should be included in the housing mix, to acknowledge the growing role this takes in providing housing to those on modest incomes.</p>
<b>Demand/ need for smaller dwellings</b>	Census, Land Registry Price Paid Data	<p>One person households currently form around 21% of all households and, while they have shown limited growth in recent years, they are forecast to grow strongly in the district in the period to 2039.</p>	<p>In part, this stems from the ageing population, and is therefore likely to be an issue for the NPA given the strong representation of older age groups.</p>
<b>Demographic Change</b>	Census, SHMA studies	<p>Over the decade 2001 – 2011, the increases in the younger generation are significant. Numerically these increases are significant as well, in terms of the 0-15 age band the increase was an additional 118 persons, whilst in the 25-44 age group the increase was 82 persons, which, in the context of the overall NPA (715 persons) is significant.</p>	<p>The NPA has experienced a significant increase in the age groups 0-44. The NPA has a strong orientation towards family life; those age groups of 44 and below are predominant.</p> <p>At a borough level, significant changes in the proportion of those aged 65 and above are projected; and this is likely to be reflected in the NPA as current family households mature into those of older couples and singles as their children set up households of their own, many of whom will do so outside the area.</p> <p>In arriving at an appropriate level of housing for older people of different types, we have applied the Housing Learning and</p>

Factor	Source(s) (see Chapter 4)	Possible impact on housing needed	Conclusion
		<p>At the district level there is projected to be an increase to the proportion of those aged 65-84 of around 60% by 2036, and for those aged 85 and over the forecast is between 160% and 170%.</p>	<p>Improvement Network's suggested numbers per 1,000 of the 75+ population. The projections show an estimate of the increase in the numbers of older people aged 75+ of 58 (97-39). This will result, over the plan period, in a need for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. additional conventional sheltered housing units = <math>60 \times 5.8\% = 3</math> (rounded)</li> <li>8. additional leasehold sheltered housing units = <math>120 \times 5.8\% = 7</math> (rounded)</li> <li>9. additional 'enhanced' sheltered units, split 50:50 between those for rent and those for sale = <math>20 \times 5.8\% = 1</math> (rounded)</li> <li>10. additional extra care housing units for rent = <math>15 \times 5.8\% = 1</math> (rounded)</li> <li>11. additional extra care housing units for sale = <math>30 \times 5.8\% = 2</math> (rounded)</li> <li>12. additional specialist dementia care homes = <math>6 \times 5.8\% = 1</math> (rounded)</li> </ol> <p>Note that there is no obligation for these all to be provided within the parish itself and specialist dwelling need is likely therefore to be split between the parish and the rest of the district, taking account of the fact that [Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent] is unlikely to be able to provide many of the specialist housing types needed within its own boundaries- although there could be the potential for these to be provided within Darlington itself, taking account of its higher levels of accessibility to services and facilities.</p>
<b>Family-sized housing</b>		<p>At 34% families with children form the largest household type in the NPA.</p> <p>The NPA has seen an increase in the last decade in smaller and medium sized family homes that are forecast to be in greatest need over the plan period.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood plan policy could play an active role to ensure the mix of dwelling sizes addresses the community need for smaller dwellings of 1-3 rooms as well as family dwellings of 5-6 rooms over the Plan period.</p>

## 5.2 Recommendations for next steps

171. This neighbourhood plan housing needs advice has aimed to provide Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent NPG with evidence on housing trends from a range of sources. We recommend that the NPG should, as a next step, discuss the contents and conclusions with Darlington Borough Council with a view to agreeing and formulating draft housing policies, taking the following into account during the process:

- the contents of this report, including but not limited to Tables 24 and 25;
- Neighbourhood Planning Basic Condition A, that it has regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State; Condition D, that the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development; and Condition E, which is the need for the neighbourhood plan to be in general conformity with the adopted strategic development plan;
- the views of Darlington Borough Council;
- the views of local residents;
- the views of other relevant local stakeholders, including housing developers; and
- the numerous supply-side considerations, including local environmental constraints, the location and characteristics of suitable land, and any capacity work carried out by the Council, including but not limited to the SHLAA.

172. As noted previously, recent changes to the planning system, including forthcoming changes to the National Planning Policy Framework as well as the implementation of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, will continue to affect housing policies at a local authority and, by extension, a neighbourhood level.

173. This advice note has been provided in good faith by AECOM consultants on the basis of housing data current at the time of writing (alongside other relevant and available information).

174. Bearing this in mind, we recommend that the steering group should monitor carefully strategies and documents with an impact on housing policy produced by the District Council or any other relevant body and review the neighbourhood plan accordingly to ensure that general conformity is maintained.

175. Most obviously, this includes monitoring the status of the emerging Local Plan.

176. At the same time, monitoring ongoing demographic or other trends in the factors summarised in Tables 24 and 25 would be particularly valuable.



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**Town & Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017  
Secretary of State Screening Direction – Written Statement**

Application name:	Residential development, north of Coniscliffe Road, Darlington
SoS case reference:	PCU/EIASC/N1350/78062
Schedule and category of development:	2:10(b): Urban development projects

**Full statement of reasons as required by 5(5)(a) of amended EIA Regulations including conclusions on likelihood of significant environmental effects.**

The proposed development falls with Schedule 2:10 (b):- urban development projects. The Secretary of State has had due regard to the EIA Regulations and Planning Practice Guidance (Practice Guidance) which identifies the physical scale of the development, potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise as key considerations in determining whether such proposals constitute EIA development. He has considered whether the above proposal is likely to have significant environmental effects. He has undertaken this screening taking into account the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Accordingly he considers the main matters to be addressed are:

**Schedule 3 selection criteria for Schedule 2 development refers:**

**Characteristics of development**

The proposal site comprises 28.7 ha of agricultural land which would be transformed into a major housing development of 535 dwellings. There is a planning application on the adjoining 48.5 ha of agricultural land, to the south of Staindrop Road ("Staindrop Road development"), for the development of about 1,000 dwellings and 400 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace, a primary school, sports pitches, landscaping, open space and associated works. In cumulative terms, the two proposals would result in the urbanisation of approximately 77 ha of undeveloped land on the western edge of Darlington and represent a major physical change in the locality. The indicative criteria and thresholds contained within the Practice Guidance state that environmental impact assessment is unlikely to be required, unless the new development is on a significant greater scale than the previous use. It identifies sites which have not previously been intensively developed as areas of more than 5 ha and developments that would have a significant urbanising effect in a previously non-urbanised area (for example, a development of more than 1,000 dwellings). In cumulative terms, the two developments would significantly exceed both the area and size thresholds in the Practice Guidance and due to the scale and change in nature of the area could potentially have significant environmental effects.

**Characteristics of potential impact**

**Potential increase in traffic**

The applicant's detailed transport assessment examines the implications of the proposal on the local highway network and access by sustainable modes. It considers the existing traffic levels at nine key road junctions in the vicinity, and the implications of increased traffic flows emanating from both the Coniscliffe Road and the adjacent Staindrop Road developments. It identifies that by 2032 (the proposed completion date of both developments), six of the junctions would be operating at above 85% of capacity at certain times of the day, and four of them would actually be operating at above 100% capacity. These junctions are the A66 (Blands Corner), the A68 Cockerton Junction; Cockerton Green Junction; Junction 58 of the A1 (M); A66/A1150 junction and A66/Yarm Road junction. As a result, these junctions could potentially suffer from severe congestion at certain times of the day.

Highways England has placed an Article 31 Holding Direction on both planning applications to enable a further assessment to be undertaken of the traffic implications of both proposals. This is to ensure that the A66 Trunk Road and the A1 motorway continue to serve their purpose as part of the national system of routes for through traffic in accordance with Section 10 (2) of the Highways Act 1980 by minimising disruption on the trunk road network and in the interests of road safety. Highways England is currently in discussion with the developers to validate the base model for undertaking a transport assessment. Following this, the developers will review the model to be used for undertaking an assessment of the traffic impacts from the sites. After the completion of this assessment, the scope for mitigation measures will be considered.

In advance of the preparation of the transport assessment, which meets the requirements of Highways England, and mitigation measures being agreed, it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of cumulative significant effects.

### **Emissions**

The applicant's detailed air quality assessment (AQA) identifies that the Borough is not located within Air Quality Management Area and NO<sub>2</sub> levels are currently below the standard of 40 UG/M<sup>3</sup>. It assesses the proposal at the construction phase and considers dust fine particulate matter emissions relating to this work, construction of the dwellings and associated buildings and dust and dirt emanating from construction vehicles. The assessment also examines the cumulative impact, in association with the Stalndrop Road proposal, of traffic emissions at 14 receptors on the basis of different scenarios, without and with the proposed developments and incorporating highway mitigation measures on three roundabouts and additional lanes at Blands Corner roundabout. The assessment concludes that once the development has completed NO<sub>2</sub> levels would still remain below the national standard of 40 UG/M<sup>3</sup>, though at one of the sensors the level would be 37 UG/M<sup>3</sup>). The Borough Council's Environmental Health Officer (the Council's EHO) has assessed the applicant's AQA and has verified the findings.

The AQA has however been produced in advance of an agreement being reached with Highways England about the model and methodology to be used in the production of an agreed transport assessment, which will assess traffic flows, the impact of the scheme, and identify proposed mitigation measures. The AQA will, therefore, need to be reviewed once this process has been completed to verify that national standards will not be exceeded, as a result of the proposed developments. In advance of this work being completed, the Secretary of State considers that it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of significant effects.

### **Noise**

The applicant's detailed noise and vibration assessment report, considers how the proposed development site would be affected by noise from the A1 (M) and the A67 Coniscliffe Road.

The assessment identifies that the application site is already subject to very high noise levels, of up to 87 dB from the A1 (M). The assessment concludes that internal noise levels within proposed dwellings would be within acceptable levels, assuming windows are closed and an additional source of noise ventilation is provided. The assessment identifies however, that external noise levels at two of the three locations on the site would exceed the 50 to 55 dB criteria and would not fulfil the BS 8233 criteria. It suggests that a suitable acoustic barrier along the north-west corner of the site, together with careful consideration of the site layout could mitigate noise levels within gardens by 10 - 15 dB. This would reduce noise levels to below 55 dB. The Council's EHO endorses the findings of the assessment and considers that internal noise levels could be mitigated through a series of measures proposed including close boarded fencing and acoustic ventilation and careful orientation of the proposed dwellings.

The Council's EHO has pointed out that the assessment does not consider noise from Coniscliffe Grange farm and the Baydale Beck Pub. Nor has the assessment considered the potential increase in noise levels arising from the earthworks and construction phase and piling activities. The Council's EHO is satisfied that noise from the farm is unlikely to have a

major impact on the site, given the distance away, but that noise from the pub could have an impact on a dwellings situated on the southernmost part of the site. The EHO considers that conditions could be imposed to ameliorate the effects of noise from these sources.

The noise assessment does not appear to have taken into account potential increased noise levels caused by the additional traffic generated by the Coniscliffe Road and Staindrop Road developments. It has been produced in advance of agreement being reached with Highways England about the model and methodology to be used in the transport assessment, which will lead to a robust assessment of traffic flows, assessment of the impact of the scheme, and identify proposed mitigation measures. The noise assessment, including any proposed conditions will therefore need to be reviewed, once the transport assessment process has been completed. The Secretary of State has also had due regard to the policy in paragraph 123 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The "Framework") which states that planning decisions should avoid giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development and the detailed advice contained in the Noise Section of the Practice Guidance. In advance of the completion of the agreed transport assessment, the Secretary of State considers that it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of significant effects, particularly as the site is already subject to high noise levels from traffic.

### **Conclusion**

In cumulative terms the scale of the Staindrop Road and Coniscliffe Road proposals would result in development of about 77 hectares of undeveloped agricultural land and represent a major physical change in the locality sufficient to indicate to the Secretary of State that the developments proposed are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Secretary of State notes that there is an extant Holding Direction, placed on the two proposals by Highways England, because of serious concerns about the potential impact on the strategic and local highway network, and that in the absence of an agreed transport assessment, he is unable to conclude proposals would not have significant effects on the environment in terms of traffic congestion, noise and air quality.

In reaching this conclusion the Secretary of State has also considered the measures proposed to mitigate the environmental impacts for the two proposals relating to traffic congestion, which have yet to be agreed by Highways England, and to noise and air quality. He has, however, concluded that the proposed measures are not sufficient to obviate the need for an environmental impact assessment because of the extent that the impacts are unknown.

Is an Environmental Statement required?	Yes
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Name	Gerry Carpenter
Date	13 November 2017

**Town & Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2011  
Secretary of State Screening Direction – Written Statement**

Application name:	Residential development, south of Staindrop Road, Darlington
SoS case reference:	PCU/EIASC/N1350/78089
Schedule and category of development:	2:10 (b) Urban development

**Full statement of reasons as required by 4(7)(a) of amended EIA Regulations including conclusions on likeliness of significant environmental effects.**

**Schedule 2**

As Darlington Borough Council issued the Screening Opinion for the proposed residential development, south of Staindrop Road ("Staindrop Road development") in September 2016, the request for a Screening Direction has been considered in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2011, as amended. The Secretary of State has had due regard to the EIA Regulations and the Planning Practice Guidance (Practice Guidance) which identifies the physical scale of the development, potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise as key considerations in determining whether the proposal constitutes EIA development. Accordingly, he considers the main matters to be addressed are:

**Schedule 3 selection criteria for Schedule 2 development refers:**

**Characteristics of development**

The proposal site comprises 48.5 ha of agricultural land which would be transformed into a major mixed housing development comprising about 1,000 dwellings, 400 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace, a primary school, sports pitches, landscaping, open space and associated works. There is a planning application on the adjoining 28.27 ha of agricultural land, to the north of Coniscliffe Road ("Coniscliffe Road development"), for the development of up to 535 dwellings and associated works. In cumulative terms, the two proposals would result in the urbanisation of approximately 77 ha of undeveloped land on the western edge of Darlington and represent a major physical change in the locality. The indicative criteria and thresholds contained within the Practice Guidance state that an environmental impact assessment is unlikely to be required, unless the new development is on a significant greater scale than the previous use. It identifies sites which have not previously been intensively developed as areas of more than 5 ha and developments that would have a significant urbanising effect in a previously non-urbanised area (for example, a development of more than 1,000 dwellings). In cumulative terms, the two developments would significantly exceed both the area and size thresholds in the Practice Guidance and due to the scale and change in nature of the area could potentially have significant environmental effects. Accordingly, the Secretary of State concludes that the proposals could have significant environmental effects in this regard.

**Characteristics of potential impact**

**Potential increase in traffic**

The applicant's detailed transport assessment examines the implications of the proposal on the local highway network and access by sustainable modes. It considers the existing traffic levels at nine key road junctions in the vicinity, and the implications of increased traffic flows emanating from both the Staindrop Road and the Coniscliffe Road developments. It identifies that by 2032 (the proposed completion date of both developments), six of the junctions would be operating at above 85% of capacity at certain times of the day, and four of them would actually be operating at above 100% capacity. These junctions are the A66 (Blands Corner), the A68 Cockerton Junction; Cockerton Green Junction; Junction 58 of the A1 (M); A66/A1150 junction and A66/Yarm Road junction. As a result, these junctions could potentially suffer from severe congestion at certain times of the day.

Highways England has placed an Article 31 Holding Direction on both planning applications to enable a further assessment to be undertaken of the traffic implications of both proposals. This is to ensure that the A66 Trunk Road and the A1 motorways continue to serve their purpose as part of the national system of routes for through traffic in accordance with Section 10 (2) of the Highways Act 1980 by minimising disruption on the trunk road network and in the interests of road safety. Highways England is currently in discussion with the developers to validate the base model for undertaking a transport assessment. Following this, the developers will review the model to be used for undertaking an assessment of the traffic impacts from the sites. Following the completion of this assessment, the scope for mitigation measures will be considered.

In advance of the preparation of the transport assessment, which meets the requirements of Highways England, and mitigation measures being agreed, the Secretary of State considers that it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of significant cumulative effects.

### **Emissions**

The applicant's detailed air quality assessment (AQA) identifies that the Borough is not located within Air Quality Management Area and NO<sub>2</sub> levels are currently below the standard of 40 UG/M<sup>3</sup>. It assesses the proposal at the construction phase and considers dust fine particulate matter emissions relating to this works, construction of the dwellings and associated buildings and dust and dirt emanating from construction vehicles. The assessment also examines the cumulative impact, in association with the Coniscliffe Road proposal, of traffic emissions at 14 receptors on the basis of different scenarios, without and with the proposed developments and incorporating highway mitigation measures on three roundabouts and additional lanes at the Blands Corner roundabout. The assessment concludes that once the developments have been completed NO<sub>2</sub> levels would still remain below the national standard of 40 UG/M<sup>3</sup>, though at one of the sensors the level would be 37 UG/M<sup>3</sup>). The Borough Council's Environmental Health Officer (Council's EHO) has assessed the applicant's AQA and has verified the findings.

The AQA has, however, been produced in advance of an agreement being reached with Highways England about the model and methodology to be used in the production of an agreed transport assessment, which will assess traffic flows, the impact of the scheme, and identify proposed mitigation measures. The AQA will, therefore, need to be reviewed once this process has been completed to verify that national standards will not be exceeded, as a result of the proposed developments. In advance of this work being completed the Secretary of State considers that it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of significant effects.

### **Noise**

The applicant's detailed noise and vibration assessment report considers noise and vibration, as a result of construction work impacting on existing receptors close to the proposed development site, as well as the impact of noise on future receptors on the proposal site from existing sources in the area. These existing noise sources include the wind turbine and a grain drier at Coniscliffe Grange Farm and traffic noise from the A1 (M) and Staindrop Road.

The assessment identifies a short-term increase in noise levels above those recommended in B5228-1:2009 (Code of practice for noise) from the earthworks and construction phase and piling activities. The Council's EHO has verified the assessment and considers that conditions can satisfactorily mitigate the effects;

Noise from the existing wind turbine at Coniscliffe Grange Farm: The assessment identifies that noise from the turbine will be 35 -40 dB at the nearest proposed residential receptor. As the site is already affected by road noise, the Council's EHO considers that the existing planning conditions for the wind turbine provide the necessary safeguards for amenity of prospective residents.

Noise from the grain dryer at Coniscliffe Grange Farm: The assessment identifies that the dryer emits noise at a level of 84 dB, but given its distance from proposed residential properties and existing mitigation measures in place, the report concludes that the dryer is unlikely to cause any impact on the closest proposed receptors and no specific mitigation is required. This is endorsed by the Council's EHO.

Having had due regard to the evidence and the views of the Council's EHO the Secretary of State concludes that the Staindrop Road development is unlikely to have significant effects, in terms of these sources of noise.

Road traffic noise from the A1 (M) and Staindrop Road: The assessment identifies that the application site is already subject to high noise levels, of up to 79 dB from the A1 (M) and up to 66dB from Staindrop Road. It estimates that additional traffic generated by the Staindrop Road development would result in an increase in noise of about 3dB. The Council's EHO endorses the findings of the assessment and considers that internal noise levels can be mitigated through a series of measures proposed including close boarded fencing and acoustic ventilation and careful orientation of the proposed dwellings.

The noise assessment has, however, been produced in advance of agreement being reached with Highways England about the model and methodology to be used to in the transport assessment, which will lead to a robust assessment of traffic flows, assessment of the impact of the scheme, and potentially identify proposed mitigation measures. The noise assessment, including the proposed conditions, will therefore need to be reviewed, once the transport assessment process has been completed. The Secretary of State has also had due regard to the policy in paragraph 123 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The "Framework") which states that planning decisions should avoid giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development and the detailed advice contained in the Noise Section of the Practice Guidance. In advance of the completion of the agreed transport assessment, the Secretary of State considers that it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of cumulative significant effects, particularly as the site is already subject to high noise levels from traffic.

### **Conclusion**

In cumulative terms the scale of the Staindrop Road and Coniscliffe Road proposals would result in development of about 77 hectares of undeveloped agricultural land and represent a major physical change in the locality sufficient to indicate to the Secretary of State that the developments proposed are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Secretary of State notes that there is an extant Holding Direction placed on the two proposals by Highways England, because of serious concerns about the potential impact on the strategic and local highway network, and that in the absence of an agreed transport assessment, he is unable to conclude the proposals would not have significant effects on the environment in terms of traffic congestion, noise and air quality.

In reaching this conclusion the Secretary of State has also considered the measures proposed to mitigate the environmental impacts of the two proposals relating to traffic congestion, which have yet to be agreed by Highways England, and to noise and air quality. He has, however, concluded that the proposed measures are not sufficient to obviate the need for an environmental impact assessment because of the extent that the impacts are unknown.

Is an Environmental Statement required?	Yes
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Name	Gerry Carpenter
Date	13 November 2017

# LOW CONISCLIFFE & MERRYBENT PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## Settlement Boundary Background Paper



**Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group  
September 2018**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to explain the process which has led to the proposed designation of settlement boundaries around the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent in the Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 As part of the consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan feedback was sought on the proposed settlement boundaries. The background paper has been updated following consultation and to reflect the new National Planning Policy Framework that was published in July 2018.

## 2. Background

### Settlement boundaries

- 2.1 A settlement boundary is a line that is drawn on a plan around a village, which reflects its built form, this is also known historically as a 'village envelope'. A settlement boundary is used as a policy tool reflecting the area where a set of plan policies are to be applied. The settlement boundary does not necessarily have to cover the full extent of a village or be limited to its built form. In general, there is a presumption in favour of development within the settlement boundary. Any land and buildings outside of the boundary line are usually considered to be open countryside, where development would be regulated with stricter planning policies. However, it should be noted that any land which has been included within the boundary line does not have a guarantee of approval of planning permission, as there will be other planning policies which will need to be adhered to also, for example; the protection of the character of a settlement.
- 2.2 Settlement boundaries have a number of advantages, they seek to:
- Ensure development is directed to more sustainable locations, both in terms of accessibility to and support of existing services and transport and in terms of landscape;
  - Protect the countryside from encroachment of land uses more characteristic of built up areas, which can help conserve and enhance cultural heritage and natural beauty;
  - Provide an easy to understand tool that gives certainty for landowners, developers and the community over where development is likely to be acceptable and where it is not;
  - Direct development to specific parts of the area and this can help increase the viability of local services, as well as encourage new ones to establish;
  - Ensure a plan-led and more managed approach to future development, providing a firm basis for protecting the countryside from unnecessary encroachment;
  - Support the presumption in favour of sustainable development of sites that are too small to be identified as formal allocations;
  - Make it easier for local residents to obtain planning permission for domestic outbuildings within a settlement boundary than outside;
  - Provide a guide for appropriate locations for rural exception sites to provide affordable housing for local needs (in locations adjoining and outside of the settlement policy boundary); and
  - Ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach.
- 2.3 However, there can also be some disadvantages of settlement boundaries:
- By restricting development, settlement boundaries can artificially increase land values within the settlement compared with land outside, as the likelihood of successfully gaining planning permission differs;
  - Artificially increase land values on land adjoining the settlement boundary due to future 'hope value', with landowners seeking the possibility of the boundary being realigned at some point in the future to accommodate future growth of the settlement. This could mean fewer rural exception sites coming forward, as the landowner may wish to take a longer-term view;
  - The general presumption that development within settlement boundaries is acceptable can result in pressure for the development of unsuitable land. This can result in pressure for the development of valued open spaces within settlement boundaries but where development may not be appropriate. Although, this can be overcome through ensuring that any open space valued by the community is protected through formal designation;

- The use of settlement boundaries can lead to the perception that they result in denser development in already well-developed settlements e.g. within the gardens of houses; and
- Settlement boundaries can be crude and inflexible. For small rural communities with a character of dispersed development, it can be difficult to draw a logical boundary around the village.

### **The Development Plan**

- 2.4 The Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan proposes a general presumption in favour of sustainable development within the settlement boundaries of the two settlements in the Plan area: Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent.
- 2.5 The current Development Plan for the Plan area comprises the: Darlington Core Strategy (2011) and the saved policies of the Darlington Local Plan (1997). Local Plan policy E2 defines settlement limits for both Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent villages and requires most new development to be located within settlements across the borough. Outside settlement boundaries, policy E2 restricts development to: agricultural or forestry operations; small scale development beneficial to the rural economy or the needs of rural communities; operational development; and countryside related sports or recreation activities.

### 3. Settlement Boundary Methodology

- 3.1 As explained in section 1, the concept of settlement boundaries is to identify a policy line which separates built-up areas (within which development is, in principle, acceptable), from the countryside (within which, with limited exceptions, development is not acceptable).
- 3.2 There is a presumption in favour of development if land is within a settlement boundary and therefore land should only be included within the boundary if that is where development is considered acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with other policies. There is a judgement to be made as to whether other development or areas adjacent to but outside the current settlement policy area relates more to the built environment than to the surrounding countryside.
- 3.3 There is no definitive methodology to establish settlement boundaries and different approaches have been taken by Local Planning Authorities and Neighbourhood Plan groups across the country. This settlement boundary methodology for the Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan, has been informed by a review of a number of different approaches and has been prepared in the context of the Parish and follows a five-stage process which is set out below.

#### **Stage 1 – Desktop review:**

This first stage involves a review of existing evidence documents, including:

- Darlington Local Plan Proposals Map (1997);
- Darlington Landscape Character Assessment (2015);
- Neighbourhood Plan evidence documents, such as the Historic Assets background paper;
- Review of current planning applications/ permissions;
- Darlington Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment (2017); and
- Aerial mapping (Google Earth).

#### **Stage 2 – Identification of a draft boundary and on-site review:**

Following the desktop review, an initial draft boundary is identified which can then be viewed on site. In order to establish robust settlement boundaries for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent villages there are a number of guiding principles:

- Where practical, the boundary should follow clearly defined physical features, such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads and water courses;
- Areas to be included are:
  - Built development that visually forms part of the settlement;
  - Those with extant planning permissions for built development which is physically and functionally related to the villages;
  - Agricultural buildings if they are well related in terms of scale and positioning to the rest of the village;
  - Community facilities where they are within the built-up area;
- Areas to be excluded are:
  - Curtilages of properties which have the capacity to extend the built form of the settlement - including large residential gardens;
  - Recreational or amenity space at the edge of settlements which primarily relate to the countryside;
  - Allotments, unless within the built-up area;
  - Isolated buildings, not well related to the settlement;
  - Designated wildlife sites, unless within the built-up area;

- Woodlands, orchards and other community green spaces, including cemeteries and churchyards, unless within the built-up area;
- Car parks on the edge of settlements;
- Community facilities clearly outside the settlement e.g. pubs/ hotels.

**Stage 3 – Engagement:**

- Contact land owners prior to wider public engagement
- Public feedback on the draft boundary as part of the consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft Plan.

**Stage 4 – Review:**

- Review of comments received and amendment where necessary.

**Stage 5 – Submission/ adoption:**

- Inclusion of proposed settlement boundaries within Submission Draft Plan, if endorsed through examination and referendum, will be adopted as part of the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### 4. Desktop review – key findings

4.1 A number of key considerations were identified as part of the desktop review, these are set out below.

##### Darlington Local Plan Proposals Map (1997)

4.2 Policy E2 of the Darlington Local Plan defines development limits for settlements across the Borough. The settlement boundaries for Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent are set out below.



Figure 1: Extract from Darlington Local Plan Proposals Map - Low Coniscliffe Settlement Boundary

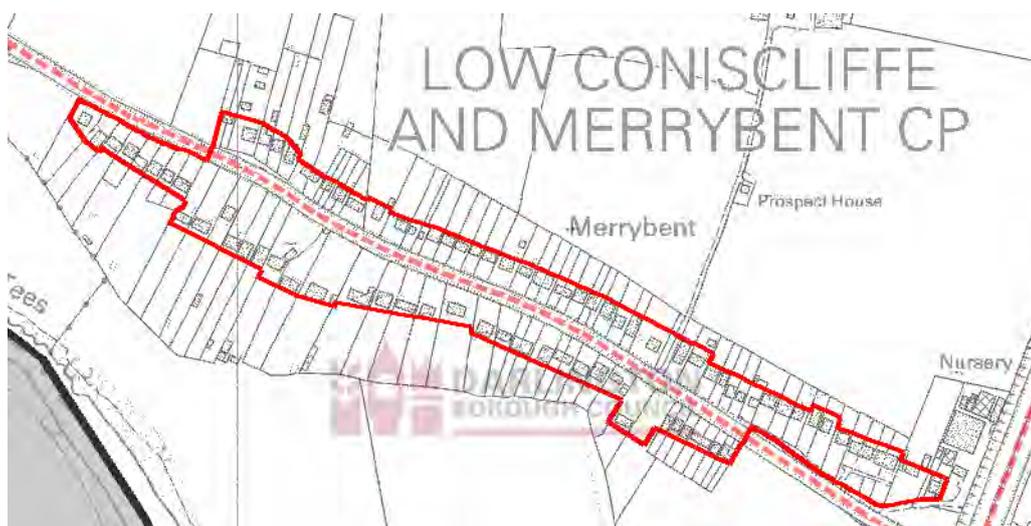


Figure 2: Extract from Darlington Local Plan Proposals Map - Merrybent Settlement Boundary

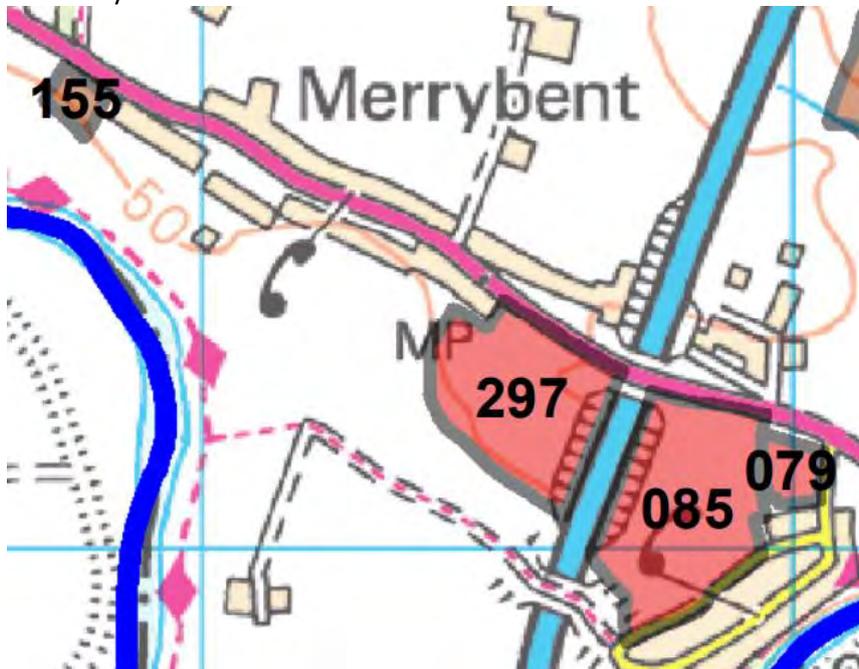
Darlington Landscape Character Appraisal (2015)

- 4.3 The Landscape Character Appraisal considers landscape and visual sensitivity to built development highlighting the importance of the historic character and form of small villages within the character areas covered by the Plan. Therefore, there is a need to retain strong settlement boundaries to ensure that development which may affect this important landscape setting is carefully considered.

Darlington Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment (2017)

- 4.4 There are four sites contained within the Darlington HELAA that are relevant to the consideration of the identification of settlement boundaries for the villages of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent:

- 079 - West of Gate Lane, Low Coniscliffe;
- 085 – South of Coniscliffe Road, Low Coniscliffe;
- 155 – 80 Merrybent;
- 297 – Merrybent Full site.



*Figure 3: Extract from Darlington HELAA showing sites adjacent to Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent villages*

- 4.5 The Steering Group agree with Darlington Borough Council's (DBC) assessment of sites 79, 85 and 297 that the sites are not suitable for housing and therefore should not form part of the settlement boundary.
- 4.6 Sites to the east and west of Gate Lane were discounted as it was considered that development in this location would be contrary to the Darlington Landscape Character Appraisal. In addition, the entrance to sites from Gate Lane would extinguish the important green approach to Low Coniscliffe, which is framed by historic hedgerows and other planting. There are also highway concerns with regard to the ability to access sites off Gate Lane.
- 4.7 The site to the south of Coniscliffe Road, north of Back Lane was discounted as a result of the impact of development on historic stone walls, flooding, highways and noise.

- 4.8 Land at 80 Merrybent, to the west of the village, was discounted because after evaluating all of the potential options, it was concluded that the site was the least viable as a result of the sloping nature of the site. In addition, more suitable and deliverable sites are available to deliver the level of development identified as being required to meet the housing needs of the Plan area.
- 4.9 Given the distance sites 041 (Coniscliffe Park South), 128 (Farmland, Staindrop Road) and 249 (Coniscliffe Park North) are from the existing villages and the size of the proposed sites they are not considered to be logical extensions to the villages and have therefore been discounted.

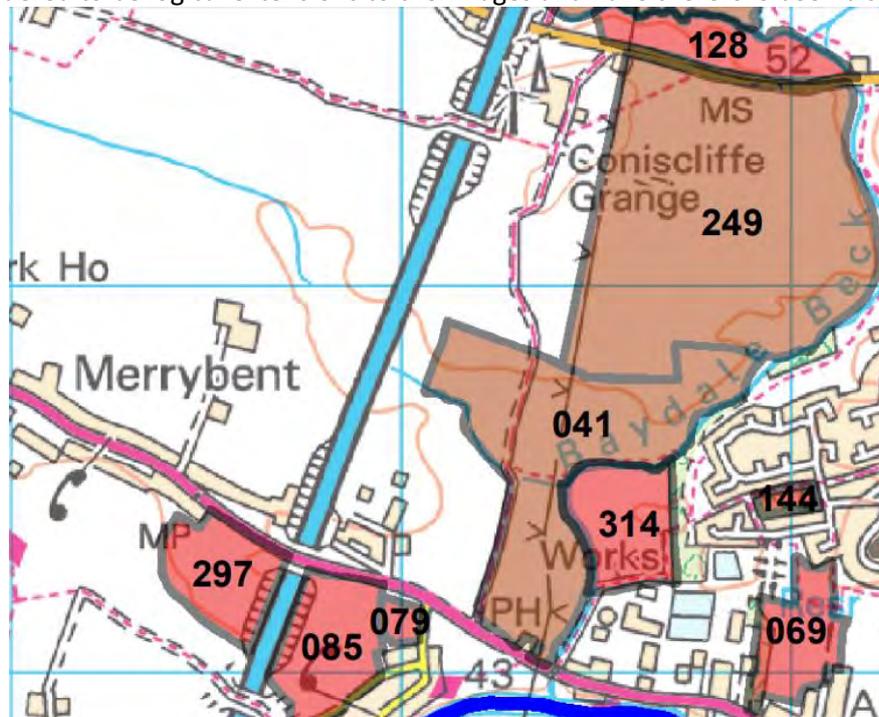


Figure 4: Extract from Darlington HELAA showing other sites

Historic Assets Background Paper (2018)

- 4.10 The Historic Assets Background paper illustrates the wealth of historic assets across the Plan area, particularly within the village of Low Coniscliffe. These important assets have been taken into consideration through the identification of a draft settlement boundary.

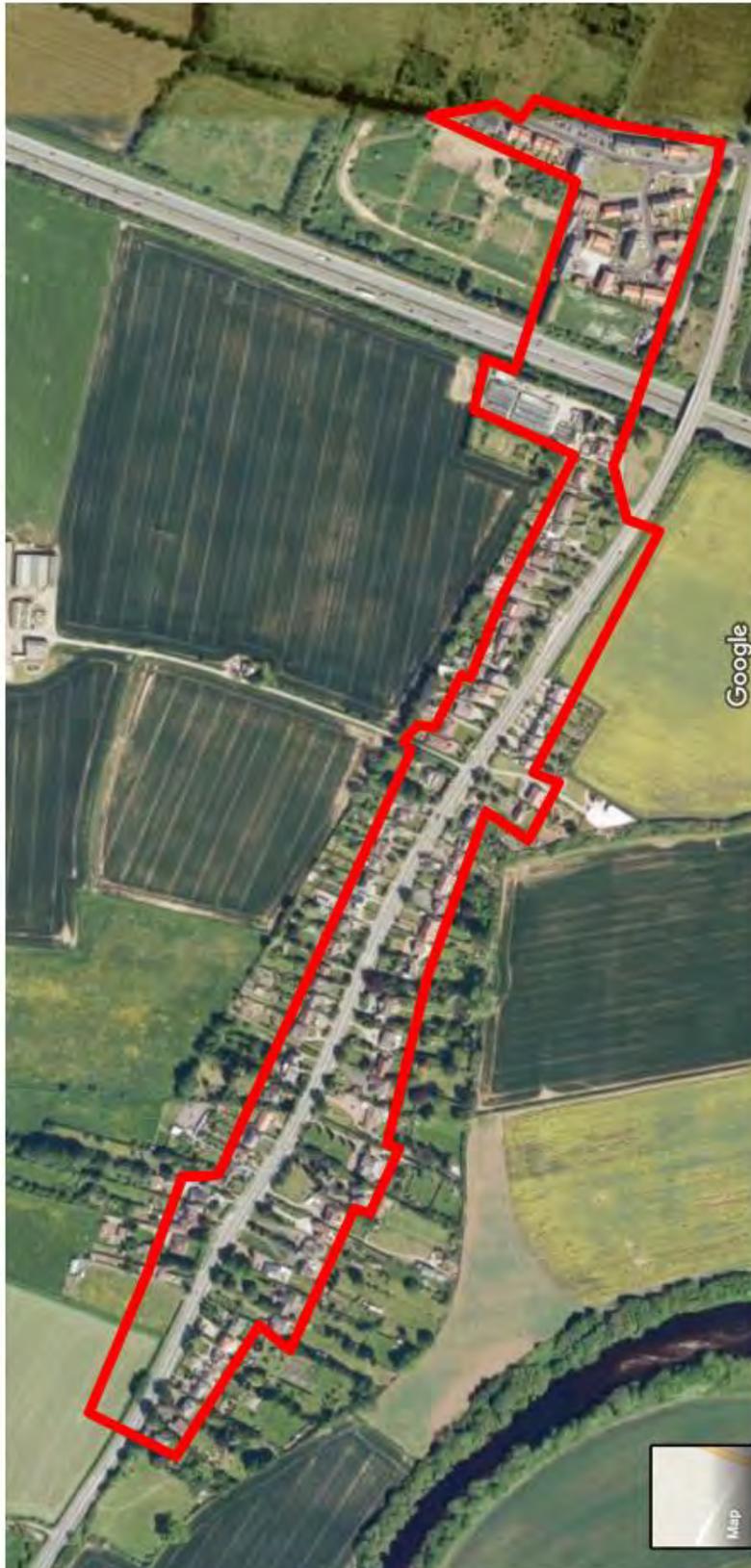
## 5. Identification of a settlement boundary

5.1 As identified above, the impact of future development on the landscape and setting of the villages has been critical in the definition of the settlement boundaries as well as ensuring the boundaries support the sustainable growth of Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent villages. The proposed boundaries:

- Take into account extant planning permissions in Merrybent;
- Will manage development to the north of Low Coniscliffe which may have a negative impact on the landscape setting of the village;
- Will manage development to the south of Merrybent which may have a negative impact on the landscape setting of the village;
- Establishes a logical shape to the edges of the villages, again seeking to conserve and enhance the character of the area;
- Avoids irregular incursions into the open countryside; and
- Has been drawn along features which are easily identified on the ground.



*Figure 5: Proposed Low Coniscliffe Settlement Boundary*



*Figure 6: Proposed Merrybent Settlement Boundary*

**Town & Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017  
Secretary of State Screening Direction – Written Statement**

Application name:	Residential development, north of Coniscliffe Road, Darlington
SoS case reference:	PCU/EIASC/N1350/78062
Schedule and category of development:	2:10(b): Urban development projects

**Full statement of reasons as required by 5(5)(a) of amended EIA Regulations including conclusions on likelihood of significant environmental effects.**

The proposed development falls with Schedule 2:10 (b):- urban development projects. The Secretary of State has had due regard to the EIA Regulations and Planning Practice Guidance (Practice Guidance) which identifies the physical scale of the development, potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise as key considerations in determining whether such proposals constitute EIA development. He has considered whether the above proposal is likely to have significant environmental effects. He has undertaken this screening taking into account the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Accordingly he considers the main matters to be addressed are:

**Schedule 3 selection criteria for Schedule 2 development refers:**

**Characteristics of development**

The proposal site comprises 28.7 ha of agricultural land which would be transformed into a major housing development of 535 dwellings. There is a planning application on the adjoining 48.5 ha of agricultural land, to the south of Staindrop Road ("Staindrop Road development"), for the development of about 1,000 dwellings and 400 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace, a primary school, sports pitches, landscaping, open space and associated works. In cumulative terms, the two proposals would result in the urbanisation of approximately 77 ha of undeveloped land on the western edge of Darlington and represent a major physical change in the locality. The indicative criteria and thresholds contained within the Practice Guidance state that environmental impact assessment is unlikely to be required, unless the new development is on a significant greater scale than the previous use. It identifies sites which have not previously been intensively developed as areas of more than 5 ha and developments that would have a significant urbanising effect in a previously non-urbanised area (for example, a development of more than 1,000 dwellings). In cumulative terms, the two developments would significantly exceed both the area and size thresholds in the Practice Guidance and due to the scale and change in nature of the area could potentially have significant environmental effects.

**Characteristics of potential impact**

**Potential increase in traffic**

The applicant's detailed transport assessment examines the implications of the proposal on the local highway network and access by sustainable modes. It considers the existing traffic levels at nine key road junctions in the vicinity, and the implications of increased traffic flows emanating from both the Coniscliffe Road and the adjacent Staindrop Road developments. It identifies that by 2032 (the proposed completion date of both developments), six of the junctions would be operating at above 85% of capacity at certain times of the day, and four of them would actually be operating at above 100% capacity. These junctions are the A66 (Blands Corner), the A68 Cockerton Junction; Cockerton Green Junction; Junction 58 of the A1 (M); A66/A1150 junction and A66/Yarm Road junction. As a result, these junctions could potentially suffer from severe congestion at certain times of the day.

Highways England has placed an Article 31 Holding Direction on both planning applications to enable a further assessment to be undertaken of the traffic implications of both proposals. This is to ensure that the A66 Trunk Road and the A1 motorway continue to serve their purpose as part of the national system of routes for through traffic in accordance with Section 10 (2) of the Highways Act 1980 by minimising disruption on the trunk road network and in the interests of road safety. Highways England is currently in discussion with the developers to validate the base model for undertaking a transport assessment. Following this, the developers will review the model to be used for undertaking an assessment of the traffic impacts from the sites. After the completion of this assessment, the scope for mitigation measures will be considered.

In advance of the preparation of the transport assessment, which meets the requirements of Highways England, and mitigation measures being agreed, it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of cumulative significant effects.

### **Emissions**

The applicant's detailed air quality assessment (AQA) identifies that the Borough is not located within Air Quality Management Area and NO<sub>2</sub> levels are currently below the standard of 40 UG/M<sup>3</sup>. It assesses the proposal at the construction phase and considers dust fine particulate matter emissions relating to this work, construction of the dwellings and associated buildings and dust and dirt emanating from construction vehicles. The assessment also examines the cumulative impact, in association with the Stalndrop Road proposal, of traffic emissions at 14 receptors on the basis of different scenarios, without and with the proposed developments and incorporating highway mitigation measures on three roundabouts and additional lanes at Blands Corner roundabout. The assessment concludes that once the development has completed NO<sub>2</sub> levels would still remain below the national standard of 40 UG/M<sup>3</sup>, though at one of the sensors the level would be 37 UG/M<sup>3</sup>). The Borough Council's Environmental Health Officer (the Council's EHO) has assessed the applicant's AQA and has verified the findings.

The AQA has however been produced in advance of an agreement being reached with Highways England about the model and methodology to be used in the production of an agreed transport assessment, which will assess traffic flows, the impact of the scheme, and identify proposed mitigation measures. The AQA will, therefore, need to be reviewed once this process has been completed to verify that national standards will not be exceeded, as a result of the proposed developments. In advance of this work being completed, the Secretary of State considers that it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of significant effects.

### **Noise**

The applicant's detailed noise and vibration assessment report, considers how the proposed development site would be affected by noise from the A1 (M) and the A67 Coniscliffe Road.

The assessment identifies that the application site is already subject to very high noise levels, of up to 87 dB from the A1 (M). The assessment concludes that internal noise levels within proposed dwellings would be within acceptable levels, assuming windows are closed and an additional source of noise ventilation is provided. The assessment identifies however, that external noise levels at two of the three locations on the site would exceed the 50 to 55 dB criteria and would not fulfil the BS 8233 criteria. It suggests that a suitable acoustic barrier along the north-west corner of the site, together with careful consideration of the site layout could mitigate noise levels within gardens by 10 - 15 dB. This would reduce noise levels to below 55 dB. The Council's EHO endorses the findings of the assessment and considers that internal noise levels could be mitigated through a series of measures proposed including close boarded fencing and acoustic ventilation and careful orientation of the proposed dwellings.

The Council's EHO has pointed out that the assessment does not consider noise from Coniscliffe Grange farm and the Baydale Beck Pub. Nor has the assessment considered the potential increase in noise levels arising from the earthworks and construction phase and piling activities. The Council's EHO is satisfied that noise from the farm is unlikely to have a

major impact on the site, given the distance away, but that noise from the pub could have an impact on a dwellings situated on the southernmost part of the site. The EHO considers that conditions could be imposed to ameliorate the effects of noise from these sources.

The noise assessment does not appear to have taken into account potential increased noise levels caused by the additional traffic generated by the Coniscliffe Road and Staindrop Road developments. It has been produced in advance of agreement being reached with Highways England about the model and methodology to be used in the transport assessment, which will lead to a robust assessment of traffic flows, assessment of the impact of the scheme, and identify proposed mitigation measures. The noise assessment, including any proposed conditions will therefore need to be reviewed, once the transport assessment process has been completed. The Secretary of State has also had due regard to the policy in paragraph 123 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The "Framework") which states that planning decisions should avoid giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development and the detailed advice contained in the Noise Section of the Practice Guidance. In advance of the completion of the agreed transport assessment, the Secretary of State considers that it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of significant effects, particularly as the site is already subject to high noise levels from traffic.

### **Conclusion**

In cumulative terms the scale of the Staindrop Road and Coniscliffe Road proposals would result in development of about 77 hectares of undeveloped agricultural land and represent a major physical change in the locality sufficient to indicate to the Secretary of State that the developments proposed are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Secretary of State notes that there is an extant Holding Direction, placed on the two proposals by Highways England, because of serious concerns about the potential impact on the strategic and local highway network, and that in the absence of an agreed transport assessment, he is unable to conclude proposals would not have significant effects on the environment in terms of traffic congestion, noise and air quality.

In reaching this conclusion the Secretary of State has also considered the measures proposed to mitigate the environmental impacts for the two proposals relating to traffic congestion, which have yet to be agreed by Highways England, and to noise and air quality. He has, however, concluded that the proposed measures are not sufficient to obviate the need for an environmental impact assessment because of the extent that the impacts are unknown.

Is an Environmental Statement required?	Yes
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Name	Gerry Carpenter
Date	13 November 2017

**Town & Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2011  
Secretary of State Screening Direction – Written Statement**

Application name:	Residential development, south of Staindrop Road, Darlington
SoS case reference:	PCU/EIASC/N1350/78089
Schedule and category of development:	2:10 (b) Urban development

**Full statement of reasons as required by 4(7)(a) of amended EIA Regulations including conclusions on likeliness of significant environmental effects.**

**Schedule 2**

As Darlington Borough Council issued the Screening Opinion for the proposed residential development, south of Staindrop Road ("Staindrop Road development") in September 2016, the request for a Screening Direction has been considered in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2011, as amended. The Secretary of State has had due regard to the EIA Regulations and the Planning Practice Guidance (Practice Guidance) which identifies the physical scale of the development, potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise as key considerations in determining whether the proposal constitutes EIA development. Accordingly, he considers the main matters to be addressed are:

**Schedule 3 selection criteria for Schedule 2 development refers:**

**Characteristics of development**

The proposal site comprises 48.5 ha of agricultural land which would be transformed into a major mixed housing development comprising about 1,000 dwellings, 400 m<sup>2</sup> gross retail floorspace, a primary school, sports pitches, landscaping, open space and associated works. There is a planning application on the adjoining 28.27 ha of agricultural land, to the north of Coniscliffe Road ("Coniscliffe Road development"), for the development of up to 535 dwellings and associated works. In cumulative terms, the two proposals would result in the urbanisation of approximately 77 ha of undeveloped land on the western edge of Darlington and represent a major physical change in the locality. The indicative criteria and thresholds contained within the Practice Guidance state that an environmental impact assessment is unlikely to be required, unless the new development is on a significant greater scale than the previous use. It identifies sites which have not previously been intensively developed as areas of more than 5 ha and developments that would have a significant urbanising effect in a previously non-urbanised area (for example, a development of more than 1,000 dwellings). In cumulative terms, the two developments would significantly exceed both the area and size thresholds in the Practice Guidance and due to the scale and change in nature of the area could potentially have significant environmental effects. Accordingly, the Secretary of State concludes that the proposals could have significant environmental effects in this regard.

**Characteristics of potential impact**

**Potential increase in traffic**

The applicant's detailed transport assessment examines the implications of the proposal on the local highway network and access by sustainable modes. It considers the existing traffic levels at nine key road junctions in the vicinity, and the implications of increased traffic flows emanating from both the Staindrop Road and the Coniscliffe Road developments. It identifies that by 2032 (the proposed completion date of both developments), six of the junctions would be operating at above 85% of capacity at certain times of the day, and four of them would actually be operating at above 100% capacity. These junctions are the A66 (Blands Corner), the A68 Cockerton Junction; Cockerton Green Junction; Junction 58 of the A1 (M); A66/A1150 junction and A66/Yarm Road junction. As a result, these junctions could potentially suffer from severe congestion at certain times of the day.

Highways England has placed an Article 31 Holding Direction on both planning applications to enable a further assessment to be undertaken of the traffic implications of both proposals. This is to ensure that the A66 Trunk Road and the A1 motorways continue to serve their purpose as part of the national system of routes for through traffic in accordance with Section 10 (2) of the Highways Act 1980 by minimising disruption on the trunk road network and in the interests of road safety. Highways England is currently in discussion with the developers to validate the base model for undertaking a transport assessment. Following this, the developers will review the model to be used for undertaking an assessment of the traffic impacts from the sites. Following the completion of this assessment, the scope for mitigation measures will be considered.

In advance of the preparation of the transport assessment, which meets the requirements of Highways England, and mitigation measures being agreed, the Secretary of State considers that it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of significant cumulative effects.

### **Emissions**

The applicant's detailed air quality assessment (AQA) identifies that the Borough is not located within Air Quality Management Area and NO<sub>2</sub> levels are currently below the standard of 40 UG/M<sup>3</sup>. It assesses the proposal at the construction phase and considers dust fine particulate matter emissions relating to this works, construction of the dwellings and associated buildings and dust and dirt emanating from construction vehicles. The assessment also examines the cumulative impact, in association with the Coniscliffe Road proposal, of traffic emissions at 14 receptors on the basis of different scenarios, without and with the proposed developments and incorporating highway mitigation measures on three roundabouts and additional lanes at the Blands Corner roundabout. The assessment concludes that once the developments have been completed NO<sub>2</sub> levels would still remain below the national standard of 40 UG/M<sup>3</sup>, though at one of the sensors the level would be 37 UG/M<sup>3</sup>). The Borough Council's Environmental Health Officer (Council's EHO) has assessed the applicant's AQA and has verified the findings.

The AQA has, however, been produced in advance of an agreement being reached with Highways England about the model and methodology to be used in the production of an agreed transport assessment, which will assess traffic flows, the impact of the scheme, and identify proposed mitigation measures. The AQA will, therefore, need to be reviewed once this process has been completed to verify that national standards will not be exceeded, as a result of the proposed developments. In advance of this work being completed the Secretary of State considers that it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of significant effects.

### **Noise**

The applicant's detailed noise and vibration assessment report considers noise and vibration, as a result of construction work impacting on existing receptors close to the proposed development site, as well as the impact of noise on future receptors on the proposal site from existing sources in the area. These existing noise sources include the wind turbine and a grain drier at Coniscliffe Grange Farm and traffic noise from the A1 (M) and Staindrop Road.

The assessment identifies a short-term increase in noise levels above those recommended in B5228-1:2009 (Code of practice for noise) from the earthworks and construction phase and piling activities. The Council's EHO has verified the assessment and considers that conditions can satisfactorily mitigate the effects;

Noise from the existing wind turbine at Coniscliffe Grange Farm: The assessment identifies that noise from the turbine will be 35 -40 dB at the nearest proposed residential receptor. As the site is already affected by road noise, the Council's EHO considers that the existing planning conditions for the wind turbine provide the necessary safeguards for amenity of prospective residents.

Noise from the grain dryer at Coniscliffe Grange Farm: The assessment identifies that the dryer emits noise at a level of 84 dB, but given its distance from proposed residential properties and existing mitigation measures in place, the report concludes that the dryer is unlikely to cause any impact on the closest proposed receptors and no specific mitigation is required. This is endorsed by the Council's EHO.

Having had due regard to the evidence and the views of the Council's EHO the Secretary of State concludes that the Staindrop Road development is unlikely to have significant effects, in terms of these sources of noise.

Road traffic noise from the A1 (M) and Staindrop Road: The assessment identifies that the application site is already subject to high noise levels, of up to 79 dB from the A1 (M) and up to 66dB from Staindrop Road. It estimates that additional traffic generated by the Staindrop Road development would result in an increase in noise of about 3dB. The Council's EHO endorses the findings of the assessment and considers that internal noise levels can be mitigated through a series of measures proposed including close boarded fencing and acoustic ventilation and careful orientation of the proposed dwellings.

The noise assessment has, however, been produced in advance of agreement being reached with Highways England about the model and methodology to be used to in the transport assessment, which will lead to a robust assessment of traffic flows, assessment of the impact of the scheme, and potentially identify proposed mitigation measures. The noise assessment, including the proposed conditions, will therefore need to be reviewed, once the transport assessment process has been completed. The Secretary of State has also had due regard to the policy in paragraph 123 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The "Framework") which states that planning decisions should avoid giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development and the detailed advice contained in the Noise Section of the Practice Guidance. In advance of the completion of the agreed transport assessment, the Secretary of State considers that it is not possible to conclude with certainty as to the likelihood of cumulative significant effects, particularly as the site is already subject to high noise levels from traffic.

#### **Conclusion**

In cumulative terms the scale of the Staindrop Road and Coniscliffe Road proposals would result in development of about 77 hectares of undeveloped agricultural land and represent a major physical change in the locality sufficient to indicate to the Secretary of State that the developments proposed are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Secretary of State notes that there is an extant Holding Direction placed on the two proposals by Highways England, because of serious concerns about the potential impact on the strategic and local highway network, and that in the absence of an agreed transport assessment, he is unable to conclude the proposals would not have significant effects on the environment in terms of traffic congestion, noise and air quality.

In reaching this conclusion the Secretary of State has also considered the measures proposed to mitigate the environmental impacts of the two proposals relating to traffic congestion, which have yet to be agreed by Highways England, and to noise and air quality. He has, however, concluded that the proposed measures are not sufficient to obviate the need for an environmental impact assessment because of the extent that the impacts are unknown.

Is an Environmental Statement required?	Yes
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Name	Gerry Carpenter
Date	13 November 2017