

Matter 3 – Vision, aims, objectives and spatial strategy

Respondent ID 1168369

Dated April 2021

Representations by Mr N Swinbank
to the Darlington Local Plan Publication Draft

Statement of

Mr Andrew Moss BA(Hons), Dip TP, MRTPI

1. **Introduction**

- 1.1. This Statement is submitted on behalf of Mr Nigel Swinbank, the 'respondent'. The respondent's interests are around Neasham, a village defined in the Settlement Hierarchy as a 'Rural Village'.

2. **Inspector's Questions Matter 3, Question 3.2**

- 2.1. It is agreed that Neasham is appropriately classified within the third tier of the settlement hierarchy. Within Neasham are services and facilities including The Fox & Hounds Pub and Restaurant, a Village Hall, a Village Green and a bus service. It is appropriate therefore that Neasham accommodates a proportion of Darlington's housing requirement throughout the Plan period.

3. **Inspector's Questions Matter 3, Question 3.3**

- 3.1. The Five Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement June 2020 includes only a single site in Neasham, site reference 54. The development of this site with 10 dwellings was completed in 2020 pursuant to planning permission 16/01020/OUT and 18/00229/RM. The short time scale between the initial planning permission and the completion of the houses is to be noted. It is additionally material that the site was a small site in NPPF paragraph 68 terms. It was developed by a small building firm providing a bespoke product different from that of the volume house builders.
- 3.2. NPPF paragraph 78 states to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It continues that planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive. A concern is where Neasham will '*grow and thrive*' in the 15 years to 2036 acknowledging that site reference 54 was completed in 2020, the wording of policy SH1 and the tightly drawn Development Limits outside which all areas are to be regarded as 'countryside'.
- 3.3. Following on from the above reasoned justification paragraph 4.0.12 refers to new housing development on the edge of Rural Villages. It is submitted that in a Plan led system and to be consistent with national policy, NPPF para 35 criterion d, the Plan should specifically identify opportunities for Neasham to grow. An option would be land adjoining the 10 dwellings recently completed pursuant to

16/01020/OUT and 18/00229/RM, there being additional land available including to the north and east, HELAA reference site 054.

4. **Inspector's Questions Matter 3, Question 3.4**

- 4.1. As set out above in response to Question 3.4, site 54 in Neasham was completed in 2020. It is submitted therefore that on the Policies Map the site should not be highlighted, it not being available to meet future development needs over the balance of the Plan period.



- 4.2. In representations it was suggested that Development Limits not be used and a criteria based policy included within the Plan. The Inspector will be familiar with Policy 6 in the Adopted County Durham Local Plan adopted in 2020 which concerned development on unallocated sites. It is submitted a similar policy in the Darlington Plan would provide flexibility, have merit and be sound. A copy of Policy 6 of the County Durham Plan is reproduced below for ease of reference. The full policy and its reasoned justification is available at the link below.

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/34069/County-Durham-Plan-adopted-2020-pdf/CountyDurhamPlanAdopted2020vDec2020.pdf?m=63742496933140000>

Policy 6

Development on Unallocated Sites

The development of sites which are not allocated in the Plan or in a Neighbourhood Plan which are either (i) within the built-up area; or (ii) outside the built-up area (except where a settlement boundary has been defined in a neighbourhood plan) but well-related to a settlement, will be permitted provided the proposal accords with all relevant development plan policies and:

- a. is compatible with, and is not prejudicial to, any existing, allocated or permitted use of adjacent land;
- b. does not contribute to coalescence with neighbouring settlements, would not result in ribbon development, or inappropriate backland development;
- c. does not result in the loss of open land that has recreational, ecological or heritage value, or contributes to the character of the locality which cannot be adequately mitigated or compensated for;
- d. is appropriate in terms of scale, design, layout, and location to the character, function, form and setting of, the settlement;
- e. will not be prejudicial to highway safety or have a severe residual cumulative impact on network capacity;
- f. has good access by sustainable modes of transport to relevant services and facilities and reflects the size of the settlement and the level of service provision within that settlement;
- g. does not result in the loss of a settlement's or neighbourhood's valued facilities or services unless it has been demonstrated that they are no longer viable;
- h. minimises vulnerability and provides resilience to impacts arising from climate change, including but not limited to, flooding;
- i. where relevant, makes as much use as possible of previously developed (brownfield) land; and
- j. where appropriate, it reflects priorities for urban regeneration.