

## Darlington Local Plan

### Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions for Examination

#### Response on behalf of Taylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd

#### Matter 3 – Vision, aims, objectives and spatial strategy

Q3.2. Is the settlement hierarchy set out in policy SH1 based on evidence that is relevant, up to date, adequate and proportionate? Is the hierarchy and associated broad distribution of development reasonable, having regard to alternatives that were considered during the preparation of the Plan and the findings of the sustainability appraisal?

Taylor Wimpey fully support the identification of Darlington as the focus of future development within the Borough. This is the most logical and sustainable approach with Darlington clearly being the highest order settlement in the Borough and the focus for housing, employment, retail and leisure facilities.

Darlington is a single town borough and, as such, there are no other reasonable alternatives to delivering the majority of housing and employment within and adjacent to the existing town. Whilst Darlington is clearly the main focus for growth in the emerging Local Plan, development has also been directed at the smaller lower order settlements within the Borough including, Middleton St George, Hurworth and Heighington.

However, Taylor Wimpey do not agree with the Council's approach to the rural villages where policy SH1 suggests that only affordable housing would be supported. This is contrary to national policy (NPPF para 78) which states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. As such, Taylor Wimpey would suggest that a modification to policy SH1 is needed to make it sound as suggested below:

*"The character of the Rural Villages, including their relationship to and setting within the surrounding countryside, will be protected and where possible enhanced. Development in these villages will make efficient and sustainable use of existing buildings and infill opportunities. On the edges of Rural Villages, housing development will meet clearly identified local needs, recognising that an element of open market housing may be required to deliver essential affordable units".*

By removing the final sentence of the policy this would not restrict sites coming forward on the edge of these smaller settlement in line with the proposed provisions of H1 in the event that the Council are unable to demonstrate a deliverable five year housing land supply. Housing development has already been recently supported by the Council in a number of these rural villages already including Low Coniscliffe. As such, these settlements were deemed to be suitable and sustainable locations for residential development.

Q3.3. Is the broad distribution of housing and employment development proposed through commitments and allocations in the Plan consistent with the settlement hierarchy set out in policy SH1?

As outlined above, Taylor Wimpey fully support the majority of development being located within Darlington as the only town in the Borough and the identification of the main strategic housing allocation (including Coniscliffe Park South – site 041) is the most justified approach and is sound.

Q3.4. Are the development limits to the Darlington urban area, three service villages, and eight rural villages defined on the policies map based on evidence that is relevant, up to date, adequate and proportionate?

Taylor Wimpey consider that the revised development limits on the western edge of Darlington in relation to the proposed housing allocation at Coniscliffe Park South (site 041) are adequate and reflect the extent of the pending application for the site.