
Darlington Local Plan Examination**Hearing statement prepared on behalf of Middleton St George Parish Council****Matter 10 Statement – Other strategic and development management policies
May 2021****1. Introduction and context**

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by Jo-Anne Garrick Ltd on behalf of Middleton St George Parish Council (MSGPC). The parish council has made detailed representations at each stage of the preparation of the Darlington Local Plan (DLP). Furthermore, MSGPC engages fully in development management process, providing detailed comments on planning applications within and potentially impacting on the parish.
- 1.2 On 13 April 2021, MSGPC submitted the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan (MSGNP) to Darlington Borough Council (DBC) for examination. The plan has been subject to significant community engagement and substantial evidence work to inform the planning policy approach.
- 1.3 MSGPC is therefore an important stakeholder in the plan making process and welcome the opportunity to participate in the examination process.

2. Response to the Inspector's Matters, Issues and QuestionsSustainable design principles and climate change – policy DC1 (Q10.1)

- 2.1 MSGPC consider that as a result of the prominence the government is now placing on the role neighbourhood plans have in ensuring good design (PPG – ID 26-004-20191001) reference should be made within policy DC1 or the supporting text to new development needing to accord with the provisions of neighbourhood plan design codes.

Flood risk and water management – policy DC2 (Q10.2)

- 2.2 Whilst MSGPC does not have any detailed comments in response to this question, there is concern that the policy approach has been undermined as a result of the strategic flood risk assessment process not informing the site selection process. It is also not clear whether there has been full consideration given to the potential flooding impacts of the development of large areas of greenfield land, particularly that within MSG Parish.
- 2.3 MSGPC support the submissions made by the Darlington Green Party regarding flooding matters.

Health and wellbeing – policy DC3 (Q10.3), safeguarding amenity – policy DC4 (Q10.4),
Historic environment – policies ENV1 and ENV2 (Q10.5)

- 2.4 MSGPC does not have any specific comments to make in response to Q10.3 to Q10.5 but wishes to reserve the right to make further representations regarding these issues in so far as they may impact on the parish.

Rural gaps – policy ENV3 (Q10.2)

- 2.5 MSGPC strongly supports the need to retain the openness and green infrastructure functions of the rural gaps between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row as well as Middleton St George and Oak Tree. The level of recent housing development approved by DBC has almost resulted in coalescence of the three settlements. The importance of these gaps was highlighted within the Middleton St George Design Code.
- 2.6 It is noted that in response to PQ62 that DBC considers it is more appropriate to define the rural gaps in words rather than mapping the areas to ensure the policy is not overly restrictive. MSGPC submit that in order for this policy to be effective these rural gaps should be clearly defined on the policies map if not, the extent of the rural gaps would be clearly open to interpretation.

Green wedges – policy ENV3 (Q1.3)

- 2.7 MSGPC has no comments in response to the specific question however, for information policy MSG6 of the submission MSG Neighbourhood Plan proposes a green wedge between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row to protect and enhance the significance of the conservation area and prevent the coalescence of Middleton St George and Middleton One Row. In addition, the green wedge seeks to protect the important landscape character of the area and its valuable role as a wildlife corridor.

Local and strategic green corridors – policies ENV3 and ENV4 (Q10.4, Q10.5, Q10.6 and Q10.7)

Q10.4:

- 2.8 MSGPC supports the intentions of policy ENV3(B) however would question its effectiveness given the apparent lack of the clear spatial detail of the extent of green corridors and historic routes. It is submitted that these should be clearly defined on an interactive policies map (see response to Q10.7). It is also unclear as to why the policy would not want to protect on existing identified green corridors and not those that were created or identified in the future.

Q10.5:

- 2.9 MSGPC supports the requirement of ENV4(a) for all development within, or immediately adjacent to, the buffer of an existing strategic or local green corridor to

conserve and enhance the function, setting, biodiversity, landscape, access and recreational value of the corridor.

Q10.6:

- 2.10 MSGPC supports the requirement of policy ENV4(b) for all development that is crossed by a proposed strategic or local green corridor to incorporate the corridor into the site's layout and design.

Q10.7:

- 2.11 MSGPC consider that to ensure policies ENV3B and ENV4 are effective, the policies map should be changed to define the existing and proposed local and strategic corridors and their buffers.

Historic routes – policy ENV3 (Q10.8)

- 2.12 MSGPC supports the requirements of policy ENV3(B) for all development that adjoins the six specified historic routes to meet criteria (i) to (v) and considers that the policies map should be changed to define those routes.

Urban and rural parklands – policy ENV3 (Q10.9)

- 2.13 MSGPC supports policy ENV3(C) relating to the specified urban and rural parklands and considers that the policies map should be changed to define those sites.

Loss of existing open space – policy ENV4 (Q10.10) and open space provision – policy ENV5 (Q10.11)

- 2.14 MSGPC does not have any specific comments to make in response to Q10.10 and Q10.11 but wishes to reserve the right to make further representations regarding these issues in so far as they may impact on the parish.

Local Green Space – policy ENV6 (10.12)

- 2.15 MSGPC supports the identification of the five local green space sites proposed in the parish (LGS15, LGS16, LGS17, LGS22 and LGS23). It should be noted that the submission MSG Neighbourhood Plan also proposes these sites as local green space, with a further 12 sites which MSGPC has assessed as meeting national policy. These sites have been previously submitted to DBC to be considered for local green space designation, but this was rejected. MSGPC consider these sites should be included within the local plan and LGS22 should be extended to reflect the neighbourhood plan proposed allocation.
- 2.16 The additional sites included in the neighbourhood plan are: The Whinnies, Former Stockton and Darlington Railway Route and Trackbed (in MSG), Land at the Platform 1 pub, Haxby Road Play Area/ Former Cornmill, Tower Hill to The Front, 64 Middleton Lane (Mown Meadows), the war memorial and garden, The Front, fields behind the

Greenway and north of the railway line, St George's Church and Grounds, Belle Vue Allotments, Killinghall Row Allotments, Sadberge Road Allotments.

- 2.17 MSGPC support the amended wording proposed by the council in relation to policy ENV6.

Biodiversity and geodiversity – policies ENV7 and ENV8 (Q10.13)

- 2.18 MSGPC does not have any specific comments to make in response to Q10.13 but wishes to reserve the right to make further representations regarding this issue in so far as it may impact on the parish.