
Darlington Local Plan Examination**Hearing statement prepared on behalf of Middleton St George Parish Council****Matter 5 Statement – Meeting particular housing needs
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 QuestionsHousing mix – policy H4*Q5.1:*

- 2.1 MSGPC are concerned that the council's proposed change to the wording of paragraph 1 of policy H4 (to replace 'expected' with 'encouraged') will further dilute the need for new housing development to provide a mix of housing that needs identified needs. MSGPC also believe that the inclusion of the word 'character' could provide justification for the provision of more homes of the same type and size being delivered.
- 2.2 It is also considered that the policy should specifically refer to any needs identified as part of neighbourhood planning work. For example, the housing needs assessment that accompanies the submission MSG Neighbourhood Plan is clear that there is a need to improve affordability in the parish across all tenures and that new residential development should ensure a substantial proportion of smaller dwellings in the aim of rebalancing the housing stock.
- 2.3 In order to be sound, paragraph 1 or policy H4 should retain the word 'expected' and reference should be made to housing needs evidence supporting neighbourhood plans.

Q5.2:

- 2.4 MSGPC does not have any specific comments to make in response to Q5.2 but wishes to reserve the right to make further representations regarding this issue in so far as it may impact on the parish.

Affordable housing – policies H5 and H6 and appendix E

Q5.3 & Q5.4:

- 2.5 MSGPC does not have any specific comments to make in response to questions Q5.3 and Q5.4 but wishes to reserve the right to make further representations regarding these issues in so far as they may impact on the parish.

Q5.5:

- 2.6 MSGPC do not support the inclusion of an exemption for executive housing schemes within policy H5. There have been a significant number of executive homes delivered in MSG parish which provided a financial contribution in lieu. MSGPC consider that executive housing schemes are not appropriate as they do not contribute to the creation of mixed and balanced communities. In practice, very limited affordable housing has been delivered in the parish:

- Site 061 - up to 250 dwellings “executive homes”, Sadberge Road, is almost complete. There are no affordable homes on the site. A financial contribution was provided in lieu to DBC for off-site affordable housing. As far as the parish council is aware this has not been provided in the village;
- Site 089 - up to 61 houses, “ executive homes”, Yarm Road, Oak Tree, has planning permission, but has not commenced. There are no affordable homes, however DBC has indicated that offsite provision will be provided in the village, but no further details have been provided;
- Site 065 - 27 dwellings off Middleton Lane, is under construction. Includes six affordable bungalows at western end (which are built) and 21 “executive homes” at eastern end;
- Site 045 - up to 198 dwellings, rear of Grendon Gardens/High Stell. No affordable housing included in the development that the parish council are aware of. Currently phase one is under construction;
- Site 230 – 44 dwellings, Yarm Road – market homes, not “executive”. Complete and includes 20% affordable homes onsite;
- Site 384 - 12 houses, Oak Tree, high density housing, largely complete and includes 20% on-site affordable housing; and
- Site 146 - up to 330 dwellings, outline permission obtained which proposes partial onsite affordable provision, and partial offsite (affordable bungalows on site 386).

- 2.7 The MSG Housing Needs Assessment highlighted that a disproportionate share of executive housing has recently been delivered in the parish (paragraph 158, page 37).

The assessment illustrates a need for the provision of 38 affordable housing units over the period of the neighbourhood plan and estimates that there is potential demand for a further 128 affordable home ownership homes.

- 2.8 MSGPC submit that the exemption does not contribute to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities and should therefore be removed from the plan in order to make it sound.

Q5.6:

- 2.9 MSGPC does not have any specific comments to make in response to question Q5.6 but wishes to reserve the right to make further representations regarding this issue in so far as it may impact on the parish.

Residential development in the countryside – policy H7 (Q5.7)

- 2.10 MSGPC does not have any specific comments to make in response to question Q5.7 but wishes to reserve the right to make further representations regarding this issue in so far as it may impact on the parish.

Housing intensification – policy 8 (Q5.8)

- 2.11 There has been some pressure for backland development within MSG Parish. There is concern that inappropriate intensification can result in the loss of valued open space which is important for both recreation and the visual amenity of the area.
- 2.12 In addition to the requirement for development proposals to have regard to the design supplementary planning document, it is suggested that in order to make the plan sound reference should also be made to neighbourhood plan design codes.