AGENDA 11, Enc viii) Town and Parish Council Engagement – Northumberland Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)

Introduction

On 9 September, NCC began work on the preparation of a new Local Plan for Northumberland formally started as they passed through Gateway 1. From that date they have 30 months to prepare and adopt a new plan. **They are keen to engage with town and parish councils as they prepare the plan.**

Given that Northumberland need to plan for around 34,000 homes over a 20-year plan period, most, if not **all parishes, can expect to see some development**. While the amount of development to be apportioned to different parts of the county is yet to be established, it is likely that most growth will go the largest settlements and places well served by trains and/or buses. However, they expect some development to go to rural areas that are less well served by public transport to help support services and sustain communities.

Through this consultation exercise, **solely for town and parish councils**, NCC are keen to get an understanding of, for each parish:

- Preferred locations for housing growth
- The types, size and tenure of homes that are required/preferred
- Any infrastructure that is needed to support new housing development
- Priorities in relation to the design of new housing development.

Sites Selected in Ashington

NCC-0364 - Land at Woodhorn Meadows, Ashington

NCC-0434 - Wansbeck Road, Ashington

NCC-0538 - Summerhouse Lane, Ashington

NCC-0540 - Land North of Wansbeck Road, Ashington

NCC-0541 - Land to the south of Morpeth Road, Ashington (Wansbeck Fields)

NCC-0550 - Land South Of Wansbeck Road, Ashington

NCC-0555 - Land to the south of Morpeth Road, Ashington (Wansbeck Fields)

NCC-0565 - Land to the south of Morpeth Road, Ashington (Wansbeck Fields)

NCC-0575 - Land to the south of Morpeth Road, Ashington (Wansbeck Fields)

NCC-0589 - Land to the south of Morpeth Road, Ashington (Wansbeck Fields)

NCC-0671 - Coulson Park First School

NCC-0685 - Hirst Welfare Land

NCC-0867 - Land to the rear 91 North Seaton Road

NCC-0877 - Site of Demolished Houses - Woodhorn Villas

NCC-0879 - Northumberland College (buildings and hardstanding)

NCC-0890 - Land at West Ashington

NCC-0983 - Land Adjoining Castle House

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NCC-0996 - Land at Green Lane

NCC-1091 - Potland Burn Phase I (northern parcel)

NCC-1092 - Potland Burn Phase II

NCC-1100 - Land north west of Castle Island Way and east of St Johns Church Cemetery (North)

NCC-1101 - Land north west of Castle Island Way and east of St Johns Church Cemetery (South)

We are asked to comment on each of these identified sites, if we support them – there is a checkbox and question 5 follows, if there is no support for the site it is simply left unchecked. There is no opportunity to comment on the unsuitability of a site.

Questions Posed and Opportunity for Comment

The table below contains all the sites identified in Ashington, where they have a yield (number of homes) this has been shown. The Town Council can comment on each as an appropriate site for housing. All comments included have been developed with those Ward Cllrs who have so far engaged. This is a starting point that can be added to, considered and agreed as a Town Council response. Please be mindful we can only respond once as a corporate body.

5. If you would like to provide any further information about a site (or sites) that you support, please do so here.

You may wish to consider the amount of new homes that may be appropriate for each site or whether only part of the site is preferred (and if so which part). Please give the reference of the site when making a comment (i.e NCC-0012).

Draft response (site schedule and comments received):

The schedule below lists every site with yields added. Only sites the Council agrees to support should be ticked on the portal and commented on in Q5; the "Council position" column is for Full Council to complete. Members will need to access the map to view these. Northumberland - Site Assessment

Ref	Site	Yield (homes)	Council position	Draft comment (Q5)
NCC-0364	Land at Woodhorn Meadows	53	Council to decide	
NCC-0434	Wansbeck Road	190	Council to decide	
NCC-0538	Summerhouse Lane	20	Council to decide	
NCC-0540	Land North of Wansbeck Road	300	Council to decide	
NCC-0541	Land S of Morpeth Road (Wansbeck Fields)	Not selected	Council to decide	
NCC-0550	Land South of Wansbeck Road	50	Council to decide	
NCC-0555	Land S of Morpeth Road (Wansbeck Fields)	2,000	Council to decide	
NCC-0565	Land S of Morpeth Road (Wansbeck Fields)	Not selected	Council to decide	

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Ref	Site	Yield (homes)	Council position	Draft comment (Q5)
NCC-0575	Land S of Morpeth Road (Wansbeck Fields)	Not selected	Council to decide	
NCC-0589	Land S of Morpeth Road (Wansbeck Fields)	Not selected	Council to decide	
NCC-0671	Coulson Park First School	27	Support	Supported on the basis that the site is developed as 100% affordable housing.
NCC-0685	Hirst Welfare Land	47	Support	Supported as the preferred location for a supported-living community for older residents, including those living with dementia (see Q12 and Q19).
NCC-0867	Land to the rear 91 North Seaton Road		Council to decide	
NCC-0877	Site of Demolished Houses, Woodhorn Villas	16	Council to decide	
NCC-0879	Northumberland College (buildings and hardstanding)	Not selected	Council to decide	Council considers this site should be retained for education use as a potential new school site (see Q8 and Q14).
NCC-0890	Land at West Ashington	99	Council to decide	Council would only support this site on the condition that improvements to the road network are delivered first, in particular at Ellington Road Ends
NCC-0983	Land Adjoining Castle House	23	Council to decide	
NCC-0996	Land at Green Lane	14	Support	Part of the site to be safeguarded for a 24/7 mental health crisis centre and supported housing
NCC-1091	Potland Burn Phase I (northern parcel)	25	Council to decide	Council would only support this site on the condition that improvements to the road network are delivered first, in particular at Ellington Road Ends
NCC-1092	Potland Burn Phase II	93	Council to decide	As above
NCC-1100	Land NW of Castle Island Way / E of St Johns Cemetery (North)	80	Council to decide	
NCC-1101	Land NW of Castle Island Way / E of St Johns Cemetery (South)	45	Council to decide	

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Draft Q5 text for the portal:

NCC-0671 Coulson Park First School: Ashington Town Council supports this site on the basis that it is developed as 100% affordable housing.

NCC-0685 Hirst Welfare Land: The Council supports this site as the preferred location for a supported-living community for older residents, including those living with dementia. The Council's preferred layout is a "hub-and-spoke" model: a central, staffed community building providing shared care and support services, surrounded by a cluster of secure, level-access bungalows. This would allow older residents to remain within their community and would free up family housing elsewhere in the town. The Council would wish this to be considered alongside the Hirst Masterplan.

NCC-0996 Land at Green Lane: The Council asks that the Local Plan safeguards land within the Green Lane health cluster, where Community Treatment Teams and Community Psychiatric Nurses are already based, for a purpose-built, staffed 24/7 mental health crisis centre with supported housing. Co-locating with existing community mental health staff would give residents a local alternative to A&E. The Council asks NCC to work with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust to bring this forward, and that the new Local Plan carries forward the principle in the current Plan (Policy STP 5) that development must be supported by adequate health infrastructure.

Sites within Bothal ward: Much of the potential development identified in Ashington falls within Bothal ward. The Council's support for any site within Bothal ward is conditional on improvements to the road network being delivered first, in particular at Ellington Road Ends. [Further information from Bothal Cllrs to list the relevant site references once confirmed.]

[Add comments for any further sites the Council supports, giving the site reference, an appropriate number of homes, and whether only part of the site is preferred.]

*6. Please confirm if you would support any of the existing HELAA sites as preferred locations? **

- ☐ I have selected an identified HELAA site(s).
- ☐ I do not wish to select any identified HELAA sites.
- ☐ There are no HELAA sites identified within my parish.

Draft response:

Select: "I have selected an identified HELAA site(s)."

*7. Please confirm as to whether you have identified another site/location. **

- ☐ Yes - I confirm that I have added another site/location to the map on the lefthand side of the screen.
- ☐ No - I do not wish to identify another site/location.

Draft response:

Select: "No – I do not wish to identify another site/location."

The Council's proposal for NCC-0879 (Northumberland College) as a potential school site is an education use rather than a housing site, so it is set out in Q8 and Q14 rather than added to the map. [Change to "Yes" if Council wishes to add a housing site.]

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8. Further comments about the location of new housing…If you are not sure about precise locations or want to provide more information in relation to the sites/areas selected, tell us more in the box below.

For example, you may wish to consider which settlements in the parish are the preferred location for new development, or which broad areas around settlements are most approrpriate (i.e. the north, south, east of west).

Draft response:

Ashington Town Council has selected only those sites it is able to support at this stage. Sites that have not been selected should not be read as having the support of the Town Council.

The Council's preference is for new housing to come forward on previously developed land and on sites well related to the existing built-up area, the town centre and public transport, including the Northumberland Line, before greenfield land on the edge of the town.

NCC-0879 (Northumberland College): The Council agrees this site is not suitable for residential development. Given the pressure on school places across the town, and the additional demand new housing will create, the Council considers the site should be retained for education use and assessed as a potential location for a new school.

Bothal ward: A large proportion of the potential development sites lie within Bothal ward. Development in this part of the town should only proceed once improvements to the road network have been delivered, in particular at Ellington Road Ends, which is already under significant pressure.

9. What types of housing would you most support or you consider is most needed in your parish?

- ☐ flats
- ☐ houses
- ☐ bungalows
- ☐ specialist housing

Draft response:

Select: bungalows, specialist housing and houses.

10. What size of homes would you most support or you consider is most needed in your parish?

- ☐ 1-2 bedrooms
- ☐ 3-4 bedrooms
- ☐ 5+ bedrooms

Draft response:

Select: 1–2 bedrooms and 3–4 bedrooms.

Accessible and level-access homes should not be limited to 1-bedroom units; see Q12.

11. What tenure of homes would you most support or you consider is most needed in your parish?

- ☐ private market sale
- ☐ private rented
- ☐ social housing (i.e. council housing)
- ☐ affordable rented (i.e priced at 80% of market rent)

- ☐ discounted market sale (i.e. typically 70 to 80% of market sales price)
- ☐ shared ownership

Draft response:

Select: social housing, affordable rented and shared ownership. [Council to confirm.]

12. Is there anything more that you want to tell us about house types, sizes and tenures?

Draft response:

Accessible homes for all ages: Disability affects all age groups, but level-access homes such as bungalows are often limited to residents aged over 55. Younger and working-age disabled residents, including those with hidden disabilities, can be left without a suitable option. The Council asks that a proportion of new homes are built to the wheelchair-user standard (M4(3)) and that these are not restricted by age.

Bedroom numbers and parking: Where level-access homes are provided, they are usually 1-bedroom. Many residents with complex needs require a 2- or 3-bedroom home to make room for a live-in carer, overnight support staff or medical equipment, together with parking (including disabled parking) close to the front door. Care space should be factored into bedroom numbers from the outset.

Older people and dementia care: Ashington has an ageing population with a clear long-term need for specialist housing for older residents and those living with dementia. The Council supports a supported-living "hub-and-spoke" model at NCC-0685 Hirst Welfare Land (see Q5).

Evidence of need: The Council asks that the Local Plan's housing needs evidence specifically captures the need from working-age disabled residents, so that the mix of new homes reflects it. The Council would also ask that NCC shares with its Housing service, and with registered providers such as Bernicia and Thirteen, the Council's view that allocation of adapted and specialist homes should be informed by assessments from qualified professionals such as Occupational Therapists, so that new homes are matched to those with the greatest need.

13. What infrastructure improvements would be required to support future development in the parish?

Please select all options which apply.

- ☐ road improvements
- ☐ public transport improvements
- ☐ active travel routes
- ☐ health facilities
- ☐ education facilities
- ☐ sports and recreation facilities
- ☐ open space and green infrastructure
- ☐ flood risk and drainage infrastructure
- ☐ water supply infrastructure
- ☐ wastewater/sewerage infrastructure
- ☐ broadband and mobile connectivity
- ☐ energy infrastructure (including EV charging)
- ☐ emergency services infrastructure
- ☐ other (please specify)

Draft response:

Select: road improvements, public transport improvements, active travel routes, health facilities, education facilities, open space and green infrastructure, flood risk and drainage infrastructure, wastewater/sewerage infrastructure.

Other (please specify): dental capacity; road surface condition, 24/7 mental health crisis provision (see Q14).

14. Is there anything more that you want to tell us about infrastructure requirements, capacity constraints, or infrastructure improvements needed in the parish?

Draft response:

Ashington's existing public services, roads and utilities are already operating at or near capacity. The Council asks that housing numbers agreed through the Local Plan are matched by a phased expansion of local infrastructure, funded through developer contributions, with improvements delivered before homes are occupied rather than afterwards.

School capacity: School places are already under pressure, and the scale of housing being considered will add to this significantly. The Council asks that school capacity is planned alongside housing growth and that NCC-0879 (Northumberland College) is assessed as a site for a new school.

Roads: Increased traffic will add to congestion at the town's main roundabouts and junctions and to wear on road surfaces. Development in Bothal ward in particular must be preceded by improvements to the road network, especially at Ellington Road Ends and North Seaton Roundabout.

Health: GP surgeries and dental practices are already stretched; additional capacity is needed in step with new housing.

Mental health crisis care: Ashington has no local specialist mental health crisis provision; the nearest specialist facility is in Morpeth. Residents in crisis can wait a long time for contact, and A&E is not the right setting for someone in severe mental distress or acute psychosis. Local voluntary provision such as The Bothy is valued, but it is open 2pm to 10pm only, while mental health crises happen around the clock. Housing growth will add to demand on services that are already stretched.

The Council asks that the Local Plan safeguards land within the Green Lane health cluster, where Community Treatment Teams and Community Psychiatric Nurses are already based, for a purpose-built, staffed 24/7 mental health crisis centre with supported housing. Co-locating with existing community mental health staff would give residents a local alternative to A&E. The Council asks NCC to work with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust to bring this forward, and that the new Local Plan carries forward the principle in the current Plan (Policy STP 5) that development must be supported by adequate health infrastructure.

Drainage: The sewerage and drainage network needs to be upgraded to take additional development.

Adoption of new estates: A number of large estates in Ashington have not been adopted by NCC after completion because snagging and remedial works have not been finished by the developer. This can leave roads, footpaths, street lighting, drainage and open spaces unadopted for years, with residents receiving fewer services than elsewhere in the town while paying council tax like everyone else. The Council asks that the Local Plan requires:

- roads, footpaths, lighting and drainage to be built to adoptable standards, with adoption agreements and sufficient bonds in place before development starts;
- a clear timetable for adoption on each phase, with snagging completed before the developer leaves site;
- NCC to use the bonds to complete outstanding works where developers fail to do so, so that residents are not left waiting;
- where open spaces are to be managed by a management company, residents are protected from unfair or open-ended charges, and NCC (or the Town Council) has a route to take them over.

15. What are the most important aspects that new housing development should respond to in your parish?

Please choose a maximum of 5 options.

- ☐ distinctive local features or materials
- ☐ rural character
- ☐ urban character
- ☐ green spaces and nature
- ☐ historic character and heritage
- ☐ landscape setting
- ☐ existing settlement pattern
- ☐ compact layouts that make efficient use of land
- ☐ the design of streets and public spaces
- ☐ walking and cycling connections
- ☐ inclusive and accessible environment
- ☐ environmental sustainability
- ☐ other (please specify)

Draft response:

Select (max 5): inclusive and accessible environment; green spaces and nature; walking and cycling connections; existing settlement pattern; the design of streets and public spaces. [Council to confirm.]

16. Is there anything more that you want to tell us about design requirements in the parish?

Draft response:

All new homes should be built to at least the accessible and adaptable standard (M4(2)), with a proportion to the wheelchair-user standard (M4(3)). Layouts should include disabled parking close to the property, and adequate space for bins and recycling to be stored securely and collected easily.

Pride of place: New development should be designed from the outset to be easy to maintain and to look good for the long term. In the past, street lighting, street cleaning, grounds maintenance and litter and dog bins have too often been an afterthought, leaving new estates that are poorly lit, difficult to clean and quick to look neglected. The Council asks that:

- street lighting is designed in from the start to adoptable standards, with well-lit footpaths, cut-throughs and parking areas;
- streets, verges and open spaces are laid out so they can be swept, cleaned and maintained easily, with mechanical sweepers and refuse vehicles able to access them;

- litter bins, dog bins and planting are included in the design, with clear arrangements and funding for who will maintain them;
- materials and street furniture are durable and easy to repair or replace.

17. Are there any particular features, characteristics or qualities that give your parish its identity and should be reflected in future housing development?

Draft response:

Ashington's identity is rooted in its mining heritage, its colliery-era street pattern and its strong sense of community. New development should respect this and support residents to stay within their community as their needs change. [Council may wish to add examples of local developments it considers good practice; the Hirst Masterplan may be relevant here.]

18. What design issues or problems would you like future housing development to avoid?

Draft response:

New housing should avoid:

- insufficient space for bins and waste to be stored securely and collected easily;
- homes that are not accessible, or that cannot be adapted; a significant proportion of homes should be DDA compliant;
- inadequate parking, which pushes cars onto the street and pavements;
- over-concentration of high-density housing and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), particularly in Central and Hirst wards;
- homes being occupied before the infrastructure to support them is in place.
- estates left unadopted after completion, and street lighting, cleaning and maintenance being treated as an afterthought.

19. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the design of future housing development in your parish?

Draft response:

Houses in Multiple Occupation: The growth of HMOs is changing the character of traditional neighbourhoods and placing additional pressure on refuse collection, on-street parking and local utilities, particularly in Central and Hirst wards. The Council asks that the Local Plan includes a policy to prevent over-concentration of HMOs, for example a percentage-based threshold by area, and that NCC considers an Article 4 Direction so that all HMO conversions in Ashington require planning permission.