

# **Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Pre-Submission Draft**

**A Health Check report to  
Ponteland Town Council on the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan  
by Independent Examiner, Rosemary Kidd**

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## Summary of Recommendations

- 1.1 The draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP) contains much to commend it and it is clear that considerable research has been undertaken to prepare the plan for this attractive town/village and its nearby hamlets as is evidenced by the background papers prepared on each topic. The recommendations are made to ensure that the NP will firstly meet the Basic Conditions and will secondly become an effective plan that will deliver its objectives and help to shape the settlements in the parish for the next 15 years or so during a period when it is likely to go through considerable change. Recommendations are also made to ensure that the policies are clearly worded and are capable of being interpreted in a consistent manner by decision makers as required by Planning Practice Guidance.
- 1.2 The NP has been divided into two sections with Part A setting out the Planning Policies and Part B the Community Actions. This is good practice and the distinction is clearly made. The Plan refers to the Policies Map being in Appendix 1. When preparing the submission draft plan, consideration should be given to how the map can be included in the NP and be capable of being printed. At present the map can be accessed on the website.
- 1.3 The NP is divided into clear sections with introductory text that provides background information about the plan area and the relevant policies. Relevant background papers are referred to. The plan refers to the Ponteland as a village, however, the Local Plan refers to it as a “main town” which perhaps better reflects the size and status of the settlement. In view of the variety of terminology, I have used the term town/village or settlement throughout this report.
- 1.4 The section on Ponteland Today should be strengthened to describe the location of the settlement and its proximity to Newcastle and its airport to provide the economic and social background of the town/village today. It would be helpful to include recent statistical information about population, housing, employment and travel to work and highlight any trends and forecasts that are relevant to the plan eg the ageing population.
- 1.5 In order to provide the planning context for the NP, it would be helpful to include a concise summary of the status of the adopted and emerging Local Plans and the key strategic policies that will steer the neighbourhood plan area over the next 15 years or so (eg on the role of the settlement, the housing requirement and proposed major allocations, economic growth, the redevelopment of the leisure and educational development, and the proposal to explore the re-opening of the former rail line).

- 1.6 The NPPF states that neighbourhood plans should support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development; and they should plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing the future development of their area. The NP is relying on the emerging Local Plan to allocate sites for future development and this is an acceptable approach. Within the context of the growth proposed in the emerging Local Plan, it is essential that the plan makers determine which matters can be shaped by the NP and to ensure that the policies of the NP address these topics in a way that is clear and focused so that they can be used to effectively deliver the distinctive community that is desired. For example, there will no doubt be contributions from the new development to community infrastructure; there is an opportunity for the NP to play an important role in ascertaining the needs and priorities of the community in this regard.
- 1.7 The Vision is clear and locally distinctive. However, it may be considered to be restrictive as it refers to “meeting the needs of the local population”. It is evident that the town/village has grown as an attractive location for people working in Newcastle and other centres nearby and the vision should be worded to better reflect the role of the town/village as a commuter settlement meeting the housing needs and aspirations of households from a wider catchment area.
- 1.8 The Plan Objectives are clear and distinct. The housing objective could be worded in a more focused way to refer to the sections of the community that are in most need.
- 1.9 The Plan includes a general design policy and one specifically relating to the Darras Hall area. The effectiveness of these policies could be improved by the introduction of local design guidance to highlight the distinctive character of the settlement and area. The Darras Hall policy is considered to be imprecise and would be difficult to use consistently unless detailed standards are set out.
- 1.10 The Heritage and Natural Environment sections provide clear local policies and guidance. The proposed designation of the former railway line as a wildlife corridor and local green space is likely to conflict with the proposal in the emerging Local Plan to consider the potential for the route for future use for passenger rail transport.
- 1.11 The Economic Development section provides a limited amount of information on the lack of availability of employment land in the plan area and refers to the option suggested by the market for an area to be provided to the east of the town. The emerging Local Plan refers to this aspiration but because of site availability and deliverability issues, it is proposing that Prestwick Park Business Park and 2

hectares of adjoining land to be inset within the Green Belt to allow for the development of additional phases of high quality office accommodation to serve the Ponteland market.

- 1.12 The economy section of the NP would be considerably strengthened if it highlighted how the economic development needs of the town/village are to be met through the allocations in the Local Plan. Policy PNP18 is a general statement of support for economic development in the plan area and could be strengthened to provide local guidance on where and/or how the economy of the area is to be encouraged to grow.
- 1.13 Policy PNP19 on the Village and Local Centres supports the enhancement of these centres and seeks to safeguard A1 retail uses. It is recommended that the policy be strengthened by setting out more details on safeguarding measures.

### **Housing**

- 1.14 To reflect the recommendation to revise the housing objective, the housing section and Policy PNP21 should be revised to ensure that the housing provision helps to meet the aspirations and demands of people from outside the parish who wish to move to Ponteland. It is recommended that the justification includes a summary of the main types, sizes and tenures of housing that are to be provided in the initial period of the plan based on evidence from your research and that prepared for the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.15 Further consideration should be given to whether the policy is sufficiently clearly worded to deliver the various types and tenures of housing for older people and vulnerable groups.

### **Community, Open and Recreational Space and Other Infrastructure**

- 1.16 The Plan could be strengthened to set out a prioritised list of infrastructure and community facilities that are required over the next 15 years or so to meet the needs of the growing settlement and the changing demographics.
- 1.17 Policy PNP23 would be clearer if a local standard for the provision of open and recreational space were included in the policy. This would provide clarity for developers and decision makers.

## **Flood Alleviation**

1.18 The Plan includes very clear and detailed policies in this section.

## **Transport and Movement**

- 1.19 Policy PNP29 sets out a requirement for adequate vehicle parking to be provided. However, there is no guidance in the plan about the standards to be applied. Further consideration should also be given to disabled parking, and cycle parking and storage.
- 1.20 Policy PNP30 includes the safeguarding of the former railway line as an active travel route. As currently worded the policy would restrict the potential reuse of the route for rail travel as proposed in the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.21 The options for improving car and cycle parking in the village centre should be considered to demonstrate that Policy PNP31 is deliverable.
- 1.22 The Submission Plan should be accompanied by a Basic Conditions Statement, a Consultation Statement, an HRA Screening Report, none of which have been prepared at this stage. An SEA Screening Report has been prepared; this should be updated to reflect any future changes to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Part 1 – Process

	Criteria	Source	Response/Comments
1.1	Have the necessary statutory requirements been met in terms of the designation of the neighbourhood area?	Para 1.11 states it was designated on 28 June 2013	It would be helpful to include a copy of the letter from the County Council confirming this or a copy of the Council minute in the Basic Conditions Statement.
1.2	If the area does not have a parish council, have the necessary statutory requirements been met in terms of the designation of the neighbourhood forum?	NA	
1.3	Has the plan been the subject of appropriate pre-submission consultation and publicity, as set out in the legislation, or is this underway?	Website sets out details of consultation events. 6 week pre submission just completed	The Consultation Statement should include a summary of consultations undertaken including list of statutory organisations consulted, issues raised and actions taken.
1.4	Has there been a programme of community engagement proportionate to the scale and complexity of the plan?	Website sets out details of consultation events to date.	

1.5	Are arrangements in place for an independent examiner to be appointed?	Not known	
1.6	Are discussions taking place with the electoral services team on holding the referendum?	Not known	
1.7	Is there a clear project plan for bringing the plan into force and does it take account of local authority committee cycles?	Yes	
1.8	Has an SEA screening been carried out by the LPA?	Yes	This should be reviewed and updated as necessary to take account of any changes in the Submission draft plan.
1.9	Has an HRA screening been carried out by the LPA?	The SEA screening identified that a separate HRA screening was required. This was not provided to me.	Undertake HRA screening and consult Natural England.

Part 2 – Content

	Criteria	Source	Response/Comments
2.1	Are policies appropriately justified with a clear rationale?		See detailed comments below
2.2	Is it clear which parts of the draft plan form the 'neighbourhood plan proposal' (i.e. the neighbourhood <i>development plan</i> ) under the Localism Act, subject to the independent examination, and which parts do not form part of the 'plan proposal', and would not be tested by the independent examination?	Yes	Part 4 is headed Planning Policies. Part 5 is headed Community Actions
2.3	Are there any obvious conflicts with the NPPF?		See detailed comments below
2.4	Is there a clear explanation of the ways the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development?	In part	Policy PNP1 sets out Sustainable Development Principles that underpin the plan. It would be helpful if the section includes a paragraph on the how the plan as a whole will contribute to the enhancement of social, economic and environmental conditions of the plan area. A more detailed assessment could be included in the Basic Conditions Statement.

2.5	Are there any issues around compatibility with human rights or EU obligations?	Not known at this stage	The HRA screening has not been provided. The Basic Conditions Statement should include confirmation of the results of the screening and that human rights have been considered in the plan making and consultation.
2.6	Does the plan avoid dealing with excluded development including nationally significant infrastructure, waste and minerals?	Yes	
2.7	Is there consensus between the local planning authority and the qualifying body over whether the plan meets the basic conditions including conformity with strategic development plan policy and, if not, what are the areas of disagreement?	Concerns received from LPA	<p>The NP does not set out the town's economic role or the vision for the town's future in the context of its setting in the wider area. Little consideration is given to the relationship of Ponteland with Newcastle Airport which has major plans for expansion and Kirkley Hall which has further plans for its future growth. This would provide a positive context for economic growth of Ponteland.</p> <p>The Plan should refer to it supporting the strategic development needs and not solely local housing need. The emerging Local Plan identifies Ponteland as a "main town" which will be the focus for growth and investment.</p> <p>The NP should include a flexible approach to meeting the needs of an ageing population.</p> <p>Lack of evidence to support policy to manage development at Darras Hall.</p>

			<p>Lack of evidence to support designation of former railway lines as Wildlife Corridors and Local Green Space. Together with the designation of the route as active travel route, these designations could prejudice any potential re-use of the route for passenger rail transport.</p> <p>Designation of land north of Rotary Way as an area of land to be protected from loss to development may conflict with County Council's schools and leisure proposals in the area.</p> <p>Comments on wording of Flooding policies.</p> <p>Lack of clarity of in certain policies resulting in uncertainty for decision makers.</p>
2.8	Are there any obvious errors in the plan?		See detailed comments below
2.9	Are the plan's policies clear and unambiguous and do they reflect the community's aspirations?		See detailed comments below

## 2.0 Detailed Considerations

### General Comments

- 2.1 The following comments are made to assist the qualifying body in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) to ensure that it meets the Basic Conditions and accords with national planning advice in the NPPF and PPG and helps deliver the strategic policy requirements of the Local Plan. The comments are made on the pre-submission draft Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan dated November 2016.
- 2.2 When the Neighbourhood Plan is submitted it should be accompanied with a Basic Conditions Statement, a Consultation Statement and a HRA screening. The SEA screening should be updated to take account of any changes in the plan. The Basic Conditions statement should include evidence of how the Plan has taken account of EU obligations on Human Rights. Locality provides guidance on writing these Statements
- 2.3 The draft NP contains much to commend it and it is clear that considerable consultation and research has been undertaken to prepare the plan for this important settlement.
- 2.4 Paragraph 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that
- “The application of the presumption will have implications for how communities engage in neighbourhood planning. Critically, it will mean that neighbourhoods should:*
- *develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development;*
  - *plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan;”*

2.5 Paragraph 184 of the NPPF states that

*“The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. To facilitate this, local planning authorities should set out clearly their strategic policies for the area and ensure that an up-to-date Local Plan is in place as quickly as possible. Neighbourhood plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods should plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.”*

### **General Conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area**

- 2.6 The Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on bringing forward a neighbourhood plan before an up-to-date Local Plan is in place. One of the Basic Conditions is that the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area. The courts have ruled that the term “general conformity” allows for a degree of flexibility in the matter of compliance. The general conformity is to be with the strategic policies of the statutory (adopted) development plan and not any other emerging policy. It is recognised that the reasoning and evidence informing the emerging Local Plan process is likely to be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested. It is important to work collaboratively with the local planning authority in order to minimise any conflicts between policies in the neighbourhood plan and those in the emerging Local Plan, including housing supply policies. The evolving policies may be relevant because the adopted development plan may be out of date and not conform with policies and guidance in the NPPF/PPG; the emerging Local Plan is likely to comply to a greater extent and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 2.7 Any objections to the Local Plan should be taken through the Local Plan consultation and examination process. It is not appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan to seek to fetter or restrict the emerging strategic development proposals. Paragraph 1.2 of the NP makes it plain that the role of the Neighbourhood Plan is to set out locally distinctive policies and guidance to help shape the future development of the parish.
- 2.8 The consultation on the pre-submission NP was undertaken from 1 November to 16 December. This draft of the NP did not take into account the changes to the Northumberland Core Strategy set out in the Proposed Further Major Modifications which was consulted on from 11 November to 23 December. This includes the proposal for the Dissington Garden Village which lies within the NP area

## Clarity in wording of policies

2.9 Planning Practice Guidance includes advice that:

- *The Neighbourhood Plans should be clear and unambiguous so that the decision maker can apply it consistently;*
- *It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence*
- *It should be distinct to reflect to and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area.*

2.10 Locality has prepared a useful guide for Neighbourhood Plans entitled “Writing Planning Policies”. This advises:

*“It is important to set out each planning policy so the intention is clear and it can be shown the evidence base is robust. This will help ensure it meets the basic conditions. It will also be useful to future applicants and the local authority planning officers who have to use the policy to make decisions in future years.”*

## Structure of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.11 The Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan is well presented with a clear Policies Map and photographs to illustrate the text. The NP refers to the Policies Map being in Appendix 1. When preparing the submission draft plan, consideration should be given to how the map can be included in the NP and be capable of being printed. At present the map can be accessed as a separate document on the website. The NP includes a mixture of site areas in metric and imperial measurements. These should be standardised as metric units.
- 2.12 The NP refers to the Ponteland as a village, however, the Local Plan refers to it as a “main town” which perhaps better reflects the size and status of the settlement.
- 2.13 Paragraph 1.15 states that the Plan covers the period 2011 to 2031 in line with the emerging Local Plan. The NP should not be retrospective and it is usual practice for the Plan to commence in the year it is “made”. It is recommended that the period covered by the Plan is included on its front cover.

## **Ponteland – its history and future**

- 2.14 The historical section is thorough and comprehensive. However, the section on Ponteland Today fails to describe the context of the settlement and the economic and social background of the town/village today. It would be helpful to include key statistical information about population, housing, employment and travel to work and highlight any trends and forecasts that are relevant to the plan eg the ageing population. It is also recommended that the plan describes the proximity of Ponteland to Newcastle and its airport which has meant that the town/village has been attractive as a commuter settlement within the Newcastle travel to work area for some time; this is likely to continue with the plans to develop the economic base around Newcastle Airport. The impact of proposals to strengthen the economy in the wider area associated with the airport should be described and taken into account in the plan. It is recommended that the background description should paint a more accurate picture of the town/village; it is a significant settlement with an important role to play in the local area.

## **Planning Strategy for the Plan Area**

- 2.15 To assist in setting the context for the Neighbourhood Plan, it is recommended that the plan includes a summary of the planning strategy for the parish from the adopted and emerging Local Plans highlighting any significant changes that are being developed in the emerging plan. It should be noted that the Local Plan is not yet finalised and could be revised during the examination stage.

## **Vision and Objectives**

- 2.16 As mentioned above, the NPPF requires neighbourhood plans to support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development; and they should plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing the future development of their area.
- 2.17 The Vision refers to “*meeting the needs of the local population*” and therefore fails to consider the role that the town/village has played and will no doubt continue to play as a commuter settlement meeting the housing needs and aspirations of households from a wider catchment area. It is suggested that the text be revised along the lines of “*meeting the needs of the local population and those wishing to live in an attractive, sustainable settlement with a good standard of shopping and community facilities that is accessible to employment opportunities in the Newcastle area*”.

- 2.18 The housing objective could be worded in a more focused way to refer to the sections of the community that are in most need. This should reflect the findings of your research and that prepared for the Local Plan. For example, it could refer to delivering housing to meet the needs of the ageing population and young people as well as families. You may wish to consider whether to include reference to affordable housing as well as market housing and the proportions required.

### **Policy PNP1 Sustainable Development Principles**

- 2.19 The section on sustainable development principles is helpful. The Basic Conditions requires that the NP demonstrates how it contributes to the achievement of sustainable development which is defined in the NPPF. It would be helpful to include a paragraph to describe how the NP contributes to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the town/village. A more detailed assessment could be included in the Basic Conditions Statement.

### **Policy PNP3 Infrastructure**

- 2.20 Paragraph 4.11 refers to planning obligations / Section 106 agreements. If the Local Authority is proposing to introduce Community Infrastructure Levy, it would be useful to make reference to it here.
- 2.21 This section could be strengthened to set out a prioritised list of infrastructure and community facilities that are required over the next 15 years or so to meet the needs of the growing settlement and the changing demographics.

### **Policy PNP2 High Quality and Inclusive Design**

- 2.22 This is a clearly written general design policy capable of being applied throughout the plan area for all forms of development. It incorporates many matters set out in the emerging Local Plan Policy 2 on Design. To help to make the policy more locally effective and aid decision makers in its implementation, a more detailed description and design guidance on the distinctive features that make up the character of the built up area of the settlement would be helpful.

### **Policy PNP4: Residential Development at Darras Hall**

- 2.23 The historical development of the area is well described and paragraph 4.13 refers to it having a “unique character”. However, this unique character of the area is not adequately described in the Plan. There is more information in the Darras Hall background paper

which also includes details of the requirements set in the Trust Deed and the planning policies from the Castle Morpeth Local Plan. The paper identifies some of the concerns arising from the redevelopment and enlargement of houses on the estate and the resulting change in the character of the area which has occurred despite the current detailed planning policies for the estate. It is suggested in the first instance that the Steering Group develops a clear understanding as to why the current policies have not been effective in maintaining the character the area. This will then help in developing a more effective policy for the NP that would address the matters of concern and provide clear guidance on what is and is not considered acceptable.

- 2.24 It is suggested that the distinctive character of the area could be set out in supporting design guidance (to be included in a separate document or an Appendix to the Neighbourhood Plan) to explain the features that contribute to the “unique character” and which aspects should be retained or enhanced. A summary of the key points could be included in the justification to the policy.
- 2.25 Policy PNP4 is considered to be unclear and imprecise and could not be used consistently in making decisions on planning applications. The first paragraph refers to conforming to all the criteria; however, point b) only relates to extensions. Points a) and b) refer to space and privacy standards however these are not defined. Planning permissions cannot define the curtilage of the dwelling. What does “maximise the continuation of existing boundary features mean”? How can a new dwelling on a backland plot reflect the building line of adjacent dwellings?

### **Heritage Assets**

- 2.26 This section and the Policies PNP5 – PNP9 are clear and relevant to the plan area drawing on detailed policies and guidance from the adopted Local Plan. The section includes detailed guidance on advertisements, shutters and canopies. The problems associated with A boards are mentioned in the text and this could be cross referenced to the community action on the subject. It is suggested that the views of Heritage England are sought at an early stage to ensure that the policies accord with their up to date guidance.

### **Natural Environment**

- 2.27 The policies in this section (PNP10 – PNP17) are well thought out and locally distinctive. The following comments are made to improve their clarity.

- 2.28 Paragraphs 4.40 – 42 present the findings and recommendations of the Key Land Use Impact Study. These include a number of recommendations such as protecting parkland landscape and retaining views. It is not clear what the purpose of this section is as it is not translated into the plan's policies.

### **Policy PNP11 Landscape**

- 2.29 The Ponteland Parish Landscape Character Assessment describes the landscape at a local level. It does not provide guidance on how new development should be designed to fit into the landscape.

### **Biodiversity**

- 2.30 Would you explain the status of the locally designated sites. Are they Local Nature Reserves or is there a local designation such as site of nature conservation importance?
- 2.31 You may need to revise the policy to distinguish between nationally and locally designated sites. The Council's ecologist or Natural England will be able to advise.

### **Former Railway Line**

- 2.32 It is proposed to designate the former railway line as a wildlife corridor and a Local Green Space. This would appear to prejudice proposals in the emerging Local Plan to consider the potential for the route for future use for passenger rail transport.
- 2.33 It is unlikely that the designation as Local Green Space would be acceptable as the footpath route would be considered to be adequately safeguarded under other legislation as a right of way. It may also be considered as an extensive tract of land. If the rail route went ahead, would there be an expectation that an alternative footpath / bridleway route would be provided?
- 2.34 Do you have any expert ecological assessment of the wildlife potential of the corridor to support its designation as a wildlife corridor?
- 2.35 The Background Evidence on the assessment of Local Green Space is clear and comprehensive.

## Economic Development

- 2.36 Paragraph 4.65 provides a limited amount of information on the lack of availability of employment land in the plan area and refers to the option suggested by the market for an area to be provided to the east of the town. The Plan however states that it is constrained by the Green Belt and limited in its scope.
- 2.37 The Pre-Submission Core Strategy Proposed Major Modifications refers to this aspiration which has arisen as a recommendation from the evidence base and states that *“the allocation of an additional 5 hectares of land for industrial and office use should be a priority, as there is no available land and identified market demand.”* Because of site availability and deliverability issues, a modification to the Core Strategy was proposed that *“No changes to existing Green Belt boundaries are proposed for additional land for industrial development, given the amount of planned and available employment land locally within the adjoining development plan area. Prestwick Park Business Park and 2 hectares of adjoining land to be inset within the Green Belt to allow for the development of additional phases of high quality office accommodation to serve the Ponteland market.”*
- 2.38 It would be helpful if the NP highlighted how the economic development needs of the town/village are to be met through the allocations in the Local Plan (some of which may be outside the plan area) as well as the allocation for a small office development of 1 ha in the Pre Submission Core Strategy as part of the redevelopment of the existing education and leisure facilities.
- 2.39 Paragraphs 2.24 – 2.25 of the NP refer to the Kirkley Hall campus of Northumberland College. The expansion proposals could be included in the economy section about this site.
- 2.40 The economy section of the Neighbourhood Plan would be considerably strengthened if it referred to and supported the Local Plan proposals on employment development. As written Policy PNP18 is a general statement of support for economic development in the plan area and provides no local guidance on where or how the economy of the area is to grow.
- 2.41 It would be helpful to include details on the wider economic context to demonstrate the opportunities that are and will become available associated with the airport in particular. The questions that should be asked about economic development of the plan area are: How can the plan influence the enhancement of the local economy? How will the future employment and economic development needs of the plan area be met? Will this be through improving the opportunities in the plan area or by relying on the opportunities that will become available in the wider area such as at the Airport?

## Policy PNP 19 Village Centre and Local Centre

- 2.42 This policy seeks to diversify and enhance the range of shops and services at the two centres. The second part of the policy supports the change of use of ground floor A1 retail premises to other town centre uses providing it can be demonstrated that it would not harm the viability and vitality of the centre.
- 2.43 It is considered that this policy is unclear as it provides decision makers with no guidance on when the loss of an A1 use would be harmful. It may be helpful to include a percentage of A1 uses that would be considered the minimum acceptable, then if the change of use would result in a drop below this figure it should be refused. Alternatively users may need to demonstrate that there is no market for an A1 use following active marketing for a set period of time. Background evidence on the number of premises of various uses and changes over recent years would be required to support a more detailed policy. Evidence from the market and estate agents would help in understanding the local trends.

## Housing

- 2.44 Paragraph 4.75 refers to “a significant unresolved objection to the proposed housing requirement and distribution of housing across the County”. It is suggested that this phrase should be deleted and replaced with a factual update on the progress of the Local Plan, including the proposals in the Further Major Modifications for the Dissington Garden Village. It is recommended above that a summary of the emerging Local Plan strategy be included in the introduction to the Plan.
- 2.45 Paragraph 4.76 refers to the “*defined needs of residents*”. Paragraph 4.81 refers to “*the needs of different groups in the community*”. It is recommended that this be revised as suggested in paragraph 2.16 above on the Vision. Paragraph 4.80 – survey of estate agents - provides useful anecdotal information about the local housing market and households from outside the area wishing to move into the NP area, particularly families, and the lack of suitable available housing. Paragraph 4.82 and Policy PNP21 should be revised to include reference to the housing aspirations of those moving from outside the area. It is recommended that the justification includes a summary of the main types, sizes and tenures of housing that are to be provided in the initial period of the plan. You may wish to note that these will be updated periodically as the Housing Market and Needs Assessments are updated.

- 2.46 You may wish to consider whether the policy is worded sufficiently clearly that it will result in the delivery of various types and tenures of housing for older people and vulnerable groups. Have you considered whether new housing should be built to Lifetimes Homes standards or to an accessible homes standard?
- 2.47 The housing background paper should be updated to provide a factual summary of the most recent findings of the surveys of housing need and demand.

### **Policy PNP22 Community Infrastructure**

- 2.48 This is a clear policy that seeks to safeguard community facilities. As mentioned under paragraph 2.20 above, the NP could give further thought to the needs and priorities for new and improved community facilities during the next 15 years or so.

### **Open and Recreation Space Provision**

- 2.49 Paragraph 4.96 sets out the Core Strategy's approach to identifying the requirement for sport and recreational facilities that it should be based on up to date local evidence on need. It is recommended that the plan should set out details of the findings of local surveys on the need for new and improved facilities, both indoor and outdoor. You may also wish to refer to the improved leisure centre and other sports and recreation facilities that is proposed in the emerging Local Plan proposals. It would be appropriate to set a local standard in a policy in the neighbourhood plan for play and recreational open space. Policy PNP 23 is considered to be unclear and could not be used consistently by decision makers as it does not set out the standards that are to be provided.
- 2.50 Policy PNP24 identifies the open space and playing fields associated with the school and community facilities within the area proposed for redevelopment as safeguarded land. The policy does provide for the replacement of any land lost with equivalent or better provision. It is recommended that the Steering Group ascertain whether there is likely to be any conflict between this policy and the proposals in the emerging Local Plan or whether the policy would place undue restrictions on the proposals to redevelop the educational and leisure facilities to serve the town/village.
- 2.51 Policy PNP24 and paragraph 4.99 refer to the temporary loss of open space, sports and recreational buildings and land arising from the proposals in the emerging Local Plan to redevelop/improve the schools and leisure facilities. The policy requires the temporary replacement of the provision of at least equivalent quantity and quality. It is considered that this requirement is unduly onerous and may

not be capable of delivery and should be deleted from the policy. It is recommended that discussions are held with the County Council to ensure that the development is phased and adequate provision is retained or access to alternative facilities is made available during the development phase.

### **Flooding and Sustainable Drainage**

2.52 Ensure that the details in this section are agreed with the Environment Agency and are in line with the latest guidance.

### **Transport and Movement**

2.53 Policy PNP29 refers to providing sufficient vehicle parking spaces. There is no guidance in the plan about the standards to be applied. Is it intended to rely on the County Council's standards or to develop your own standards? If the latter, a background evidence paper should be prepared to support and justify the new standards. You may also wish to consider disabled parking, and cycle parking and storage.

2.54 Policy PNP30 includes the safeguarding of the former railway line as an active travel route. As currently worded the policy would restrict the potential reuse of the route for rail travel as proposed in the emerging Local Plan. The policy should be revised to recognise that the route is safeguarded for future rail use in the emerging Local Plan. You may wish to consider how an active travel route could be retained or re-provided alongside the route should the former line be reopened for rail travel.

2.55 Policy PNP31 provides support to additional car and cycle parking in the village centre. Has any work been undertaken to look at possible options to demonstrate that the policy is deliverable? Is there scope for new parking areas or would improved management help alleviate the current problems?

2.56 It may be more appropriate to include the aspiration to improve public transport within the community actions section of the Plan. Particular local projects could be included in the priorities for community infrastructure.

### **Hamlets and Rural Area**

2.57 The NP includes very little guidance to steer the planning of the hamlets and countryside within the parish. Whilst there is no requirement to include specific policies, it may be helpful for the sake of completeness to describe the approach to planning of these

areas and the Plan's vision /aspirations for the rural area. For example, new housing development should only be permitted in the exceptional circumstances set out in NPPF or Local Plan policy. How will the rural economy be supported?

### **Consultation on Policies**

2.58 It is recommended that you engage with the specialist bodies before finalising the Submission Plan, such as Natural England, Heritage England and the Environment Agency, to verify the wording of policies meets their most recent guidance.

### **The Plan as a whole**

2.59 The draft plan will no doubt have gone through many changes and revisions in the course of its preparation. It is evident that there are concerns within the community about the development strategy of the emerging Local Plan, however these should be played out as representations to the Local Plan and debated through its examination. The NP should not be used to seek to fetter or restrict the Local Plan strategy.

2.60 Before finalising the Submission Plan, it may be useful to take a look at the Plan as a whole and for the Steering Group to ask what are the most important things they want the Plan to deliver. Then ask whether the Plan is worded sufficiently clearly to achieve these aims. Does the Plan set out locally specific requirements and will the Plan make a difference in decision making on planning applications?

2.61 The Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to be a powerful tool in helping to shape the future development of the settlement whatever the scale of the new development and wherever it takes place. Ponteland is a unique place which has been shaped over the centuries by the decisions made by local residents, businesses and developers. This is the opportunity for the present community and businesses to set out guidance for the next stage of its development.