

WANSBECK DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN



Written Statement

Adopted July 2007

WANSBECK DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

July 2007

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FOREWORD

This written statement and proposals map replace the first version of the Wansbeck District Local Plan adopted in April 1994. The Plan has been prepared in line with statutory provisions for local plan preparation. The process has included:

- Consultation prior to the finalisation of the plan proposals
- Publication of a first deposit version written statement and proposals map (June 2004) and a statutory six week period for the making of representations
- Publication of a revised deposit version written statement and proposals map (August 2005) and a further statutory six week period for the making of representations
- A public inquiry (commenced May 2006) involving consideration of the objections to the Plan by an independent Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State
- Amendment of the written statement and proposals map in line with the Inspector's recommendation
- Formal adoption of the Plan by Wansbeck District Council on 3 July 2007

The local plan was also subject to a sustainability appraisal to assess the potential social, environmental and economic effects of plan policies. An 'Appropriate Assessment' of the plan was carried out to assess the impact on the integrity of European nature conservation sites.

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INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

1 INTRODUCTION

The status of the plan

- 1.1 This local plan replaces the first version of the Wansbeck District Local Plan which was adopted in April 1994. Together with the Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan, the Northumberland Waste Local Plan and the Northumberland Minerals Local Plan, it forms the development plan for Wansbeck. It has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Transitional Arrangements)(England) Regulations 2004.
- 1.2 Development plans are fundamental to the operation of the planning system throughout the country. They set out local planning authorities' policies and proposals for the use and development of land in their areas and provide a basis for rational and consistent decision making. Decisions on planning applications and appeals must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The need for a new local plan

- 1.3 A number of factors indicated the need for a replacement of the 1994 local plan. Housing land allocation was a major issue that needed to be addressed. The local plan covered only the period to 2001 and new policies concerned with the amount and location of new house building beyond that date needed to be established. A wide range of new Government, regional and countywide policy guidance had also been produced which suggested a new policy approach was required in several areas. The need for sustainable development was a major common theme.

The strategic framework for the local plan

- 1.4 In preparing its local plan, the Council is required to take into account national and regional planning guidance. National guidance is mainly issued by the Government in the form of Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). There are over 20 such notes or statements covering such subjects as housing, the countryside, retailing, employment and so on. Regional Planning Guidance for the North East (RPG1), published in November 2002, sets out the broad strategic policies for land-use and development on issues of regional importance.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.5 The local plan must also be in conformity with the Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan. The plan, prepared by Northumberland County Council and adopted in 2004, sets out the overall strategy for development in the County in the period to 2016. It indicates the scale of provision for development to be made including figures for housing and employment development for each district. It indicates the preferred location for major developments and those areas where there should be a restraint on development.

Reforms to the development plan system

- 1.6 This local plan will be the last local plan prepared for Wansbeck. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new plan making system in England and Wales. In place of local plans and structure plans, local planning authorities in future will prepare new style development plan documents. Under the transitional arrangements for the new system, the replacement Wansbeck District Local Plan will retain development plan status and its policies will be 'saved' for a period of 3 years from plan adoption. During that three year period, the District Council will bring forward local development plan documents to replace the saved policies in the local plan. Instead of a single local plan, there will in future be a portfolio of development plan documents including a core strategy, site specific allocations, a proposals map and, if needed, area action plans. The core strategy will set out the key elements of the planning framework for the District including a spatial vision and strategic objectives, a spatial strategy and core policies.

The format of the Local Plan

- 1.7 The Local Plan consists of:
- The Written Statement which sets out the Council's policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the District. It also includes reasoned justification and explanation of the plan's policies and proposals.
 - The Proposals Map drawn on an Ordnance Survey base which defines areas to which specific policies will be applied and sites proposed for particular developments or land use
- 1.8 In the Written Statement, policies and proposals are shown in bold italics to distinguish them from the explanatory text.

2 THE LOCAL PLAN VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The Local Plan area

- 2.1 Wansbeck District was established as a result of local government reorganisation in 1974. It is one of six districts within the county of Northumberland. Lying 15 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne, Wansbeck takes its name from the river running through the centre of the District.
- 2.2 The District is small in area, approximately 67 square kilometres (27 square miles), and has a population of approximately 61,125 (2001 Census). Most settlements owe their early development to the rapid expansion of the deep coal mining industry in Northumberland at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. At one time, as many as 15 collieries operated in the District. No collieries now remain.
- 2.3 The decline in the coal mining industry led to out-migration and major population decline in the period between 1951 and 1991 with the biggest losses being seen in the 60's and 70's. The results of the 2001 Census suggest that over the last decade population levels have begun to stabilise.
- 2.4 Ashington, with a population in excess of 28,000, is the main settlement and service centre. There are four secondary centres with populations of between 6,500 and 9000 at Bedlington, Bedlington Station, Newbiggin by the Sea and Guidepost/Stakeford; each has a shopping centre and a range of other services and facilities. There are a number of villages and smaller settlements in the District with less than 1000 residents and a very limited number of facilities.
- 2.5 The decline of the coal mining industry has required the diversification of the local economy and the creation of new employment opportunities for residents of the District. Various initiatives to attract new industries and employment have been established and there have been successes including the development of the Wansbeck Business Park on the site of the former Ashington Colliery. The number of new employment opportunities created, however, does not fully offset the job losses suffered through the pit closures and unemployment levels in Wansbeck remain consistently higher than regional and national levels.
- 2.6 As well as high levels of unemployment, some areas of the District also demonstrate high levels of poverty and other forms of social disadvantage. In the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004), Wansbeck has an overall rank of 45 out of 354 local authorities in England.

2 THE LOCAL PLAN VISION AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.7 Since the first Local Plan was adopted, up to 200 new homes have been completed each year in Wansbeck, the majority in the private sector. Whilst demand for private sector housing remains high, recent years have seen a major decline in demand for socially rented housing. Many Council properties have become difficult to let and over 700 have been demolished. Housing market problems are now found in several areas including Newbiggin by the Sea and East Ashington. A shortage of affordable housing has also become an issue as a consequence of a rise in house prices in the area which has not been matched by an equivalent rise in incomes.
- 2.8 The environment of the District has recovered greatly from the damage caused by coal mining and all the major spoil heaps have been reclaimed, mostly for agricultural and recreational purposes. There are major natural assets including the valleys of the rivers Blyth, Wansbeck and Sleekburn and the coastline and there are both formal town parks and country parks. There are a small number of buildings of architectural or historic merit and three designated Conservation Areas. Improvements to the road network have continued to take place and the A189 South East Northumberland Spine Road, the major link southwards to Tyneside, has been upgraded to dual carriageway standard for its entire length.

The Vision for the District

- 2.9 A new strategy for the District, the Wansbeck Community Plan, is being developed by the District Council on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership, the Wansbeck Initiative, in association with other public, private and community organisations. It is a statutory document prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000. Its main purpose is to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the District. In particular, it seeks to ensure that the activities of the various organisations which provide services to the public are better co-ordinated, reflect the aspirations and concerns of local people and take account of the needs of future generations.

2 THE LOCAL PLAN VISION AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.10 The Community Plan seeks to set an overall vision for the future of Wansbeck that all partners can sign up to. It identifies the general priorities for action and as such acts as an overarching framework for other plans and strategies in the area including the Wansbeck District Local Plan. The overarching aim for Wansbeck set out in the Community Plan (March 2004) is as follows:

Our aim is to secure the highest quality of life for everyone residing within the District by providing excellent public services. We want to create a district where culture, the economy and the environment prosper and where the whole community is able to take part and assist in the commitment to its success.

There are seven themes to the improvement of the quality of life in the District:

- Achieving excellence in education and training
- Protecting and transforming the local environment
- Being confident and secure
- Delivering economic prosperity for all
- Being health, feeling good
- Getting from A to B
- Quality housing for all

Local Plan Objectives

- 2.11 Those elements of the Community Plan which relate to the development and use of land can be taken forward in the Wansbeck District Local Plan within the context of national and regional planning policy. The objectives of the Local Plan, set out below, take account of the overarching aim of the Community Plan and its themes. A diagram setting out the relationship between the Local Plan objectives and the Community Plan themes is included in Appendix V1.

2 THE LOCAL PLAN VISION AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.12 As well as Community Plan priorities, account as been taken in drawing up the Local Plan objectives, of national and regional guidance and, in particular, the Government's aims for sustainable development. A well used, international, definition of sustainable development is the Bruntland definition:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

- 2.13 The Government's strategy for sustainable development is based on four broad objectives:

- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment
- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- Effective protection of the environment
- Prudent use of natural resources

- 2.14 The Government stresses that the planning system, and development plans in particular, can make a major contribution to the achievement of these objectives. A Sustainability Appraisal of the policies in the Plan has been carried out and is available as a separate document.

2 THE LOCAL PLAN VISION AND OBJECTIVES

2.15 Eleven Local Plan objectives provide the framework for the policies in the document. They are:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Objective 1 | <i>To contribute towards economic regeneration and to support the development of a range of employment creating uses</i> |
| Objective 2 | <i>To regenerate communities demonstrating housing market problems and to widen housing choice</i> |
| Objective 3 | <i>To protect and improve the quality of the environment</i> |
| Objective 4 | <i>To conserve and enhance the diversity of wildlife species and habitats</i> |
| Objective 5 | <i>To ensure that needs for open space, recreation and other community facilities can be met</i> |
| Objective 6 | <i>To support and enhance the District's town centres</i> |
| Objective 7 | <i>To contribute towards the development of a sustainable and accessible transport network</i> |
| Objective 8 | <i>To enhance the character and distinctiveness of individual settlements and prevent them merging</i> |
| Objective 9 | <i>To develop a pattern of development which makes good use of existing facilities, services and infrastructure and which minimises the need to travel by car</i> |
| Objective 10 | <i>To make use of previously-developed land and buildings in existing settlements before greenfield sites</i> |
| Objective 11 | <i>To take account of the needs of all sectors of the community</i> |

2 THE LOCAL PLAN VISION AND OBJECTIVES

APPENDIX V1 How the Local Plan objectives relate to the Community Plan themes

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING
PROTECTING AND TRANSFORMING THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT To protect and improve the quality of the environment To conserve and enhance the diversity of wildlife species and habitats To make use of previously-developed land and buildings in existing settlements before greenfield sites To develop a pattern of development which makes good use of existing facilities, services and infrastructure and which minimises the need to travel by car To ensure that needs for open space, recreation and other community facilities can be met To enhance the character and distinctiveness of individual settlements and prevent them merging
BEING CONFIDENT AND SECURE To support and enhance the District's town centres To take account of the needs of all sectors of the community
DELIVERING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY FOR ALL To contribute towards economic regeneration and to support the development of a range of employment creating uses To develop a pattern of development which makes good use of existing facilities, services and infrastructure and which minimises the need to travel by car To support and enhance the District's town centres
BEING HEALTHY, FEELING GOOD To contribute towards economic regeneration and to support the development of a range of employment creating uses To develop a pattern of development which makes good use of existing facilities, services and infrastructure and which minimises the need to travel by car To protect and improve the quality of the environment To ensure that needs for open space, recreation and other community facilities can be met To take account of the needs of all sectors of the community
GETTING FROM A TO B To contribute towards the development of a sustainable and accessible transport network To develop a pattern of development which makes good use of existing facilities, services and infrastructure and which minimises the need to travel by car
QUALITY HOUSING FOR ALL To regenerate communities demonstrating housing market problems and to widen housing choice To take account of the needs of all sectors of the community



GENERAL POLICIES AND ENVIRONMENT

Chapter 3

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter of the local plan sets out a comprehensive set of general policies which provide a framework for development control in the District and apply to all uses of land and buildings. A key feature of the general development strategy as expressed in the policies is that priority is to be given to development on sites in existing settlements, on previously-developed sites and on sites which are accessible by a choice of means of transport. An area of Green Belt is designated in the District for the first time.

The location of development

- 3.2 In developing the locational strategy of the local plan, the District Council has had regard to national, regional and county planning policies. National planning policy is set out mainly in Planning Policy Guidance Notes, more recent Planning Policy Statements and circulars. Regional policy is set out in Regional Planning Guidance for the North East (RPG1) and county policy in the Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan. Regard has also been given to local issues and initiatives in the District.

National, regional and county policy

- 3.3 The overriding thrust of national planning policy guidance is to ensure that development and growth is sustainable. In particular, local authorities are advised of the need:
- To encourage patterns of development which reduce the need to travel and ensure everyone can access services or facilities by a choice of means of transport
 - To take account of environmental issues such as the protection of the wider countryside, the impact of development on landscape quality and the natural and historic environment and matters such as flood risk
 - To focus developments that attract a large number of people, especially retail, leisure and office development in existing centres
 - With regard to the release of land for housing development, to follow a search sequence starting with the re-use of previously-developed land and buildings within urban areas, then urban extensions and finally new development around nodes in good public transport
 - To adopt a spatial planning approach which considers the needs and problems of local communities and integrates policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes

3 GENERAL POLICIES AND ENVIRONMENT

- 3.4 The strategy of Regional Planning Guidance for the North East (RPG1) is based on four key themes of Regeneration, Opportunity, Accessibility and Conservation. The RPG advises of the need for a sequential approach to development involving the selection of sites in the following priority order:
- Suitable previously-developed sites and buildings within urban areas;
 - Other suitable locations within urban areas not identified as land to be protected for nature or heritage conservation or recreational purposes;
 - Suitable sites in locations adjoining urban areas, particularly where this involves the use of previously-developed land and buildings; and
 - Suitable sites in settlements outside urban areas, particularly where this involves the use of previously-developed land and buildings.
- 3.5 RPG1 establishes a range of sustainability criteria under which the sustainability of sites can be assessed in accordance with the sequential approach. The criteria include accessibility to homes, jobs and services by all modes of transport, the capacity of existing infrastructure and physical constraints. An integrated approach should be adopted to housing renewal, clearance and urban regeneration.
- 3.6 To assist regeneration, create sustainable communities and promote a sustainable pattern of development, it is the underlying strategy of the Northumberland County and National Park Structure Plan to accommodate the majority of development in the County in South East Northumberland and in doing so to focus development on the towns of Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth and Cramlington. The Structure Plan also indicates the need for a sequential approach to meeting development needs along the lines advised in RPG1 and the need to assess sites against a range of sustainability criteria. Local plans should consider the action necessary to address changes in housing markets and housing demand and to secure improvements in the housing stock. A comprehensive approach to housing improvement, demolition and environmental enhancement is advocated.

Local issues and initiatives

- 3.7 The Wansbeck Community Plan, the overarching strategy for the delivery of public and voluntary services across Wansbeck, establishes that the regeneration of the most deprived communities is the uppermost priority for the District. As one of the 88 most deprived local authority areas in England representing the poorest 10% of neighbourhoods in the country, the District is the beneficiary of the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund which aims to deliver long term, sustainable improvements to people's quality of life in the most deprived areas.

3 GENERAL POLICIES AND ENVIRONMENT

- 3.8 The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund has been a key source of funding for the setting up of the Life Initiative in Wansbeck. The Life Initiative has been developed by Wansbeck District Council in partnership with Cheviot Housing Association, the Housing Corporation, the Northumberland Strategic Partnership, the Wansbeck Initiative (the local strategic partnership) and local communities. It was established in order to develop, with the community and other partners, an integrated approach to the delivery of social and physical regeneration in the most deprived communities and to assist in attracting public and private investment to the area. Newbiggin Life has been in operation in Newbiggin by the Sea since 2003 (6000 residents) and East Ashington Life has been in operation since 2004 (15,000 residents). Strategic masterplans have been developed with the community and other partners in these two most deprived areas to form the basis for future development and investment decisions and to assist in attracting public and private investment.
- 3.9 Lack of diversity in the housing stock, poor quality living environments and low demand in social housing estates are key issues for neighbourhood renewal in the District and regeneration of the housing stock is a key part of the integrated approach of Newbiggin Life and East Ashington Life to sustainable regeneration. The strategy for housing stock renewal has a number of elements including selective demolition and sale of Council stock, improvement of the remaining stock and the provision of new private sector housing.

The locational strategy for the District

- 3.10 In developing a locational strategy for the District, the Council has sought to give effect to national, regional and county policies for the delivery of sustainable development and in particular the sequential approach to development set out in RPG1. The Council has also been mindful of local issues and priorities and, in particular, the need to support local regeneration initiatives including Newbiggin Life and East Ashington Life. Whilst the Structure Plan policy of focusing the majority of development in the main towns of Ashington and Bedlington will be delivered through windfall housing sites, a locational strategy which focuses housing allocations in East Ashington and Newbiggin by the Sea has been adopted. These areas are most in need of investment and a comprehensive approach to housing market restructuring will, in the Council's view, best achieve the overall aims of the Structure Plan to secure regeneration and contribute to sustainable communities.

3 GENERAL POLICIES AND ENVIRONMENT

Policy GP1

Part A

Provided that the proposals are in accordance with other policies of the Plan, development on previously-developed sites and buildings within settlement limits, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be permitted.

Part B

Development on greenfield sites within settlement limits will only be permitted if:

- a) the site is allocated for development; or***
- b) it can be demonstrated that the development will meet an identified and justified need and no suitable alternative previously-developed site is available***

Part C

Development in the countryside on sites beyond settlement limits will only be permitted if:

- a) the nature of the use requires a countryside location; or***
- b) the development involves the re-use of an existing building; or***
- c) the development involves an extension to a property within an existing curtilage***
- d) in the case of greenfield development, it can be demonstrated that no suitable alternative previously-developed site is available***

Part D

The re-use of an existing building on a site beyond a settlement limit will only be permitted if:

- a) the building is of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without significant reconstruction or extension; and***
- b) the development can be achieved without detriment to the***

3 GENERAL POLICIES AND ENVIRONMENT

character of the area and, if the building is of historic or architectural interest and contributes to local character, the development can be achieved without harm to the architectural or historic integrity of the building; and

c) in the case of residential development, it can be demonstrated that every reasonable attempt has been made to secure a suitable business or community re-use.

- 3.11 In combination with other policies in the Plan, including site allocations, Policy GP1 helps to promote a sequential approach to development which gives priority to the re-use of previously-developed land and buildings and development in existing urban areas.
- 3.12 The use of settlement limits in the 1994 local plan to control development proved a good basis for development control and is continued. Settlement limits give a clear indication of where, in general, development is likely to be allowed and where it is likely to be much more strictly controlled. As well as facilitating the sequential approach to development, settlement limits help to achieve several plan objectives including to maintain the character and distinctiveness of individual settlements and to prevent them merging.
- 3.13 The boundaries have been drawn to allow foreseeable developments for the plan period to take place within the limits. Wherever possible lines have been drawn to follow features identifiable on the ground and the base of the Proposals Map. In defining the limits, consideration has been given to regularising the shape and pattern of settlement in the District and to the point of change between urban and non-urban land uses.
- 3.14 The countryside is an important environmental resource in the District. The District's towns and villages are not surrounded by extensive areas of countryside and it is important that, what there is, is safeguarded from urbanisation wherever possible. The policy will prevent the unnecessary intrusion of development into the countryside.
- 3.15 Most of the District's development needs during the plan period can be accommodated within existing settlements or employment zones. The policy recognises, however, that certain uses by their nature necessitate a countryside location. Such uses include agriculture and forms of outdoor sporting facility. It allows for the re-use of existing buildings and extensions to existing buildings.

3 GENERAL POLICIES AND ENVIRONMENT

- 3.16 The policy allows for the re-use of existing buildings and extensions to existing buildings. In relation to the re-use of existing buildings in the countryside, it establishes that uses which contribute to the local economy or community will usually be preferable and that development should be in sympathy with the character of the area. Buildings for conversion must be of sound construction and suitably constructed for the proposed new use. Where a building is of architectural or historic interest that contributes to local character, the development should also respect the architectural or historic integrity of the building.
- 3.17 Compliance of a proposal with policy GP1 does not obviate the need to comply with other policies of the plan.

Green Belt

Policy GP2

A Green Belt is designated in the western part of the District as shown on the Proposals Map.

The construction of new buildings within the Green Belt will not be permitted unless it is for the following purposes:

- a) agriculture or forestry; or***
- b) essential facilities required for outdoor sport and recreation, for cemeteries, and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purpose of including land in it; or***
- c) limited extension or alteration of existing dwellings***

Any new buildings which are acceptable in principle in the Green Belt must be sited in a manner which preserves the openness of the Green Belt. They should relate closely to existing buildings, or where their functional requirements demand otherwise, be located in an unobtrusive position within the landscape.

The re-use of an existing building within the Green Belt will be permitted provided that any proposed extension or ancillary development would not be detrimental to the openness of the area. Proposals for the re-use of existing buildings within the Green Belt should preferably be for economic development purposes and meet the requirements set out in Policy GP1.

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- 3.18 Green Belt is a statutory, long term designation of land which extends normal planning and development control policies for rural areas and seeks to keep land permanently open in character.
- 3.19 Policy GP2 takes forward proposals in Regional Planning Guidance for the North East and in the Northumberland County Structure Plan to extend the Northumberland Green Belt northwards to encircle Morpeth. Morpeth has considerable pressure for development and the main purpose of the Green Belt extension as set out in Regional Planning Guidance is to:
- protect the countryside around Morpeth from encroachment;
 - prevent the sprawl and coalescence of the town and neighbouring smaller settlements;
 - protect the character of the historic town; and
 - focus development on priority areas for regeneration.
- 3.20 The Wansbeck Green Belt will in effect be the eastern extent of the extended Northumberland Green Belt. In defining the precise boundaries, regard has been given to Structure Plan guidance on the general extent of the enlarged Green Belt and to Government advice on defining Green Belts. No land has been included which it is not considered necessary to keep permanently open. The boundaries, wherever possible, follow recognisable features on the ground such as roads, streams and field boundaries. The villages of Bothal, Hartford Bridge and Nedderton are inset or excluded from the Green Belt. This will allow limited development or infilling within the settlements.
- 3.21 The policy sets out the exceptional circumstances when development in the Green Belt is appropriate. The policy also seeks to ensure that where development is acceptable in principle, proposals do not harm the openness of the Green Belt.

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Policy GP2a

Within the villages of Nedderton, Hartford Bridge and Bothal, only infill development will be permitted. Such development must meet the following criteria:

- a) the site is previously developed and within the defined settlement limit; and***
- b) the development will occupy a small site largely surrounded by existing development; and***
- c) the development is sympathetic in scale, density and design with the character of the village and surrounding countryside.***

- 3.22 The settlements of Nedderton, Hartford Bridge and Bothal are inset within the Green Belt i.e. they are enclosed by the Green Belt but excluded from it. Sensitive control is required to ensure that development does not have an adverse effect on the character of the villages or the openness of the Green Belt. Policy GP2a establishes that development will only be appropriate where it occupies a small gap site and where it harmonises with its surroundings. Development of sites of more than 0.2 hectares is unlikely to be acceptable.

Accessibility

Policy GP4

New development should be located to reduce the need to travel and to minimise journey length. It should be accessible to all users by a choice of means of transport including buses, walking and cycling.

- 3.23 Policy GP4 seeks to address the issue of traffic growth. At the local level, growth in road traffic is the cause of noise, pollution and road congestion and at the global level it contributes to global warming. By controlling the location of new development, the planning system can help to combat traffic growth. It can help to reduce the need to travel and reduce the length of journeys.
- 3.24 The policy promotes the use of alternatives to the private car. It makes it clear that new developments which are accessible only by car will not be acceptable and that access by a range of transport modes is required. This is particularly important to those members of the community who do not have regular use of a car. In assessing accessibility, the authority will consider the distance of proposed developments from bus stops and the frequency of bus services. Account will also be taken of whether access is

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easy, safe and convenient for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people. Distances will be measured as actual walking distances rather than straight lines.

Landscape character

Policy GP5

Development must respect the character of the District's landscape. Proposals will be assessed in terms of:

- a) the siting, scale and design of buildings and materials; and***
- b) the effect on distant views***

Development which would have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of those areas which contribute most to the quality and distinctiveness of the local landscape will not be permitted. Such areas will include:

- a) the coast***
- b) the valley of the River Blyth***
- c) the valley of the River Wansbeck***
- d) the valleys of the Willow Burn and Sleek Burn***

- 3.25 The policy recognises that landscape and topographical features make an important contribution to the character and attractiveness of the District. It seeks to ensure that landscape character is taken into account in the planning process and that special protection is afforded to areas of greatest value.
- 3.26 A Landscape Character Assessment of South East Northumberland was carried out in 2000 as part of work on the Northumberland Coalfield Environmental Enhancement Strategy. Wansbeck falls within two broad landscape character tracts identified as part of the assessment work – the Wansbeck and Blyth River Valleys and the South East Northumberland Coastal Fringe. The assessment confirms that the Wansbeck landscape is dominated by urban settlements and large scale industry with limited tracts of countryside between. Urban fringe character applies to a large part of the area and there is a general lack of relief and mature woodland.

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- 3.27 The study suggests that the most positive and distinctive character areas are the watercourses and the coast. The vast majority of deciduous woodland is found in the river valleys which allow green spaces to penetrate the main areas of settlement and provide habitat diversity. The coastal zone contains a range of habitats including sandy beaches, cliffs, rocky shores and mudflats and is accessible to local communities.

Trees and hedgerows

Policy GP6

The authority will seek to protect trees, woodlands and hedgerows in the District and will encourage new planting, particularly of native species.

Tree Preservation Orders will be made to protect trees of value judged to be at risk.

When planning permission is granted for development, conditions will be applied or planning agreements entered into to secure the protection of existing trees or hedgerows of value on the site and to secure and maintain new planting.

Development which would result in the loss of healthy trees which make an important contribution to the quality of the environment will not be permitted unless there are overriding social or economic benefits to the community and compensatory off-site provision of landscape infrastructure is made. Healthy trees lost as a consequence of development shall be replaced with trees of an equivalent standard.

- 3.28 Policy GP6 recognises the importance of trees and hedgerows to the character and quality of the local environment and the value attached to them by the local community. Trees, woodlands and hedgerows can be features of beauty in their own right, they can provide an attractive setting for development, they can provide shelter and screening and can provide a habitat for wildlife. Many trees and hedgerows also have historic importance. The importance of trees in controlling global air pollution is also becoming increasingly recognised. Major greening of the A189 corridor between Ashington and Newbiggin by the Sea and east of Bedlington is proposed as part of the South East Northumberland Forest Park project of the Greening for Growth partnership.

Best and most versatile agricultural land

Policy GP7

Development which would have an adverse and irreversible effect on the best and most versatile agricultural land will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the development cannot be accommodated on poorer quality land that is not subject to sustainability constraints.

- 3.29 Agricultural land is a finite resource. It is classified by the Government into five grades numbered 1 to 5, with grade 3 being divided into 2 sub grades (3a and 3b). The best and most versatile agricultural land falls into grades 1 and 2 and 3a and it is in the national interest that such land be protected as a resource for future generations. Policy GP7 ensures that the presence of any agricultural land classified as the best and most versatile (grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Government's Agricultural Land Classification) will be taken into account when planning applications are determined. It establishes that where development of agricultural land is necessary, areas of poorer quality (3b, 4 or 5) should be used in preference to that of higher quality unless there are other overriding planning considerations such as biodiversity, landscape, amenity, heritage and accessibility.
- 3.30 There are likely to be only very small pockets of higher quality agricultural land in Wansbeck and only in very exceptional circumstances is it likely to be needed for development purposes.

Farm diversification

Policy GP7a

Proposals for farm diversification will be supported provided that:

- a) they will help to sustain the main agricultural use of the farm or holding; and***
 - b) existing buildings are re-used where at all possible; and***
 - c) the character, scale and design of the development is appropriate to its countryside setting.***
- 3.31 The agricultural industry is not a major employer in the District but it plays an important role in maintaining the character and appearance of the countryside surrounding our towns and villages. Policy GP7(a) recognises that farmers are finding it increasingly necessary to obtain some of their income from sources other than mainstream agriculture. As well as new enterprises such as equestrian centres or livery stables, diversification can

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include agri-environmental schemes which deliver positive environmental benefits such as the enhancement of wildlife habitats, landscape protection

and the provision of improved public access and better understanding of the countryside.

- 3.32 The policy supports appropriate farm diversification schemes that help to sustain agricultural enterprises in Wansbeck. It does not override other policies of the plan such as Policy GP2 (Green Belt) or Policy RTC4 (Retail development outside settlements).

The Coastal Zone

Policy GP8

The Coastal Zone, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be protected and, where possible, improved. Development in or affecting the Coastal Zone will only be permitted if:

- a) a coastal location is essential and no suitable alternative site exists; and***
 - b) development would not cause harm to coastal systems and habitats.***
- 3.33 Policy GP8 recognises the coastal area of the District as a major environmental asset. The coastal zone as defined comprises the undeveloped areas of the Wansbeck coastline and includes rocky shores, cliffs, mud and sand flats, sand dunes and low lying land and encompasses three estuaries - the Blyth, Sleekburn and Wansbeck. As well as being of ecological importance, it is a valuable recreational and landscape resource. It is fragile environment and sensitive to development. It is important that the special value of the coast is taken into account in the planning process and that only uses and activities which require a coastal location, such as recreation and port related uses, take place there. Where the coastal area has suffered damage the opportunity will be sought to bring about environmental improvements.
- 3.34 It is important that the effects of development on the natural processes at work on the coast are taken into account when decisions are made. Interference with processes such as erosion and the movement of sediment may increase risks to existing development and coastal defences and cause damage to important habitats. Such outcomes must be avoided.

Sites of international importance for nature conservation

Policy GP9

- 3.35 The policy applied to these sites is that imposed by statute. The sites are shown on the Proposals Map. In Wansbeck, parts of the coast line are designated as part of the Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. Proposals for development likely to affect any of these internationally important sites, either directly or indirectly, individually or in combination, must be made in accordance with the procedures set out in the Habitats Regulations for the protection and management of European sites (see Part I of Circular, ODPM 06/2005 and Defra 01/2006).
- 3.36 Any proposed development likely to have a significant effect on a site of international importance will be subject to a thorough Environmental Impact Assessment to be carried out by the developer and an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations that will be made by the local authority. Appropriate assessment is a process to assess the implications of a proposal on a site's conservation objectives and to ascertain whether it would adversely affect the integrity of a site. This should inform the implementation of avoidance, mitigation, or in exceptional circumstances compensation, measures to address any adverse effects. An applicant for planning permission must provide sufficient information to the local authority for purpose of assessment. Such development will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the legislative provisions to protect European Sites can be fully met.
- 3.37 Where other policy considerations apply to these areas, such as in relation to any impact on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), because internationally important sites for conservation can also be SSSIs, these may also inform any decision in such cases.
- 3.38 In accordance with the statutory provisions, Natural England will be consulted when an application affecting an internationally designated site is received. Developers are strongly advised to carry out pre-application consultation with Natural England to minimise any delay in determining the application and when doing so to provide sufficient information to enable a substantive reply to be given.

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Sites of national importance for nature conservation

Policy GP10

Development proposals in or likely to affect sites designated as being of national importance to nature conservation will be subject to special scrutiny. Development which is likely to have an adverse affect will not be permitted unless the authority is satisfied that:

- a) the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site including its importance in relation to the national network of sites; and***
- b) there are no reasonable alternative means of meeting the development need.***

Where development affecting a site is permitted, the use of conditions and/or planning agreements will be used to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's nature conservation interest or to provide compensatory measures for any harm.

- 3.39 Policy GP10 affords appropriate protection from the consequences of development to nature conservation sites which are rated amongst the best in the country. All such sites are designated by English Nature as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and are considered to be national importance because of their fauna, flora or features of geological or physiographical interest. SSSIs designated at present in the District are shown on the Proposals Map. They are:
- a) Hawthorn Cottage Pasture - of interest as an unimproved grassland
 - b) Willow Burn Pasture - of interest as an unimproved grassland
 - c) Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores - of geological interest
 - d) Northumberland Shore – of interest to birdlife
- 3.40 Some SSSIs or parts of SSSIs are also designated under the international conventions and European directives. Parts of the Northumberland Shore SSSI are, for example, designated as part of the Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area and Ramsar site. They are identified on the Proposals Map. Such sites are protected by statute. Proposals which affect these sites will be judged in terms of their international importance i.e. assessed in terms of Policy GP9.

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- 3.41 The policy recognises that planning conditions or agreements can be used to regulate a proposed development to prevent harm to the interest of an SSSI or to provide compensatory measures.
- 3.42 Policy GP10 will be applied in the context of Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as inserted by section 75 and schedule 9 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 which set out provisions for the protection and management of SSSI. Natural England will be consulted when an application affecting an SSSI is received. Developers are strongly advised to carry out pre-application consultation with Natural England and when doing so to provide sufficient information to enable a substantive reply to be given.

Sites of local or regional nature conservation significance

Policy GP11

Development likely to have an adverse affect on a site designated of local or regional importance to nature conservation will not be permitted unless the authority is satisfied that the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site including its importance in relation to the local or regional network of sites.

If development is permitted which would cause damage to the nature conservation interest of a site, such damage should be kept to a minimum. Planning conditions and/or agreements will be used to ensure compensatory measures are undertaken.

- 3.43 In addition to sites in the District designated as being of international or national importance, there many other sites of more local importance. Policy GP11 affords protection to such sites and seeks to minimise the effects of potentially damaging development. Such sites fall in to the following categories:
- a) Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) designated by the Northumberland Wildlife Trust
 - b) local nature reserves, either statutory or non-statutory
 - c) regionally important geological or geomorphological sites

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- 3.44 Sites presently designated in the District are listed in Appendix GP1. In addition to the sites on the list, there are some non-statutory nature reserves that are also protected under the policy.

Protection of species

Policy GP12

In accordance with Planning Policy Statement 6 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation) a specific policy in respect of legally protected species is not included. Determination of development proposals where there is a reasonable likelihood of an adverse impact on these species must be in line with the relevant legislation. The determination can only be made on the basis of adequate information on the presence of relevant species, provided by the applicant, in accordance with the procedures explained in part 1V of Circular, ODPM 06/2005, Defra 01/2005.

Where development affecting a site providing habitat for a protected species is permitted, planning conditions and/or agreements will be used to ensure the protection of the species.

Developers are strongly advised to carry out pre-application consultation with Natural England to minimise any delay in determining the application due to the need for appropriate information.

- 3.45 Certain plant and animal species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Others are protected under other national and European legislation. As well as being an offence to harm the species itself, it is also an offence to damage their resting places or breeding sites. The non-specific policy statement at GP12 reflects this legal situation and will ensure that protected species and their habitats are not harmed by development.
- 3.46 In certain circumstances, it may be possible for a development to proceed without detriment to a species or its habitat. The use of conditions or agreements will ensure that protective measures are undertaken. Where permission is granted for works likely to disturb or damage a protected species or their habitat, a licence may be required from Defra. Conditions in such a case will secure protection, mitigation and compensation, as appropriate, to meet the licensing requirements.

Biodiversity and wildlife networks

Policy GP13

The value to biodiversity of all sites proposed for development will be considered when planning applications are determined whether or not they are designated sites. Particular importance will be attached to the protection of priority habitats and species in Wansbeck.

Where proposals affect a habitat which contributes, or could potentially contribute, to a network of natural habitats the developer will be required to protect and enhance the network.

- 3.47 Conserving biodiversity i.e. the variety of plant and animal life and the habitats that support them is central to sustainable development. The conservation of biodiversity requires not only the protection of designated wildlife sites and statutorily protected species but also the protection and enhancement of other important natural habitats and species. The Biodiversity Audit of the North East (October 2001) indicates that examples of some of the national priority habitats identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan are found in Wansbeck including lowland meadows, coastal sandmarsh, coastal sand dunes and mudflats. The Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (April 2000) provides a list of additional key habitats which may not be identified as national priorities but which are of local importance to biodiversity. Priority species and habitats in Wansbeck are listed in Appendix GP1. There are, in addition, some areas of Wansbeck, mostly in the river valleys, included in the Ancient Woodland Inventory for England.
- 3.48 Planning conditions and/or agreements will be used to ensure that biodiversity is maintained and enhanced.
- 3.49 Without links between habitats, the movement of species is restricted. Sites which are cut off from one another tend to support far fewer species and are less valuable in biodiversity terms. Wildlife corridors such as rivers, streams, woodlands, ponds and parks, in particular, provide routes or stepping stones for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species. It is important that the network of sites is protected from development and, where possible, strengthened by or integrated within it.

Listed Buildings

Policy GP14

Consent to demolish a Listed Building will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances if there is clear and convincing evidence that:

- a) all reasonable efforts have been made, without success, to find a use for the building and preservation in some form of charitable or community ownership is not possible; and***
- b) the fabric of the building is beyond reasonable economic repair; and***
- c) there would be substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from the demolition.***

Consent to partially demolish a Listed Building will only be permitted if the proposal does not materially and adversely affect the special character of the building.

Policy GP15

Consent to alter, extend or change the use of a listed building will not be permitted unless:

- a) sufficient information has been presented to enable the full and proper consideration of the effects of the proposals; and***
- b) the proposals will not harm the special architectural or historic interest of the building, its character or appearance.***

- 3.50 Lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest are compiled by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Listed buildings can include many types of structure such as gates, walls and gravestones. The list for Wansbeck contains almost 90 entries including Bothal Castle, seven churches or chapels, the Ashington Co-operative Society premises in Woodhorn Road, cottages at Bothal, a terrace of houses at First Row, Hartford Hall, Netherton Hall and buildings at the former Woodhorn Colliery. Five of the entries are classified as grade I listed buildings i.e. they are buildings of exceptional interest. They are the Church of St. Andrew, Bothal; the Church of St. Bartholomew, Newbiggin by the Sea; the Church of St.

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Mary, Woodhorn (the Woodhorn Church Museum); Bothal Castle and the remains of the curtain wall at the castle.

- 3.51 Policies GP14 and GP15 recognise the special value of listed buildings and seek to prevent their unnecessary demolition or alteration and to protect them from unsuitable and insensitive change. The policies are not meant to bar all change. Many buildings can sustain quite major alterations without losing their interest. The interest of other buildings, however, could be easily lost by small alterations. In accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 15; Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG 15), applicants for Listed Building Consent must be able to justify their proposals, and show why works which would affect the building's character are desirable or necessary. The listing of a building confers protection not only on the building but also any object or structure fixed to a building or within its curtilage. Demolition of a listed building will only be justified in exceptional circumstances and where the substantial benefits for the community outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.

Policy GP16

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on the setting of a listed building.

- 3.52 Policy GP16 indicates the intention to exercise control over development which would affect the setting of a listed building. It recognises that setting often contributes to the character of a listed building and that inappropriate development in the area surrounding a listed building can damage its character or interest. Setting varies according to local circumstances. It could include land some distance from the building and could include adjoining buildings. When assessing the impact of proposed development on the setting of a listed building, consideration will be given to the proximity of the proposed development to the listed building, the scale and design of the development and the effect on significant views both to and from the building and other vantage points.

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Conservation Areas

Policy GP17

Conservation Area designations in the District will be kept under review. Only areas which are judged to be of special architectural or historic interest and whose character and appearance it is considered desirable to preserve or enhance will be designated, or continue to be designated, as Conservation Areas. Character appraisals and management plans will be prepared for those areas where they do not already exist and they will be kept up-to-date.

- 3.53 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local authorities to designate as Conservation Areas "areas of special or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". There is also a duty to review from time to time the extent of designation and if appropriate to designate new areas. Policy GP17 demonstrates the authority's intent to meet these obligations. It is the distinctive quality and character of an area rather than individual buildings which will be of prime consideration when decisions about designation are made.
- 3.54 Three Conservation Areas have been designated in the District at Bedlington, Newbiggin by the Sea and Bothal. The boundaries are shown on the Proposals Map. As part of its review of Conservation Areas, the authority will ensure that up to date character assessments are carried out including the elements that contribute to the special interest of an Area. This will assist the consideration of applications for planning and other forms of consent.

Policy GP18

The special architectural or historic interest of the District's Conservation Areas will be preserved and enhanced. Special regard will be paid to the impact of proposed development on the special architectural or historic interest of a Conservation Area and its setting.

Development within, or otherwise affecting, a Conservation Area must be in sympathy with the character and appearance of the Area. Development likely to have an adverse impact will not be permitted.

Demolition of a building, feature or structure which makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be permitted unless there is conclusive evidence that it is beyond reasonable economic repair.

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- 3.55 Policy GP18 seeks to prevent any development which would have a detrimental effect on the special architectural or historic interest of the District's Conservation Areas. It is not meant to imply that all development will be resisted but that any proposals for change should preserve or enhance the area's character, setting and appearance. The policy does not exclude quality contemporary design solutions. The policy will apply when applications for planning permission, advertisement consent and other consents are considered. In order to consider a planning application, the authority will often require the developer to provide detailed plans and drawings of the proposed new development. Consent will not be given for demolition of a building or clearance of a site unless prior approval has been given to detailed plans for after-treatment or redevelopment.

Policy GP19

If it appears to the authority that permitted development is having, or is likely to have, an adverse effect on the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, the authority will bring the development under planning control by seeking to make an Article 4 direction.

- 3.56 The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 permits minor specified development to be undertaken without the need for planning permission. Article 4 of the Order allows authorities to withdraw these permitted development rights in a Conservation Area where considered necessary. Policy GP19 indicates that these powers will be brought into use if required to protect the special architectural or historic interest of a Conservation Area.
- 3.57 An Article 4 Direction is currently in force in the Bedlington Conservation Area and removes permitted development rights to householders including the enlargement or other alteration of dwellings and the erection of sheds and other buildings.

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Archaeology

Policy GP 20

Development which would adversely affect a scheduled or other nationally important archaeological site, and/or its setting, will only be permitted where:

- a) there is no alternative solution; and***
- b) the development is in the national interest.***

Development which would affect other sites of archaeological significance will only be permitted if:

- a) the archaeological remains would be preserved in situ as part of the proposals; or***
- b) the significance of the remains is outweighed by the need for and benefits of the development.***

Where development affecting archaeological remains is permitted, the developer will be required to make proper provision for the excavation and recording of the site and its remains before and during development and also for post-excavation analysis and publication of findings.

- 3.58 Policy GP20 establishes the presumption in favour of the preservation of archaeological sites and monuments of national importance as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16). The policy also seeks to avoid the unnecessary destruction of sites of more local archaeological importance. The policy recognises the historical and cultural value of such sites and that once lost they are irreplaceable. In some cases the archaeological significance of a site may not justify its preservation in situ. In such cases it may be appropriate that archaeological excavation, recording of the remains and analysis and publication of the findings takes place.
- 3.59 Woodhorn Colliery, is the only site scheduled as an ancient monument of national importance in Wansbeck. In addition to this one scheduled monument, there are almost 150 archaeological sites identified at present on Northumberland County Council's Sites and Monuments Record.

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Policy GP21

Where evidence suggests that a proposed development could disturb archaeological remains, the developers will be required, before their planning application is determined, to provide information on the character and extent of the remains and any measures they propose to mitigate the impact of development. A field evaluation will be required if judged necessary.

- 3.60 Although the existence of many archaeological sites in the District is known, their level of importance is often not fully known. The information required by Policy GP21 to be provided by developers will enable the authority to properly assess the importance of sites and enable them to weigh the importance against the benefits of the proposed development. As well as undertaking a desk based evaluation of historical records and other known information about the site, it may also be necessary for an archaeological field evaluation to be undertaken involving ground surveys and small scale trial trenching.

Flood risk and erosion

Policy GP22

Developers are required to consider the risk to their development from flooding and erosion and to consider any possible effect of their development on flood risk or erosion elsewhere. Development in areas of flood risk will not be permitted unless a flood risk assessment has been carried out and it can be demonstrated that:

- a) there is no reasonable alternative development option available which would involve no risk or a lower risk of flooding; and***
- b) the development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; and***
- c) satisfactory protection measures can be carried out at the expense of the developer and maintained for the lifetime of the development***

In coastal situations, work should not prejudice the ability of coastal features and processes to form natural sea defences.

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- 3.61 River and coastal flooding and erosion can cause both danger to life and damage to property. It is appropriate, therefore, that risk from flooding is avoided where possible and managed elsewhere.
- 3.62 Areas of known risk of flooding are shown on the Environment Agency's Flood Zone Maps. These maps are subject to periodic review and development proposals will be assessed in relation to the most up-to-date plans and consultation with the Environment Agency. Indicative Flood Zones are shown on the Proposals Map. Developers of sites within areas of identified risk, and other areas for which information on flooding is unavailable but where it is considered that there is a risk of flooding, will be expected to evaluate flood risk and identify measures to mitigate such risks on site or elsewhere. The assessment of risk will involve both the statistical probabilities of a flood occurring and the scale of the potential consequences. As well as the Agency's flood plain information, risk assessment should take into account the likely impacts of changes (resulting from global climate change for example) on the future nature and frequency of flooding. Account should also be taken of the presence of any existing defences, the standard of protection and whether they are likely to be maintained during the life of the proposed development.
- 3.63 The Northumbrian Coastal Authorities Group Shoreline Management Plan (September 1998) provides important information on the risk of coastal flooding and erosion. It sets out a sustainable strategy for coastal defence for the north east coast between St Abb's Head and the River Tyne. Work on the plan took into account the natural coastal processes, human influences, land use and other environmental matters of significance in the area.
- 3.64 New development can cause or exacerbate flooding problems in downstream areas by impeding the flow or storage of flood water or causing increased water run-off. Developers will be required to demonstrate that such effects will not occur or can be overcome by appropriate mitigation measures.
- 3.65 Where risks of flooding are identified but it is decided that development can proceed if protection or mitigation measures are carried out by the developer, the developer will be required to enter an agreement to ensure that the works are undertaken before the development is brought into use and, where appropriate, to ensure long term maintenance.

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Land instability

Policy GP22a

Development on unstable land will not be permitted unless satisfactory measures to stabilise the site are carried out and done so at the expense of the developer.

If risk from unstable ground conditions is suspected, developers will be required to submit a stability report with their planning applications to demonstrate that the site is stable or can be made so and that the development will not affect land stability beyond the site.

- 3.66 Land instability continues to be an issue in a number of areas of the District, mainly as a result of past opencast and deep coal mining activity. It can cause damage to property and infrastructure and be a threat to human safety.
- 3.67 It is important that when a planning application for a site which is possibly unstable is submitted, the Council has sufficient information on ground conditions available to enable it to determine whether development is appropriate. The Council will seek advice and information from appropriate sources such as the Coal Authority but, as the policy establishes, it is the ultimate responsibility of the developer to establish that land is suitable for development. This could involve specialist investigation and assessment.
- 3.68 When a stability report identifies problems but it is decided that development can proceed if remedial or precautionary measures are carried out, such works will be the subject of an agreement or condition.

Pollution and nuisance

Policy GP23

When determining planning applications, the authority will consider whether a proposed development has the potential to cause pollution or nuisance. Planning permission will not be granted for development liable to cause significant harm to either:

- a) human health and safety***
- b) the amenity of local residents and other land users***
- c) the quality and enjoyment of all aspects of the environment***

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- 3.69 Pollution is the release into air, water or land of substances which can have potentially harmful effects on the environment. It can arise from a number of sources including certain types of industry and the effects can include noise, dust, vibration, light, heat, smoke, fumes, gases, steam and odour. To ensure an attractive, healthy and safe environment, it is essential that developments which have the potential to cause pollution are strictly controlled.
- 3.70 Policy GP23 aims to control and minimise pollution or nuisance arising from development in the District in so far as it relates to land use planning interests. It is not intended to duplicate controls administered under pollution control legislation by other authorities.
- 3.71 The policy is not intended to exclude all potentially polluting development from the District. In many cases environmental concerns may be resolved by the use of planning conditions or agreements. They could, for example, be used to limit the hours of operation of a noisy business; to ensure the decontamination or restoration of land after use or to require the use of particular transport modes.
- 3.72 The policy contributes towards the achievement of the Wansbeck Air Quality Strategy. The strategy, adopted by the District Council in 2004, aims to safeguard the good air quality in Wansbeck for future generations to enjoy and in doing so to meet national air quality standards and objectives.

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Policy GP24

When determining planning applications for development within the proximity of an existing or approved source of pollution, the authority will take into account the following factors:

- a) the impact of the polluting activity on the health of users of the proposed development; and***
- b) the standard of amenity likely to be enjoyed by the users of the proposed development; and***
- c) whether the proposed development has particular sensitivities to pollution; and***
- d) the additional costs or other constraints which may be imposed on the polluting use as a result of permitting the proposed development; and***
- e) whether any potential conflict can be resolved by the use of planning conditions or obligations.***

If after having considered the above factors the, the authority considers that the uses cannot reasonably co-exist, the proposed development will not be permitted.

- 3.73 Policy GP24 aims to keep apart polluting uses and developments sensitive to pollution where they cannot reasonably co-exist because of impacts such as noise, dust, vibration, light, heat, smoke, fumes, gases, steam and odour. Some developments are more sensitive to pollution than others. Uses sensitive to pollution will include residential accommodation, hospitals, schools and other types of development attracting people on a regular basis such as places of entertainment and shopping centres. They may also include industrial processes depending on dust-free, clean air.
- 3.74 It is possible that a consequence of allowing new development could lead to an existing or approved polluting development in the area being required to meet higher environmental standards and to incur expense in doing so. Pressures for closure of a factory or other plant could even arise. The authority wishes to avoid such unreasonable restrictions.
- 3.75 It is possible that some land uses will be unable to co-exist in which case an application will be refused.

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Policy GP25

When determining planning applications, the authority will consider the levels and characteristics of any noise which may be generated as a result of permitting the development. The likely impact will be assessed in terms of the following:

- a) any disturbance to people living in the area; and***
- b) any disturbance to other noise-sensitive uses such as hospitals, schools, colleges, offices and community buildings; and***
- c) any effect on people's enjoyment of the outdoor environment including gardens, parks, the coast and the countryside; and***
- d) any disturbance to wildlife or livestock***
- e) whether any potential conflict can be resolved by the use of planning conditions or obligations.***

Proposals which would cause significant harm in terms of the above criteria will be refused.

- 3.76 The introduction of many activities into an area, particularly certain industrial, commercial and transport related uses, can lead to noise disturbance. The source of noise may not necessarily be confined to that generated within the development. It could, for example, be made by customers on their way to from a commercial establishment such as a pub or fast food outlet.
- 3.77 The policy seeks to protect people from the adverse impact of noise arising from new developments in an area. It is not only concerned with the effects of noise on people within buildings but also as they enjoy the outdoor environment. It recognises that as well as noise levels, the characteristics of noise can have a bearing on the level of disturbance and that some uses are more sensitive to noise than others. Noise can, for example, be intermittent or continuous. Noise at night can be particularly disruptive to anyone who lives nearby. In certain circumstances, wildlife and livestock may be adversely affected by noise and the authority will take this into account in appropriate circumstances such as the introduction of a noisy use near an area designated as important to wildlife.
- 3.78 In certain circumstances, measures can be incorporated into proposals to control noise emissions. Such measures can include the insulation of buildings which house noisy machinery, maximisation of the distances between the noise source and a noise sensitive building, screening by

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barriers, limitations on the hours of operation and the specification of acceptable noise limits. Such measures may be introduced by the imposition of planning conditions and obligations and may allow a development to go ahead which wouldn't otherwise be acceptable.

Policy GP26

When determining planning applications for development which could be exposed to an existing or potential source of noise, the authority will consider the following:

- a) the level and characteristics of the noise from existing activity; and***
- b) whether the proposed use is particularly sensitive to noise.***

If after considering the above factors the authority concludes that the proposed development would not be compatible with the existing activity, the proposals will not be permitted.

- 3.79 Policy GP26 seeks to avoid conflict between existing noisy uses and new noise-sensitive developments such as residential property, hospitals, schools, colleges, offices and community buildings.
- 3.80 A number of measures may be introduced to limit disturbance from noise from external sources. Such measures might include sound insulation and keeping the most sensitive parts of a development away from the noise source. Planning conditions and obligations can be used to require the provision of such measures. If an adequate level of protection against an existing noise source cannot be ensured, it will normally be appropriate for planning permission to be refused.

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Hazardous installations

Policy GP27

Development involving the use, movement or storage of a hazardous substance will not be permitted if there is an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of its users or people occupying other land in the vicinity.

Policy GP28

Development in the vicinity of an establishment where hazardous substances are known to be used, stored or transported, will not be permitted if there is an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of its users or occupiers.

- 3.81 Certain chemicals, gases and other substances are defined as hazardous in the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations 1992. There may be a risk of ill health, injury or death both to the users and the general public as a result of an incident such as a fire, explosion or toxic release at an industrial plant or other establishment where such substances are present. It is important that such risks are taken into account when proposals for hazardous installations or other forms of development near to installations are considered as part of the planning system. Considerations will include the likelihood of an incident occurring, the consequences and the numbers at risk.
- 3.82 As well as normal planning consent, the presence of hazardous substances in excess of a specified quantity also requires hazardous substances consent under the Hazardous Substances Act 1990. A register of consents is maintained by the Council as the hazardous substances authority.

Land contamination

Policy GP29

Where there is reason to suspect that land is affected by contamination, applicants for planning permission will be required to submit a report of a desk study of previous uses of the site and their potential for contamination. Unless the study clearly demonstrates that the risk to the proposed uses from contamination is acceptable, further more detailed investigations will be required before the application is determined to assess the risks and identify and appraise the options for remediation.

Development will only be permitted if sustainable and feasible remediation solutions are adopted to secure the removal of unacceptable risk and make the site suitable for its new use.

Contaminated materials should be decontaminated and re-used on site if this can be achieved economically and without unacceptable adverse impacts upon the environment or the health and safety of the community.

- 3.83 The re-use of previously-developed land contributes to the achievement of local plan objectives but it is likely that some such land coming forward for development will have been contaminated by former uses. Policy GP29 establishes that the authority will take into account risks arising from contamination. It is important that the authority has sufficient knowledge of the nature and extent of contamination to be able to make a judgement. The minimum requirement of an applicant is a desk study to establish the possible presence of contamination. The study, which should incorporate a site reconnaissance or walk over, will assist in determining the need for and scope of further investigation and the problems that may require remediation. Further detailed site investigation and risk assessment will be required to be undertaken unless the initial assessment clearly and reliably demonstrates that any risks that may be posed by contamination can be reduced to an acceptable level.

Visual impact

Policy GP30

All proposed development will be assessed in terms of its visual impact. Developments which in visual terms would cause significant harm to the character or quality of the surrounding environment will be refused.

- 3.84 Policy GP30 indicates that the appearance of buildings and their curtilages is an important consideration when planning applications are determined particularly in relation to the surrounding built and/or natural environment. Aspects of the proposed development to be considered in the context of its surroundings will include the height and massing of new buildings, the layout of the development, materials, density and the extent and timing of landscaping.

Urban design

Policy GP31

When considering any proposed development the authority will require high standards of urban design to

- a) promote character in townscape and landscape and establish local identity; and***
- b) clearly define public and private spaces; and***
- c) encourage accessibility; and***
- d) make places with a clear image that is easy to understand, by providing recognizable routes, intersections and landmarks; and***
- e) encourage adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions; and***
- f) promote diversity and choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs.***

- 3.85 Policy GP31 encourages high quality design. It recognises that good design is not only about the appearance of individual buildings but also about the

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way places work. The policy sets out the key principles that must be addressed to ensure good urban design. The policy will be further developed in detailed design guidance, master plans and development briefs as necessary.

Landscaping and the Public Realm

Policy GP32

Developers are required to incorporate a high standard of landscape treatment in their developments. When submitting their planning applications, developers will be required to demonstrate that:

- a) any existing landscape features of value including trees, shrubs, hedgerows and ponds, will be retained, protected and used to advantage as part of the development; and***
- b) new landscape features will be introduced which enhance the visual quality of the development, reduce its impact and provide habitat for the district's wildlife; and***
- c) new landscape features to be introduced will be appropriate to the use and character of the development and its location; and***
- d) opportunities to create new public spaces and improve existing ones have been considered; and***
- e) arrangements will be made for the future management and maintenance of all landscaped areas, whether public or private.***

- 3.86 Appropriate landscaping contributes to the achievement of an attractive environment for those who live, work and visit the District. It can improve the appearance of a development, mitigate any adverse effects on the amenity of adjoining users and extend the range of wildlife habitats in the District.
- 3.87 A high quality and well landscaped public realm is particularly important. A creative design approach is required which links spaces visually and physically, creates landmarks and visual interest and incorporates a range of attractive and robust landscaping treatments including planting, lighting, street furniture, surface materials, public art etc.
- 3.88 Ongoing maintenance of landscape features, such as the mowing of grass and carrying out of necessary works to trees, is important and will be secured by means of an agreement or planning condition.

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- 3.89 Supplementary guidance on landscaping and the design of the public realm will be produced.

Public Art

Policy GP33

Public works of art and craft will be required to be incorporated into developments visible or accessible to significant numbers of people. Developers will be required to demonstrate that such works will be maintained in the future.

- 3.90 Public art integrates artists' skills, vision and creative abilities into the process of creating new buildings and spaces giving them a unique quality and creating a visually stimulating environment. It has a vital role to play in maintaining or creating a distinct identity or sense of place, affirming and strengthening its uniqueness. It can act as a way of understanding and navigating through built up areas and can celebrate, challenge and explore the social and cultural aspects of an area.
- 3.91 Public art is a broad term that can include sculpture, lighting, signage, paving, street furniture and architectural ironwork, glasswork and brickwork. Artworks can range in scale from a small plaque attached to a wall through to an earthwork covering several hectares. They can be sited outdoors or in public accessible indoor spaces and in both urban and non-urban locations. To be successful public art should be developed for a particular site and relate to it and it is appropriate that artists are brought in at the earliest design stages of a development.
- 3.92 The Percent for Art scheme is a well established means of securing public art as part of new developments. As part of the scheme, the developers of significant projects of all types, including commercial and residential schemes, contribute a percentage (at least one percent) of the total capital budget towards commissioning new works of art.
- 3.93 In the same way as landscaping features, it is important that works of art are maintained. This will be ensured by means of agreement or planning condition and may involve the insurance of works.
- 3.94 Demands regarding the provision of public art which are not fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development will not be made on developers.

Resource Conservation and Integrated Renewable Energy

Policy GP34

Part A

Developers are required to demonstrate that their developments have been designed to conserve energy and water resources.

Part B

For all major developments, including residential development comprising 10 or more units, and non-residential development exceeding 1000m² gross floorspace, the Council will require 10% of predicted energy requirements to be provided, on site, from renewable sources.

- 3.95 Policy GP34 recognises the contribution that the design, layout and siting of buildings can make to a reduction in energy consumption. Demand for energy must be curbed to help limit the emission of green house gases which are an acknowledged threat to the planet's climate. Energy production and consumption accounts for the majority of all man-made emissions of carbon dioxide.
- 3.96 New development can be designed in a number of ways to conserve energy and water resources including the following:
- orienting the main glazed elevations of buildings to maximize the potential for passive solar gain and daylighting
 - utilizing natural shelter and protecting buildings from prevailing winds
 - incorporating renewable energy technologies within a development such as photovoltaic cladding or roof tiles, solar panels, small scale wind turbines and the use of biofuels
 - connecting to off-site renewable energy sources
 - minimizing heat loss from buildings by good insulation and minimizing air leakage
 - utilizing locally sourced and/or recycled materials

3 GENERAL POLICIES AND ENVIRONMENT

- use of combined heat and power plants to provide both electricity and heat to a development
 - recycling of rain water and use of sustainable drainage systems
- 3.97 The scope to introduce energy conserving measures as part of a development will vary according to the characteristics of the site and development.
- 3.98 The renewable energy contribution required from development schemes under Part B of the policy could include energy from wind, biomass, photovoltaic equipment or solar powered water heating. The Council would seek to ensure that the technology is appropriate to the location in terms of any visual amenity impact it may have, and will therefore encourage discussion on such schemes at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.99 The council will only expect the provisions of Part B of the policy to be included within a scheme of development where it is viable. However, applications for developments where it is claimed that such a requirement would be non-viable will be expected to be supported by a development appraisal which substantiates why this is the case.
- 3.100 In order to secure the objectives of the policy and for the guidance of all involved in the development industry the Council intends to set targets for resource conservation in a Supplementary Planning Document.

Crime Prevention

Policy GP35

Development proposals will be expected to have regard to the objectives of 'planning out crime' through the incorporation of measures such as:

- ***promotion of mixed use development and other schemes that increase the range of activities that maximize the opportunities for surveillance;***
 - ***maximizing the amount of defensible space which is controlled, or perceived to be controlled, by occupiers;***
 - ***a high standard of street lighting.***
- 3.101 Good planning can help to discourage criminal activity to both people and property. The range and type of design measures available to developers varies according to the size and type of development. The main opportunities for crime prevention arise as part of the layout and landscaping

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of major developments such as new housing areas and town centre developments.

- 3.102 Crime is less likely to be committed where offenders think they may be seen and it is sensible, therefore, for developments to be designed in such a way that the benefits of natural surveillance are maximised. Open spaces, footpaths, play areas, car parks and other areas should be kept open to view from surrounding property and well used thoroughfares wherever possible and hiding places should be avoided.
- 3.103 Good lighting can deter crime. Physical barriers such as walls and fences and psychological barriers such as entrance features and changes in surface can help give the impression that areas are private or semi-private and make offenders feel vulnerable and exposed.
- 3.104 In certain circumstances the desire to prevent criminal activity can conflict with other design objectives such as the creation of a visually attractive environment or a convenient network of access routes. A balanced approach will always be necessary.

Comprehensive development

Policy GP36

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would prejudice the future comprehensive development of other land which is either allocated for development in the plan or which has reasonable prospects in terms of plan policies of coming forward for development.

- 3.105 Policy GP36 is concerned with making full use of land which is suitable for development. It seeks to prevent development which would land-lock or otherwise restrict development on adjoining areas. Land suitable for development is a scarce resource and should be put to full and appropriate use. If development is prevented because of other poorly designed development on adjoining land, it could lead to the need to release less suitable land.

APPENDIX GP 1 Sites of local or regional nature conservation significance (January 2005)

Sites of Nature Conservation Importance

1. Plessey Woods
2. Bothal Burn and the River Wansbeck
3. Coneygarth Pond
4. Willow Burn Pasture
5. Portland Terrace Copse
6. Sleekburn Fen
7. River Blyth Estuary
8. River Wansbeck Estuary
9. Spital Carrs
10. Lyne Sands

Local Nature Reserves

1. Castle Island
2. Choppington Community Woods
3. QE2 Country Park

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Priority species and habitats

Habitat	Area
Lowland meadows	40.6 ha
Lowland heathland	Present, area not listed
Maritime cliffs and slopes	Present, area not listed
Coastal saltmarsh	2.3 ha
Coastal sand dunes	21 ha
Mudflats	82 ha
Species	Status
Water vole (mammal)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Brown hare (mammal)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
European otter (mammal)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Pipistrelle bat (mammal)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Red squirrel (mammal)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Skylark (bird)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Linnet (bird)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Reed Bunting (bird)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Corn Bunting (bird)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Spotted flycatcher (bird)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Tree sparrow (bird)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Grey partridge (bird)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Bullfinch (bird)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Song thrush (bird)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Great crested newt (amphibian)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Northern wood ant (ant)	Old records (1960-89)
White clawed crayfish (crustacean)	Recent records (1990 onwards)
Shepherd's needle (plant)	Historic (1959 or earlier)

Source: 'A Biodiversity Audit of the North East', North East Biodiversity Forum, 2001



HOUSING

Chapter 4

Introduction

- 4.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East emphasises the need for an integrated approach to housing renewal, clearance and urban regeneration in the region. It advises that the problems of older housing should be tackled in conjunction with planning for new housing and that it is particularly important that the provision of additional housing does not exacerbate problems of low demand and abandonment. The Consultation Draft North East Regional Housing Strategy (December 2004) also highlights the need to address changing housing markets in the North East. The planned replacement of unattractive, poor quality housing is considered essential for a long-term thriving housing market and for resolving problems associated with weak or failing neighbourhoods.
- 4.2 South East Northumberland is identified in both the Regional Spatial Strategy and the draft Regional Housing Strategy as an area where housing market problems need to be addressed. Housing market research carried out for the SENNTRI area in 2004 confirms that there is evidence of low demand in areas of Wansbeck including Newbiggin by the Sea and East Ashington but that the problems are concentrated in pockets. Such areas tend to be characterised by empty properties and a general decline in street scene and environmental quality. Whilst current problems are concentrated in the social housing stock, the research also indicates that some groups of the pre-1919 private stock in Ashington and Newbiggin by the Sea are also beginning to show signs of weakness and that the situation here also needs to be monitored.
- 4.3 To assist in the implementation of national and regional housing policies, the Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan encourages development in the south east of the County to revitalise the economy, secure the regeneration of the older towns and widen housing choice. The type, size, location and design of housing development must be appropriate to the community's needs and respect the environment and existing land uses. This should be achieved through the preparation of local plans which should identify the scale and nature of housing development in each settlement taking into account Structure Plan policies regarding the location of new development and the amount of new development required.
- 4.4 The Wansbeck Housing Strategy is an overarching document produced by the District Council setting out housing objectives and priorities for action in the District. The strategy recognises that the District Council must work with other partners to tackle housing

problems and deliver good quality affordable housing for local residents. New ways of working are being developed.

Newbiggin LIFE is a partnership established between Wansbeck District Council, Cheviot Housing Association and representatives of the local community to secure both social and physical regeneration in Newbiggin by the Sea. An integrated, masterplan approach to regeneration is being adopted by the partners. As well as revitalising the local housing market through a balance of new housing provision and improvements to existing stock, the initiative also seeks to support local business and enterprise, improve learning, leisure and cultural facilities and achieve environmental improvements. The LIFE approach to housing renewal and regeneration in general is being extended to other areas of Wansbeck and East Ashington LIFE has also now been established.

- 4.5 Policies in this housing section of the local plan recognise that the regeneration of communities demonstrating housing market problems requires a balanced approach to housing improvement, selective demolition and new build housing schemes. It also requires that housing provision is linked to the provision of jobs, education, leisure and other facilities.

Existing housing

Policy H1a

The condition of existing housing areas will be kept under review. Where problems emerge, proposals for area renewal will be developed in consultation with local residents and property owners. A range of solutions will be considered for areas in need of renewal including house improvements, environmental improvements, selective demolition and rebuilding.

- 4.6 The existing housing stock of the District will continue over the plan period to provide for the majority of housing needs and choice. It is important that this stock continues to meet the needs and aspirations of residents. The preferred solution in areas in need of revitalisation will vary according to local circumstances including the views of residents.
- 4.5 A particular concern of the District Council is to ensure that its stock meets the Government's decent homes standard. All councils are required to ensure that by 2010 all their housing meets set standards of decency. A stock condition survey undertaken on behalf of the Council has revealed (at 1 April 2004) that 48% of its stock failed the decent homes standard. In line with Government requirements, the authority is considering the level of investment needed to bring the

failing stock up to the decency standard and the options available to them to secure the necessary funding. Options for the future ownership and management of its housing are being considered in terms of delivering the required improvements and the light of the views of tenants and other stakeholders. In April 2005, the Council agreed to support the recommendations of tenants that a stock transfer to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) is the best option to deliver objectives identified by tenants for the improvement of the housing stock and service. The options for transfer to an RSL are now being considered and if agreed by a ballot of the tenants in late Spring 2006, the transfer will take place in Spring 2007.

- 4.8 An appraisal of all Council housing estates was carried out in 2004 to assess which areas have a sustainable future, those areas that require action to ensure they remain sustainable and those where clearance is likely to be required. Each estate was assessed in terms of a range of criteria including performance in terms of the decent homes standard, demand for housing in the area, quality of the environment etc. Of the 555 estates, 13 were classified as at high risk and a further 14 at medium risk. There was a focus of problems in Newbiggin by the Sea, East Ashington and Choppington. Consultation with residents of the high risk estates is now taking place with a view to establishing the best course of action. Housing and environmental improvement will be the principle form of action but a mixed solution also involving selective demolition and rebuilding may be appropriate in some areas.
- 4.9 Whilst the main housing problems at present are related to the local authority housing stock, it is possible that during the plan period, they may also develop amongst the high numbers of pre-1919, privately owned terraced houses in the District. It is important that the condition of these areas is also kept under review and, if necessary, new initiatives developed to address any issues.

New housing requirements

Policy H1

To meet housing needs arising from demographic and household changes, provision will be made in Wansbeck District to achieve an annual average of 200 new dwellings in the period 2002 – 2006 and 160 dwellings post 2006. Additional provision will be made to replace occupied housing lost through clearance including 341 new homes in the period 2002-2011.

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- 4.10 Policy H1 demonstrates the commitment to meet needs for new housing in the District. The proposed level of provision is based on policies in the Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan. In the period 2002 – 2006, the Structure Plan requires provision of an average of 200 new homes per year and in the period after 2006, an average of 160 new homes per year. The figures indicate that provision is required for a total of 2600 new homes.
- 4.11 The Structure Plan allocation for the District is based on Regional Planning Guidance which allocates an overall housing requirement for the County. In distributing the Northumberland figure between the six districts, the Structure Plan seeks to ensure that each district provides sufficient new housing to at least maintain its population. The allocation for Wansbeck (and also for the Borough of Blyth Valley) will also allow some population growth as well as maintaining population.
- 4.12 The Structure Plan new housing allocation for the District does not take into account the replacement of housing lost through clearance and it is appropriate, therefore, to provide over and above the Structure Plan allocation to compensate for housing lost from the stock. Both the Structure Plan and Regional Planning Guidance indicate that compensatory provision should not be made for houses which have effectively been removed from the stock because of abandonment before the decision to demolish has been taken.
- 4.13 In the period 2002 -2004, 143 homes, all in the local authority sector, were demolished. As 79 were void at the time the decision to demolish was taken by the District Council, replacement of 64 dwellings already demolished will be required.
- 4.14 Further selective housing demolition (together with house improvement, environmental improvement and new house building) is proposed as part of the District Council's Housing Estate Regeneration Strategy. The strategy is based on a comprehensive appraisal of all 55 Council housing estates carried out in 2004. Proposals for the demolition of a further 369 homes are currently being considered in six of the 55 estates. Exact numbers to be demolished will be confirmed when consultation with residents has been completed and detailed action plans established for each estate. With an estimated 75% of houses likely to be still occupied when a decision to demolish is made, compensatory provision of approximately 277 homes will be required.

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- 4.15 Replacement of a total of 341 dwellings already demolished or proposed to be demolished is therefore known to be required over and above the general house building allocation. In the longer term, however, it is not possible to predict with any accuracy how much demolition will take place and how much replacement will be required. There is uncertainty, in particular, about the scale of demolition which might take place in the private sector. It is therefore not proposed at the present time to make provision for the replacement of clearance in the post 2011 period of the plan. The need for compensatory provision for the loss of existing housing will be closely monitored, however, and taken into account when the release of land for housing development is considered as part of the development control process and as part of a future plan review.
- 4.16 Policy H1 indicates a requirement for 2941 new dwellings in the plan period including known requirements for replacement of clearance in the period 2002 to 2011. Table H1 below illustrates how it is envisaged that the total of 2941 new dwellings will be achieved.

Table H1 The envisaged components of new housing provision 2002 – 2016

	2002 - 2011	2012 - 2016	Total
New dwellings already completed, by conversion or new build, (Jan. 2002 – Dec. 2004)	632	-	632
New dwellings under construction on new build sites (Dec. 2004)	139	-	139
Completions on new build sites already with the benefit of planning permission (Dec. 2004)	900	280	1180
Completions on new build sites identified in the Local Plan	279	195	474
Completions on windfall new build sites	151	305	456
New dwellings to be achieved by conversion or change of use	40	20	60
Total	2141	800	2941

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- 4.17 It is anticipated that 62% of the 2941 additional dwellings can be achieved by the development of previously-developed land or conversion of existing buildings. This compares favourably with the County target of 50% of housing on previously-developed land or by conversion by 2016. It is however, less than the Regional Planning Guidance target of 65% by 2016. The scope through the local plan to increase the percentage of brownfield development over the plan period is very much constrained by planning decisions which have already been taken which permit development of over 1015 new dwellings on greenfield sites. In line with Government guidance, any applications to renew greenfield housing permissions will be reviewed thoroughly, particularly by comparison with available previously-developed sites and in terms of location and accessibility to jobs, shops and services by modes other than the car.
- 4.18 Wansbeck does not have a large stock of vacant previously-developed land suitable for housing development as confirmed by the Urban Housing Capacity Study. Most of the derelict land resulting from coal mining and other industrial activities has successfully been reclaimed already for purposes including employment, agriculture and amenity uses. Achievement of the envisaged level of housing development on previously-developed land will require windfall development on sites which cannot be identified at present. Such sites are expected to include housing clearance sites and sites currently in other uses.

Housing land allocations

Policy H2

The sites listed below and shown on the Proposals Map are allocated for new housing development. Proposals for development on sites assigned to Phase 1 will be permitted. Proposals for development on sites assigned to Phase 2 will not be permitted before 2012 unless monitoring reveals that early release of sites is required to avoid a shortfall in new housing supply.

	Site	Area (in hectares)	Approximate site capacity	Site type	Phase
H2(a)	Site of the former Ashington Hospital, East View, Ashington	3.1	139	Brownfield	1
H2(b)	Store Farm Road, Newbiggin by the Sea	1.6	48	Brownfield	1
H2(c)	Moorhouse Estate, Ashington	3.4	92	Brownfield	1
H2(d)	Storey Crescent, Newbiggin by the Sea	2.9	78	Brownfield	2
H2(e)	Site of the former Hirst Welfare, Moorhouse Lane, Ashington	2.2	60	Greenfield (80%) with brownfield (20%)	2
H2(f)	Spital House Farm, Newbiggin	2.1	57	Greenfield	2
TOTAL			474		

4.19 It is estimated that release of the above sites will allow the creation of approximately 474 new dwellings. The overall plan objectives form the basis of the site allocation strategy including in particular:

- the regeneration of areas of housing market failure and the widening of housing choice
- the use of previously-developed land in settlements before greenfield land
- patterns of development which make good use of existing facilities and minimise the need to travel

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- 4.20 Regard has been given to the findings of the Wansbeck Urban Housing Capacity Study (April 2003) and in particular the performance of sites when assessed in terms of the following criteria:
- access to local facilities
 - access to public transport
 - development constraints
 - impact on community facilities
 - marketability
- 4.21 In considering the overall site strategy, it is appropriate to consider the allocated sites together with the main sites which already have planning permission and are likely to come forward for development. They are listed in Appendix H1 and shown on the Proposals Map. Sites of less than 0.4 hectares with permission have not been identified in the plan but their contribution to future housing development has been taken into account.
- 4.22 Ashington is envisaged as a focus for housing development during the plan period, in particular the eastern part of the town. Ashington is the main town in the District and the main location for services and facilities. The eastern side of the settlement in recent years has demonstrated major housing market problems, in particular a serious drop in demand for local authority housing. The need is recognised to move away from a housing stock dominated by social rented housing to a more balanced stock which better reflects the needs and aspirations of residents today. A package of measure is proposed including selective demolition, improvement of the remaining stock and new house building. In estates showing large numbers of voids and difficult to let properties, including the Churches and Moorhouse estates, a significant amount of clearance has already taken place. Planning permission has already been granted for new private sector house building on sites including the Churches clearance site and the Summerhouse Lane greenfield site to the south of the Wansbeck General Hospital.
- 4.23 It is proposed in the plan to continue the process of replacing social housing in East Ashington with new private sector housing. In allocating sites in the Plan, priority has been given to the re-use of previously-developed land within the town. The site of the former Ashington Hospital and the Moorhouse Estate housing clearance area are allocated for development. A single greenfield site is allocated on part of the site of the former Hirst Welfare where housing will form a small part of a mix of new uses on the disused sports ground.

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- 4.24 Newbiggin by the Sea will also be a focus for new housing development. Local authority housing has dominated the housing stock in the town and there was no significant new housing development for many years. A drop in demand for council housing has resulted in a growing number of voids. A significant amount of demolition has already taken place and is likely to continue. A wider choice of housing for residents is urgently required. One site, the site of the former Newbiggin Poultry Farm and a scrap yard has recently been completed. It is proposed as part of the plan strategy to continue the process of extending housing choice by allocating a number of sites. Sites allocated include both housing clearance sites and a smaller greenfield site which are well located in terms of raising the image of housing in Newbiggin.
- 4.25 The phasing of development on allocated sites allows the authority to manage the release of land over the plan period, in particular the release of greenfield sites. It is considered necessary to allocate a small amount of greenfield land for development during the plan period because of the lack of previously-developed sites but the use of phasing allows it to be held back until required. The phasing allows for sites to come forward earlier than envisaged if monitoring reveals that they are needed to avoid an interruption in land supply. Such circumstances may arise, for example, where the estimated number of houses on windfall sites does not emerge, completions on sites assigned to Phase 1 are not achieved as envisaged or if more than the expected number of dwellings is demolished and needs replacing.

Windfall housing sites

Policy H3

The construction of new housing on sites not allocated for development in this plan will be permitted provided that:

- a) the site has been previously developed or the development involves the re-use or conversion of an existing building; and***
- b) to grant permission will not lead to an over-supply of housing; and***
- c) development will not exacerbate problems of, or lead to, problems of low demand; and***
- d) the site is within a defined settlement limit; and***

- e) *the site is well located in relation to local facilities and to public transport; and*
- f) *residents would enjoy a satisfactory living environment.*

New housing development on greenfield sites not allocated for housing in the plan will not be permitted.

- 4.26 The development of previously-developed sites and the re-use of buildings not identified in the Plan in urban areas where there is good access to community facilities and services can provide a significant sustainable contribution to new housing supply in the District. It is envisaged that approximately 456 new dwellings can be provided on such windfall sites during the plan period. Windfall sites include small sites too small to include in the Plan and other sites, not known about at the present time and possibly in use, which become available for development during the plan period. They will include the sites of housing demolished during the plan period. Policy H3 applies to sites of all sizes.
- 4.27 Notwithstanding the recognised contribution that previously-developed land can make to sustainable development, it is inappropriate to permit such development if it would create an over-supply of housing in terms of strategic structure plan housing requirements and/or it would exacerbate problems of low demand experienced in the area. A situation of existing or impending over-supply will be highlighted in the Annual Monitoring Report.
- 4.28 National and regional planning guidance establishes that local plans should not allow for greenfield windfall housing development.

Monitoring

Policy H4

The supply of housing in the District will be monitored on a quarterly basis and a summary report produced every year.

- 4.29 It is envisaged that matters to be monitored will include:
- the number of new houses completions
 - the number of permissions granted
 - the number of demolitions
 - the amount of new housing created by the development of previously-developed sites and buildings
 - the amount of housing created on windfall sites

- 4.30 Monitoring will assist the overall delivery of the managed release of housing sites and will establish whether the housing objectives and policies of the plan are being achieved. In particular it will indicate whether new housing is being provided as anticipated in Table H1. If completions are not occurring as envisaged, it may point to the need for action such as the early release of Phase 2 housing sites (identified in Policy H2) or measures to overcome constraints to development. Ultimately it might point to the need to alter or replace the plan.
- 4.31 The availability of previously-developed sites will continue to be monitored as part of regular reviews, approximately every two or three years, of the Wansbeck Urban Housing Capacity Study.

The design and density of new housing developments

Policy H5

New housing developments should be well designed. Developers will be expected to demonstrate in their proposals that:

- a) movement through the area will be safe, direct and attractive and has been designed to put the needs of non-motorised users before the needs of motor vehicles; and***
- b) the impact of motor vehicles has been minimized and streets have been designed for slow speeds; and***
- c) residents will enjoy reasonable standards of privacy, outlook and daylight; and***
- d) the new development will relate well to its surroundings; and***
- e) the new housing area will have its own distinctive character and identity; and***
- f) the arrangement of houses, streets and open spaces is clearly defined and easily understood; and***
- g) there will be an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes and types which takes account of local housing needs; and***

- h) external spaces have been planned as an integral part of the development and are well defined; and*
- i) adequate provision is made for gardens or other forms of private amenity open space; and*
- j) the layout and design of dwellings allows for future adaptation to meet changing household needs; and*
- k) the new development has been designed to conserve energy and water resources; and*
- l) appropriate provision is made for those with reduced mobility.*

4.32 Policy H5 seeks to ensure that new housing areas help to create sustainable communities, that they are well planned and well designed and that residents enjoy a high standard of living environment. It requires that residential areas are designed with a broad range of objectives in mind, not primarily the accommodation of motor vehicles. It requires developers to think imaginatively about designs and layouts to create housing areas that fit with the surrounding area and offer a high quality network of streets and open spaces, a clear image and identity and a choice of housing opportunities. Policy GP34 of the plan is also particularly relevant to the design of new housing developments. It requires that developments are designed to conserve energy and water resources.

4.33 If new dwellings and housing areas are designed to be adaptable, they can better meet the changing needs and circumstances of residents over time. Initial design and choice of construction methods, for example, can have a significant bearing on the potential to extend a dwelling to create more space or to reconfigure existing space to form differently designed rooms. The requirements of future disabled users can also be met more easily if new housing is designed to be quickly and inexpensively altered. Other measures to assist residents and visitors with reduced mobility which should be taken into account at the design stage are the provision of ramped alternatives to steps, car parking for users with disabilities, sufficiently wide paths and gates etc.

4.34 Policy GP34 of the plan is also particularly relevant to the design of new housing developments. It requires that developments are designed to conserve energy and water resources.

Policy H6

New housing developments with an average net density of less than 30 dwellings per hectare will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a) particular characteristics of the site prevent higher densities from being achieved; or***
- b) development at higher densities would have a significant adverse effect on the character of the surrounding area.***

Densities higher than 30 dwellings per hectare will be encouraged at places with good access to public transport.

- 4.35 In order to reduce the amount of land taken for new housing development, particularly greenfield sites, it is important that unnecessarily low densities are avoided. Policy H6 recognises that lower densities are justified in exceptional circumstances, for example where development is constrained by factors such as site context, poor access arrangements or physical and infrastructure constraints.
- 4.36 Raising residential densities in areas such as town centres which have good accessibility by modes of transport other than the car can make a valuable contribution towards the achievement of more sustainable settlements.
- 4.37 For the purposes of calculating net density, only those areas which will be developed for housing and directly associated uses should be included. They should exclude major distributor roads, primary schools, open spaces serving a wider area and significant landscape buffers.

Affordable housing

Policy H7

On all housing sites of more than 0.5 hectares or developments of more than 15 dwellings, the authority will negotiate for the provision of at least 30% of the total dwellings proposed to be in the form of affordable housing.

The developer will need to satisfy the authority that affordable housing provided under the policy will remain affordable on subsequent changes of ownership or occupant.

4 HOUSING

- 4.38 A review of housing needs in Wansbeck carried out at the end of 2004 reveals major changes in housing markets in recent years and indicates that affordability of housing has become a significant issue in the District for the first time. Rising house prices coupled with a decrease in the social rented stock has had a particularly significant impact on first time buyers, elderly households and those trying to move up the property ladder. Although house prices are still not as high as in some other districts in Northumberland such as Castle Morpeth or Alnwick, incomes for many are too low for them to buy or rent housing generally available on the open market. It is estimated that there is a need for 750 new affordable units within the District over the next five years (2005 – 2009) and that this should be made up of a mixture of social rented, shared ownership and low cost home ownership.
- 4.39 The planning system can make an important contribution to meeting the shortfall in affordable accommodation. The authority is somewhat constrained in securing affordable housing in this way, however, because of the significant existing stock of permissions (which do not require an element of affordable housing) and the reduced scale of house building planned overall in the District. It considers it appropriate that all new housing developments over 0.5 hectare coming forward in the plan period include a significant element of affordable housing. Attempts to circumvent the threshold requirements of the policy, such as by piecemeal site development, will be resisted. In the case of phased development, the whole site will be subject to assessment of the affordable housing requirement prior to consent for part of the site.
- 4.40 The particular costs associated with the development of a site and the scheme's viability will be factors taken into account in establishing whether it will be reasonable to seek at least 30% of housing provided on a site as affordable housing. (In determining the actual number of houses to be provided, 30% will be rounded to the nearest whole number).
- 4.41 For the purposes of the policy, affordable housing is defined as housing provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. It should meet the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford. It includes social rented housing managed by local authorities and registered social landlords and intermediate affordable housing provided at prices and rents above those of social rent, but below market price or rents.

4 HOUSING

- 4.42 It is important that housing provided under the policy will always be available as affordable housing for local people. Either conditions imposed on planning permissions or planning obligations will be used to ensure that this is the case. In the Council's view, involvement of a social landlord is the most appropriate arrangement to secure affordable housing in perpetuity but other effective arrangements will be considered.
- 4.43 For the foreseeable future, it seems that enabling the provision of affordable housing will continue to be a planning issue. The community's needs will continue to be kept under review.

Extensions to existing houses

Policy H8

Proposals for extensions to existing dwellings will be permitted provided that:

- a) the extension will be subordinate in terms of size and bulk to the existing house; and***
 - b) the detailed design of the extension and the materials are in sympathy with the character and appearance of the existing building and the surrounding area; and***
 - c) the proposals do not have a significant adverse effect on neighbouring properties in terms of loss of daylight, sunlight, privacy or outlook; and***
 - d) reasonable garden or yard space is retained for the extended dwelling; and***
 - e) on site parking provision is not reduced to an unsatisfactory level.***
- 4.44 Householders frequently wish to increase their living accommodation by constructing extensions to their homes. An extension can, however, have significant effect on the character of a building and the surrounding area and on the amenities of adjoining residents. The criteria set out in the policy above seek to ensure that the quality of the built environment is maintained when an extension is built and that the interests of neighbours are taken into account.

Gypsy and traveller caravan sites

Policy H9

Proposals for new gypsy or traveller caravan sites or extensions to existing sites will not be permitted in areas designated as Green Belt. Such proposals will be permitted elsewhere if they meet the following criteria:

- a) the site is within a reasonable distance of community services and facilities including shops, schools, medical facilities and public transport; and***
- b) the development will be well screened and landscaped and will not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and***
- c) satisfactory arrangements for achieving vehicular access from the public highway can be achieved; and***
- d) the development is unlikely to result in disturbance or other unacceptable loss of amenity to any neighbouring residential properties; and***
- e) the site can be provided satisfactorily with drinking water, sewerage and refuse disposal.***

4.45 Policy H9 recognises the special accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers. For the purposes of the policy gypsies are defined as 'persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin'. The policy seeks to ensure that when proposals for sites are being considered, proper account is taken of the need for access to services and community facilities and the need to safeguard amenity and the local environment.

4.46 The District already accommodates the needs of gypsies and travellers at a large site at Hartford Bridge. The need for additional residential pitches, transit sites and emergency stopping places will be kept under review as part of local housing assessments and information gathered as part of any Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (Circular 1/2006) and the Council's development control and monitoring functions.

Residential institutions and care homes

Policy H10

Proposals for residential institutions and care homes will be permitted provided that:

- a) in terms of the likely needs of the prospective residents, the development is sufficiently accessible to local services and facilities; and.***
- b) it is accessible by public transport, on foot and by cycle; and***
- c) residents will enjoy satisfactory living conditions in terms of privacy, outlook, outdoor amenity space and freedom from disturbance and pollutant; and***
- d) there is unlikely to be any disturbance to neighbours.***

4.47 Residential institutions such as nursing homes, rest homes and other forms of care home meet the specialised needs of particular groups of the community. Policy H10 establishes that the main considerations to be taken into account when proposals come forward for consideration as part of the development control system are likely to be the impact on the local environment including people in the surrounding area, the living conditions for residents and accessibility to local services and public transport.

4.48 The importance of access to local services such as shops will vary according to the type of institution and prospective occupant. In cases of homes where residents are likely to be housebound, the issue will not be very significant. In other cases, it will be important that residents are not isolated from facilities enjoyed by other sections of the community.

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Appendix H1 Dwellings not yet started on sites with planning permission (Dec 2004)

	Location	Estimated site capacity		
		On previously-developed land	On greenfield land	Total
	Sites not yet started			
H1(a)	Land at Summerhouse Lane, Ashington	-	623	623
H1(b)	The former NCB Workshops site, Ellington Road, Ashington	326	-	326
H1(c)	The Carrs, Newbiggin by the Sea	44	-	44
H1(d)	Cumberland Avenue, Newbiggin by the Sea	20	-	20
H1(e)	Site of former Hirst Castle Service Station	10	-	10
	Sites with a capacity of less than 10 dwellings	54	4	58
	Sites already under construction	156	-	156
	Total	610	627	1237



EMPLOYMENT

Chapter 5

Introduction

- 5.1 The delivery of economic prosperity for all is a major theme of the Wansbeck Community Plan which aims to encourage economic development which creates jobs, balancing environmental sustainability with economic and social progress. The creation of more local businesses and the provision of high quality business environments for existing and incoming businesses is identified as a challenge for the District. In line with the Community Plan, it is an objective of the local plan to contribute towards economic regeneration and to support the development of a range of employment creating uses. Policies in this chapter of the local plan seek to address this issue.

The strategic context

- 5.2 Provision for employment in the District must accord with the policies for employment set out in the Northumberland County Structure Plan. Through its policies, the Structure Plan seeks to assist the retention of traditional industries, the attraction of new employment investment, the development of tourism and the diversification of agriculture.
- 5.3 The Structure Plan requires that at least 35 hectares of land are provided in Wansbeck to accommodate general, local employment and business park uses and to facilitate the creation of business clusters. In addition, sub-regionally significant employment sites should also be made available to accommodate investment by firms requiring industrial sites in non-estate locations and, at Cambois, investment by individual firms requiring large sites.
- 5.4 As part of the process of identifying employment sites, the Structure Plan requires authorities to re-assess their existing allocations and to de-allocate sites with no prospects of being developed. Regional Planning Guidance also points to the need to re-assess employment land allocations in the light of a general over provision of allocated land in the region, far more in aggregate than is likely to be needed in the period covered by the guidance. It advises that a Regional Employment Survey is being undertaken to assess the market potential of allocated employment sites in the region.
- 5.5 In line with the strategic guidance, an appraisal of existing employment allocations has been carried out. The main issues raised by the appraisal are the substantial greenfield allocations in the 1994 plan for employment development at Cambois. The appraisal has prompted a revision of policy for the area as set out in policy EMP3.

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The findings of the Regional Employment Land Survey are not yet known and have not been taken into account.

- 5.6 Both Regional Planning Guidance and the Regional Economic Strategy stress the importance to the regional economy of developing business clusters, of attracting businesses in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector and of developing ICT facilities and infrastructure. In the absence of detailed information and guidance on existing and potential regional and local clusters, the Council has sought to support their development by identifying a range and choice of employment sites in the District. Two business parks suitable for ICT business development are identified (policy EMP 2 refers)

General employment land and business parks

Policy EMP1

The following areas of the District, as shown on the Proposals Map are designated as general employment areas:

- EMP 1(a) Jubilee Industrial Estate, Ashington***
- EMP 1(b) North Seaton Industrial Estate, Ashington***
- EMP 1(c) North Seaton East***
- EMP 1(d) Lintonville, Ashington***
- EMP 1(e) Wansbeck Business Park, Ashington***
- EMP 1(f) Green Lane Workshops, Ashington***
- EMP 1(g) West Sleekburn Industrial Estate***
- EMP 1(h) Barrington Industrial Estate, Bedlington Station***
- EMP 1(i) Barrington Road, Bedlington Station***
- EMP 1(j) Welwyn Electronics, Bedlington Station***
- EMP 1(k) Woodhorn Road, Newbiggin by the Sea***
- EMP 1(l) Ellington Road Ends***

Proposals for development in classes B1, B2 and B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (business, industrial, storage and distribution uses) will be permitted in these areas.

- 5.7 It is anticipated that the areas identified in Policy EMP1 can accommodate the development needs of the majority of existing employers and inward investors during the plan period. A range of sites totalling 48.8 hectares is available (December 2005) for new development within the twelve areas. Appendix EMP 1 illustrates.

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- 5.8 Only two sites are not existing employment areas. Site EMP1(c), North Seaton East is adjacent to an existing employment area and was allocated for development in the 1994 Local Plan. Planning permission for employment development was granted in November 1999. Land at Woodhorn Road, Newbiggin by the Sea (site EMP (k)) was granted planning permission for a small workshop development in June 2003 but development has not yet commenced. All twelve employment areas are judged to be capable of development without harm to local amenity or other local environmental interests including landscape and nature conservation. The majority of sites are within or on the edge of Ashington, the District's main centre of population and as such are accessible by public transport and cycles as well as the private car. Sites outside Ashington are close to one or more other areas of settlement.
- 5.9 Sufficient land is available within the twelve areas to meet the Structure Plan requirement to provide 35 hectares of land to accommodate general, local employment and business park uses. The North Seaton East site (known as the Ashwood Business Park), as well as accommodating some local employment uses appropriate in character to a business park location, will also be able to meet the additional Structure Plan requirement to provide regionally significant employment sites.

Policy EMP2

The following employment areas will be developed as business parks:

EMP 1(a) Wansbeck Business Park, Ashington

EMP 1(c) North Seaton East, Ashington

Development within these areas should of a high design standard and incorporate a significant amount of planting and other forms of landscaping. Development by businesses in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector and the development of high quality ICT facilities and infrastructure will be encouraged.

- 5.10 Policy EMP2 recognises that a traditional industrial estate environment does not meet the aspirations of many employers who are looking for higher quality environment for their premises. Of the general employment sites designated in the District in policy EMP1, the existing Wansbeck Business Park and the proposed North Seaton East site are judged best able to accommodate the needs of those firms who require an estate location but also prefer a business park setting. The policy seeks to ensure that new development in the two

areas contributes towards the creation of a high quality employment area in a well landscaped setting. Proposals for open storage and the methods of screening proposed are likely to be subject to particularly close scrutiny.

- 5.11 The policy supports the development of different types of business clusters to meet sectoral priorities and local need. In particular, the policy recognises that the expanding ICT sector of the business market presents significant opportunities for economic growth in the region and that the availability of advanced ICT infrastructure is important to the region's competitive strength.

Cambois Zone of Economic Opportunity

Policy EMP3

Land at Cambois, as shown on the Proposals Map, is designated as a zone of economic opportunity for development by businesses requiring large sites in non-estate locations. Proposals for development in classes B1, B2 or B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (business, industrial and storage and distribution uses) will be permitted provided that:

- a) the development cannot be accommodated in a designated general employment area elsewhere in the District; and***
- b) in the case of proposals for greenfield development, there are no suitable alternative previously developed sites within the zone; and***
- c) the development will be carried out in a well planned and co-ordinated manner; and***
- d) proposals include large amounts of tree planting and other forms of landscaping.***

Uses other than business, industrial and storage and distribution will only be permitted if the development has major social, economic or environmental benefits to the community and a more appropriate site cannot be found elsewhere.

Major environmental improvements will be sought throughout Cambois to enhance the environment for local residents and

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create new areas for recreation and wildlife as well as improving the attractiveness of the area to investors.

Reclamation and landscaping of the former Blyth Power Station and Coal Stocking Yards will be sought to remove dereliction and provide an attractive setting pending possible future employment development, including possible port related development.

- 5.12 Policy EMP 3 maintains Cambois as an area suitable for development by large employers, both existing and potential new investors. In the light of the recent employment land appraisal and the Blyth Estuary Study, the boundaries of the zone of economic opportunity identified in the 1994 Local Plan have been amended. The zone now excludes areas of settlement and a significant amount of greenfield land (including land at Brock Lane, East Sleekburn, West Sleekburn and Cambois Farm) previously allocated for new development. The reduced zone for the most part comprises existing businesses, their reserve sites set aside for expansion and the site of the former Blyth Power Station. It is now better suited to meet the needs of industries requiring large sites without compromising adjoining greenfield land.
- 5.13 There are a number of existing major employers in the Cambois area; they are extremely important to the local economy. Most hold land for possible future expansion. As well as meeting the needs of existing Cambois employers, the area has the potential to accommodate the expansion of other local businesses and new inward investment. The proximity to existing centres of population in South East Northumberland and Tyneside and the good access to the A189 Spine Road and other parts of the strategic highway network are the major strengths of Cambois. There are also operational freight rail lines in the area which could be used by new industries and the area is adjacent to the Port of Blyth. The reintroduction of passenger rail services on the freight line and the creation of a station at Bedlington Station, as proposed, will enhance accessibility further.
- 5.14 The policy approach to development at Cambois has been formulated in the light of the findings of the Blyth Estuary Study (November 2004) as well as the employment land appraisal. The development potential of Cambois, together with parts of Blyth town centre and quayside, was considered as part of the Blyth Estuary Study. The study report identifies the vacant site of the former Blyth Power Station and associated coal stocking yards has having potential to accommodate future industrial development including possible port expansion on the power station site. It indicates the need for remediation of the site and for landscaping to improve the attractiveness of the site for economic investment and to improve the environment of the area

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more generally. The study proposes that the power station site and the southern part of the coal stocking yards be the first priority for development. The former Blyth Power Station site and coal stocking yards are currently being assessed by the landowner for potential future use as a power generation facility.

- 5.15 To the south of the East Sleekburn to Cambois road is an operational 275kv substation which forms part of the transmission network. This facility may be upgraded during the plan period and any such proposal would be considered under Policy CF3.
- 5.16 The uncertainties associated with the former power station and coal stocking yards could lead to the land remaining in an unused state with the appearance of neglect and abandonment for an indefinite period. This would be unacceptable for such large and prominent sites and would continue to blight the area. In order to deal with that situation, the Council will work with the owner of the sites and other agencies to draw up a programme of reclamation/landscaping pending the future development of the sites. The recommendations of the Blyth Estuary Study are likely to inform any scheme of restoration/landscaping for the sites.
- 5.17 Also, in line with the objectives of the Blyth Estuary Study, the environmental enhancement and general upgrading of the landscape of the remainder of the zone in order to make it attractive to potential investors and developers is regarded as a priority.
- 5.18 It is important that the special potential of the Cambois area to accommodate larger companies is not squandered by permitting development which could easily be located elsewhere on other employment sites in the District. It is appropriate, therefore, to reserve the area for development by larger firms seeking a non-industrial estate or business park location or for other uses which could have major benefits to the District and can not be accommodated elsewhere.
- 5.19 The quality of the environment in the Cambois area, particularly that part to the east of the A189, is not very high. There are some unattractive views and a lack of attractive landscape features and the area does not generally present a good image. Tree planting and other forms of landscaping will help to lessen the visual impact of development, increase the attractiveness of the area to potential investors and improve the environment for those people living or working in the area or adjacent to it. The proposed South East Northumberland Forest Park project of Groundwork Northumberland provides an opportunity to secure the delivery of major environmental and landscape improvements in the area over the long term.

Alcan Employment Zone

Policy EMP4

Land incorporating the existing aluminium smelter and associated power station near Lynemouth is recognised as an established major employment zone. Development in classes B1, B2 and B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (business, industrial and storage and distribution uses) will be permitted provided that:

- a) the development could not be accommodated within a designated general employment area elsewhere in the district; and***
- b) the development would not prejudice the continued operation of an existing use within the zone.***

- 5.20 The area covered by Policy EMP4, as shown on the Proposals Map, is already developed by important heavy industries, namely the Alcan aluminium smelter and power station and part of the Ellington Colliery coal mining complex. It is a major source of employment in the County. The policy recognises the existing importance of the site to the local economy and supports further development either by existing users or by other local firms or inward investors should land be released for development. The designation will not bring into employment use land which does not already have that classification.

Port Related Development

Policy EMP5

The continued operation and development of the Port of Blyth will be supported. Land at Battleship Wharf is designated as a port related employment area. Development in classes B1, B2 and B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (business, industrial and storage and distribution uses) will be permitted provided that development is port related.

- 5.21 The Port of Blyth plays an important role in the South East Northumberland economy. Originally a coal port, it has been forced, since the decline of the coal industry, to diversify its trade and activities. Whilst the main operations of the port are at present on the Blyth Valley side of the Blyth Estuary, Battleship Wharf on the Wansbeck side of the estuary is the focus for future development and expansion.

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- 5.22 Battleship Wharf, as shown on the Proposals Map, is a large flat site with direct access to deep water. A multi-million pound land reclamation scheme which was completed in 1996 prepared the site for development and created a new deep water quay. Because of its special features and importance to the future of the port, it is important that the site is not wasted on development which could be accommodated elsewhere. Adjacent rail freight lines provide the opportunity to move cargoes by rail.
- 5.23 Battleship Wharf is situated adjacent to the site of the former Blyth Power Station identified in the plan as suitable for employment development (policy EMP 3 refers). The site could present the opportunity for further port expansion in the longer term.

Earth Balance Sustainable Development Project

Policy EMP6

The continued operation and development of the Earth Balance Sustainable Development Project at Bomarsund will be supported. Within the project area, as defined on the Proposals Map, small scale development in classes B1, B2, B8 and D1 (business, industrial and training development) will be permitted provided that it clearly demonstrates environmentally sustainable practices.

- 5.24 Earth Balance is unique project in the area. It was established in the mid 1990's to demonstrate how environmentally sustainable food production and processing can create jobs and provide opportunities for training and education. It also now demonstrates local applications of renewable energy and energy efficiency. In total the project covers approximately 90 hectares of urban fringe land and the majority of it is in agricultural or horticultural use. A number of small businesses and a training unit are concentrated on the site near Bomarsund.
- 5.25 Whilst it is appropriate to maintain support for the initiative, it is also appropriate to ensure that built development is focused in one area to limit the impact on the countryside. To maintain the special status of the initiative, development will not be permitted unless it is a model of good environmental practices such as the use of local products, energy and water efficiency, waste minimization and recycling, sustainable drainage solutions and nature conservation.

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- 5.26 The designated employment area excludes land used principally for agricultural or horticultural purposes. Development here can be controlled by general policies concerning development in the countryside.

Employment generating development in non-designated areas

Policy EMP7

Development in classes B1, B2 and B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (business, industry and storage and distribution uses) will be permitted in areas not designated for employment use provided that:

- a) the site has been previously-developed or the development involves the re-use of an existing building; and***
- b) no harm would be caused to the amenities enjoyed by the users of adjoining or nearby properties; and***
- c) there would be no associated traffic or parking problems; and***
- d) the site is not allocated for other forms of development and the proposals accord with other policies in the plan.***

- 5.27 Sites designated in this plan for employment uses will be the main focus of economic development during the plan period, particularly for larger enterprises. Nonetheless it is possible that some businesses, particularly small concerns, can be carried out in other areas without causing adverse effects such as disturbance through traffic, noise, smell etc. Policy EMP7 demonstrates that such development will be permitted if it would have no adverse environmental effects, occupies a previously-developed site and does not prejudice other proposed development. By allowing the re-use of existing buildings for employment development, the policy will facilitate diversification of the rural economy.

Retention of general employment sites

Policy EMP8

Within designated general employment areas, development other than that in classes B1, B2 and B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (business, industry, storage and distribution) will not be permitted unless:-

- a) the use would generate a significant amount of employment or would have similar physical characteristics to the specified uses; or***
- b) the development would not significantly diminish the range of employment sites or premises available in the local area; or***
- c) the development has significant community benefits which over ride the need to maintain the site or premises for possible future employment development and the use cannot satisfactorily be accommodated elsewhere; or***
- d) the use is ancillary to a main employment use.***

5.28 It is important to the local economy that when an employer is considering investment in the District, a site which meets the company's requirements is readily available. As it cannot be predicted exactly what demands might arise, a range of different types of site must always be available. This means that, even though there may not be prospects of immediate development, employment sites must be protected from development for other purposes. In exceptional circumstances, the loss of a site or premises may not harm the general portfolio because other sites or premises with equivalent characteristics are available in the locality or it has been demonstrated that employment use is impractical. In such cases, non-employment uses may be acceptable.

5.29 Development not judged to fall within the business, industrial or storage and distribution use classes will not normally be acceptable on employment sites for the reason outlined above. Exceptions to the rule might be justified in certain circumstances. Such exceptions could include uses which don't fall within a specific class within the Use Classes Order (known as sui generis uses) but which are employment generating, share similar characteristics to the specified uses, need similar sites and raise similar issues such noise and traffic. Such uses might include uses such as haulage depots,

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builders' and contractors' yards, plant hire, waste services and taxi businesses.

- 5.30 Non employment uses might be acceptable on employment sites if they have benefits to the community and a suitable site cannot be found elsewhere.

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Appendix EMP1

General employment sites and business parks

Site Ref.		Amount of land developed	Amount of land available (hectares)		Number of available sites
			Previously developed land	Greenfield land	
EMP1(a)	Jubilee Industrial Estate, Ashington	17.98	-	-	-
EMP1(b)	North Seaton Industrial Estate	29.5	-	5.6	2
EMP1(c)	North Seaton East	0	-	24.4	9
EMP1(d)	Lintonville, Ashington	2.15	1.51	-	3
EMP1(e)	Wansbeck Business Park, Ashington	8.97	4.38	-	5
EMP1(f)	Green Lane Workshops, Ashington	0.43	-	-	-
EMP1(g)	West Sleekburn Industrial Estate	10.15	-	9.42	1
EMP1(h)	Barrington Industrial Estate, Bedlington	12.79	-	-	-
EMP1(i)	Barrington Road	4.46	-	-	-
EMP1(j)	Welwyn, Bedlington Station	5.57	3.2	-	1
EMP1(k)	Woodhorn Road, Newbiggin by the Sea	-	0.3	-	1
EMP1(l)	Ellington Road ends	0.41	-		1
Total		92.41	9.39	39.42	23
	Total available		48.81		
	Total General Employment Area	141.22			



RETAILING AND TOWN CENTRES

Chapter 6

Introduction

- 6.1 The District's town centres provide a range of shops and other important facilities for local residents. They are important to the local economy and contribute towards the character and identity of the District's settlements. As they are easily accessible by a choice of means of transport and offer opportunities for combined trips, they play an important role in achieving a sustainable pattern of development.
- 6.2 Ashington is the principal town centre in Wansbeck providing a wide range of shops and services. All centres in the District including Ashington compete for local household expenditure with centres outside the District including the regional centres of Newcastle City Centre and the Gateshead Metro Centre, the large retail parks and stores to the south of the District in the North Tyneside area and facilities in other nearby Northumberland towns including Blyth and Morpeth.
- 6.3 Maintaining the vitality and viability of the Wansbeck centres in the face of competition is crucial. The general strategy to achieve this objective, as expressed through plan policies, is to encourage investment and improvement and to ensure that the centres are the focus for significant retail and other community development in the District.

Town centre uses

Policy RTC1

Proposals for major new retail, leisure, entertainment, indoor sports, offices, arts, culture and tourism development will be permitted in the District's town centres provided that the development is appropriate in scale to the role of the town and its catchment.

Proposals for such development outside town centres will only be permitted if the site is within a settlement limit and it can be demonstrated that :

- a) there is a need for the development; and***
- b) it is appropriate in scale to the size and role of the settlement and its catchment; and***

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- c) it will not adversely affect the vitality and viability of an existing town centre; and*
- d) there are no suitable alternative sites available within a town centre; and*
- e) in the case of an out of centre site, there are no suitable alternative sites available on the edge of a town centre; and*
- f) the development will be well served by public transport and can be accessed easily on foot and by cycle*

Proposals for small scale facilities to provide for the needs of a local neighbourhood will be permitted if they are well located in relation to the community they will serve.

- 6.4 By establishing the District's town centres as the focus for a variety of uses which attract large numbers of people, this policy will help to maintain and improve the vitality and viability of the centres and maximise the opportunities for the use of public transport and combined trips.
- 6.5 The town centres are defined on the Proposals Map and comprise Ashington, Bedlington, Bedlington Station, Guide Post and Newbiggin by the Sea. They vary in size and offer differing opportunities for development. Ashington and Bedlington being the largest centres offer the most opportunity. Potential development sites include the Portland Park football ground in Ashington and the Market Place in Bedlington. Most of the District's development needs will be able to be accommodated within the existing centres. It is recognised, however, that there may not be sites in town centres suitable for particular types of development such as stores selling bulky goods and/or firms requiring large showrooms or display areas.
- 6.6 Policy RTC1 applies the 'sequential approach' to the selection of sites for town centre uses advocated by the Government in Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres (PPS6). Only where there are no town centre sites available and a need for development can be demonstrated, will consideration be given to edge of centre sites and only where there are no town centre or edge of centre sites will consideration be given to out of centre sites. Sites should be accessible by a choice of means of transport.
- 6.7 The policy will apply to many uses as well as retailing including leisure and entertainment facilities and the more intensive sport and recreation uses such as cinemas, restaurants, bars, pubs, night-

6 RETAILING AND TOWN CENTRES

clubs, health and fitness centres, sports centres, bingo halls etc. It will also apply to offices (both commercial and those of public bodies) and theatres, museums, hotels and conference facilities.

(Policies RTC2 and RTC3 were deleted from the plan before adoption)

Retail development outside settlements

Policy RTC4

Proposals for retail development outside settlement limits will only be permitted if:

- a) the retail use is small scale and linked to agricultural or horticultural activities on the same holding and primarily involves the sale of produce from the holding; or***
- b) it entails small scale ancillary sales associated with a leisure or visitor facility; and***
- c) the development would not have a detrimental effect on the viability of retail facilities in any nearby settlement.***

6.8 Whilst wishing to strictly control development outside existing towns and villages, the authority recognises the need to foster diversification of the rural economy. Policy RTC4 enables the development of small scale farm shops and shops ancillary to nurseries and other horticultural activities. Whilst expecting shops to be primarily concerned with selling produce from the holding, it is recognised that it may be necessary, in order to maintain a continuous service throughout the year and a sufficiently wide range of goods, for shops to sell some produce originating from beyond the holding. The policy similarly acknowledges the acceptability of small shops at leisure or visitor sites.

6.9 Proposals for development in the Green Belt will also be subject to policy GP2 which seeks to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

Primary shopping area

Policy RTC5

Within the primary shopping area of Ashington, as shown on the Proposals Map, planning permission will be granted for the change of use from shops (Use Class A1) to other uses provided that the development is not judged likely to adversely affect the character or attractiveness of the town centre. In making a judgement, the following factors will be taken into account:

- a) the effect of the proposal on the balance of retail and non-retail frontage in the area; and***
- b) the number of visitors likely to be attracted to the proposed business; and***
- c) the appearance of the development; and***
- d) general trends in the pattern of shopping in the town at the time.***

6.10 The majority of shopping attractions in Ashington, including most of the national or multiple stores are concentrated in the pedestrianised area of Station Road between Lintonville Terrace and John Street. Policy RTC5 seeks to protect the strong retail character and interest of the area and in doing so to maintain the viability and vitality of the centre as a whole.

There is a danger that if existing shops (uses within class A1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987) in the area are replaced by other uses such as amusement centres, betting offices etc., the attractiveness of the town centre to shoppers is diminished. The considerations identified in the policy are key to assessing the impact of a particular change of use.

Food and drink uses

Policy RTC6

Proposals for restaurants and cafes, pubs and bars, hot food take-aways will only be permitted if the development:

- a) is unlikely to have a harmful effect on the living conditions of nearby residents or other land users by way of noise, disturbance, smells, fumes or other nuisance; and***
- b) is unlikely to be detrimental to highway safety or the free flow of traffic.***

- 6.11 Restaurants, pubs, hot food take-aways and other similar uses in Classes A3, A4 and A5 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 provide a valued service to the community. They can also, however, create traffic and amenity problems, particularly if located near to residential property. Such problems can include noise and disturbance caused by car borne customers coming and going, slamming car doors, starting and revving engines and playing car radios. They can also include the smells and fumes associated with cooking.
- 6.12 Harmful impacts can sometimes be minimised by the use of conditions. Conditions might be used, for example, to restrict late evening opening or to require the provision of ventilation and fume extraction equipment, sound proofing etc. In some cases, however, it will not be possible to resolve harmful effects by conditions and a refusal is justified.

Open air retailing

Policy RTC7

Proposals for open air retailing will only be permitted if:

- a) there will be no resulting traffic or parking related problems; and*
- b) there will be no adverse visual impact; and*
- c) there will be no harm to the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties; and*
- d) there will be no harm to the vitality and viability of existing shopping centres.*

6.13 Open air retailing can take a number of forms including outdoor markets, car boot sales and temporary stalls and kiosks. Whilst such activities can add to retailing choice, they can be unsightly and, if poorly located, have a detrimental effect on neighbouring properties, create problems of highway safety and harm established centres. Policy RTC7 seeks to prevent such circumstances arising.

6.14 Proposals for development in the Green Belt will also be subject to policy GP2 which seeks to preserve the openness of the Green Belt

Upper floors of retail premises

Policy RTC8

The conversion to flats of vacant or underused upper floors above shops and other commercial premises in the District's town centres will be encouraged where satisfactory living accommodation can be created.

Development at ground floor level which would result in the loss of existing independent access to upper floors capable of being used as residential accommodation will not be permitted.

6 RETAILING AND TOWN CENTRES

- 6.15 To use the upper floors of town centre buildings for residential purposes can add to housing choice and reduce the need for housing development on greenfield sites. It can also help to ensure that buildings are kept in good repair, increase activity in the centres and aid regeneration. Planning permission is not always required for such change.
- 6.16 To maintain the opportunity to convert upper floors to residential use at a future date, it is appropriate to retain any independent means of access capable of being re-used.

Shop fronts

Policy RTC9

Planning applications for new or replacement shop fronts will be permitted if the design of the shop front relates well in terms of architectural style, scale, proportions, materials and colour to both the building of which it forms part and the surrounding streetscene.

- 6.17 Shop fronts make a large visual contribution to the streetscene. Policy RTC9 seeks to ensure that their design takes into account the local context and contributes towards an attractive, high quality environment.
- 6.18 For the purpose of the policy, the definition of shop front includes the frontages of facilities such as banks, betting offices, cafes, hairdressers, travel agents and laundrettes.

Town Centre development opportunities

Policy RTC10

Within the District's town centres, the following Town Centre Opportunity Sites are designated and shown on the Proposals Map:

RTC10(a) Portland Park, Ashington

RTC10(b) Lintonville Road, Ashington

RTC10(c) Market Place, Bedlington

RTC10(d) Station Street, Bedlington Station

6 RETAILING AND TOWN CENTRES

Development of the designated opportunity sites will be permitted if the following requirements are met:

- a) the character and attractiveness of the town centre will be enhanced by the development; and***
- b) development will take place in a comprehensive rather than piecemeal manner; and***
- c) the development is designed to integrate well with the rest of the town centre; and***
- d) in the case of the Portland Park site, the need for a replacement sports facility will be assessed under the terms of Policy REC3 of the plan.***

- 6.19 To maintain the town centres' attractiveness to customers and to withstand competition from other centres requires continuous improvement and investment. The sites listed in Policy RTC10 have been identified as having the potential to accommodate new investment in town centre facilities including retail development. Because a site is not identified as an opportunity site does not mean it may not also be suitable for development. Other potential sites may arise in the future.
- 6.20 The designated opportunity sites are strategically located within their relevant town centres and it is appropriate to ensure that the opportunity that they present in terms of achieving town centre enhancement and regeneration is not squandered on development which does not fully benefit the town centre. Application of the criteria listed in the policy will help to ensure that benefits are fully maximised. Town centre enhancements to which developments will be expected to contribute will include improvements to public transport facilities and the movement of pedestrians and cyclists and environmental improvements. A public realm design guide for Ashington Town Centre was prepared in March 2004. It contains an appraisal of the town centre and identifies a range of proposals and projects to be sought in the area. Further guidance on development in town centres is included in the Wansbeck Design Guide which is to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 6.21 Portland Park, the home of Ashington Football Club, is extremely well placed to accommodate new development in Ashington Town Centre but it is recognised that the need to replace the sports facility will have to be addressed.

Outdoor Advertisements

Policy RTC11

Consent will be granted for the display of outdoor signs and advertisements provided that:

a) the character or appearance of the building or area will not be adversely affected; and

b) public safety will not be compromised.

- 6.22 Advertisements are essential to commercial activities because they allow businesses to advertise their presence and the goods and services they provide. They can also, make a positive contribution to the character of the areas in which they are displayed, particularly shopping streets. If inappropriately designed or located, however, they can also have a detrimental effect on the visual quality of an area or building. They may, for example, be unduly obtrusive or create a cluttered street scene. In certain circumstances, advertisements can have a harmful effect on highway safety by distracting or confusing drivers.
- 6.23 Key considerations when impacts are assessed are likely to include the size of the advertisement, proposed colours, materials and illumination and the proliferation of other advertisements in the area. Proposals in Conservation Areas are likely to be subject to particular scrutiny.



TRANSPORT

Chapter 7

Introduction

- 7.1 An effective transport network is essential both to the local economy and to residents who require access to employment and local services. Improvement of transport facilities in the District must be considered in the context of national and regional policy for transport which emphasises the need to reduce the damaging environmental impacts of transport at both the local and global level, to integrate land use planning and transport and to reduce the need to travel.
- 7.2 Northumberland County Council is the Highway Authority and Transport Authority responsible for the majority of transport and highway proposals in the District. The Northumberland Local Transport Plan (2006- 2011) sets out the County Council's strategy for transport in the county. Its aim is *'to create and maintain a safe, efficient and integrated transport system which maximises accessibility, minimises the adverse effects of traffic on the environment and communities and facilitates the development of a strong economy and community.'*
- 7.3 Five Local Transport Plan objectives have been developed to achieve the overall transport aim:
- *Widen social inclusion by improving access to work, learning, health and shops.*
 - *Reduce the impact of traffic on air quality.*
 - *Improve safety and minimise the risk of accidents on the highway network.*
 - *Optimise the safety and efficiency of traffic movement and reduce the adverse effects of congestion.*
 - *Contribute to a safe, healthy, attractive and accessible environment.*
- 7.4 Local Plan policies in this chapter seek to assist the implementation of Local Transport Plan aims, objectives and strategy, particularly the promotion of alternative forms of transport to the car.

Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Rail Line

Policy T1

The re-introduction of passenger services on the rail line between Newcastle and Ashington will be supported and promoted. Land which may be required for associated facilities such as stations, bus stops and car parks will be safeguarded. Such sites will include Woodhorn Colliery; Ashington Town Centre; North Seaton Road, Ashington; and Bedlington Station.

- 7.5 Passenger services between Newcastle and Ashington, on the route now known as the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line, were withdrawn in the 1960's but the line has continued to be used by freight traffic and the basic rail infrastructure is still in place. The re-introduction of passenger services will significantly enhance the District's transport network and provide an attractive alternative to the car for many journeys. It will improve access to employment and training opportunities and to other services. Access to regional and national transport networks will also be enhanced.
- 7.6 It is envisaged that the scheme will operate as part of an integrated public transport system for Wansbeck and the neighbouring borough of Blyth Valley including co-ordination with local bus networks, the establishment of park and ride at certain locations and the improvement of pedestrian and cycle routes to and from stations.
- 7.7 The preferred option is a two train per hour service between Newcastle Central and Ashington Central calling at Backworth, Newsham and Bedlington Station. Whilst only two stations would initially be required in Wansbeck i.e. Ashington Central and Bedlington Station, two other potential station sites have been identified for a possible enhancement of the scheme. It is appropriate to safeguard these sites, at Woodhorn Colliery and North Seaton Road as well as the Ashington Central and Bedlington Station sites.
- 7.8 Realisation of the project will require support and investment from a range of bodies and progress to a large extent will depend on external factors relating to the rail industry as a whole. The support of the Department for Transport (Rail) and Network Rail, for example, remains to be achieved for both the scheme in principle and the type of service envisaged. Further work to secure implementation of the proposal will continue to be carried out by the local authorities.

Rail freight

Policy T1a

Proposals for the use of rail transport for freight will be encouraged and supported. Existing and disused railway infrastructure will be safeguarded from development where there is a reasonable prospect of its re-use for freight purposes in the future.

- 7.9 There are substantial environmental benefits, including less pollution and less road congestion, to be gained by moving freight by rail rather than road. To assist the transfer of freight from road to rail, it is appropriate to protect and promote potential connections to the railway network. There is a significant amount of rail freight infrastructure in the District, particularly in the Cambois area, and potential for a number of potential development sites to use rail freight and might also include site(s) for transshipment between rail/lorry/ship.

Provision for buses

Policy T2

Improvements to bus service provision in the District and the introduction of measures to make bus travel more attractive will be sought.

Planning permission for developments which are likely to generate a significant number of journeys will not be permitted unless proposals include new or improved access by bus to the development including the provision of appropriate infrastructure and/or financial support for services.

Developments which affect existing facilities for bus users will not be permitted unless the facilities are retained or enhanced as part of proposals.

- 7.10 Buses are the main form of public transport in the District and are an efficient and sustainable means of travel. Bus travel is particularly important to the large proportion of households in Wansbeck who do not have use of a car by providing access to jobs, shops, schools and other community facilities.

- 7.11 Policy T2 seeks to ensure that as part of major developments, including housing and employment related schemes, appropriate provision for bus travel is made. Facilities which may be required include bus lay-bys, bus stops, shelters, access kerbs, lighting and paths and bus links. Existing facilities will be safeguarded. In applying the policy the Council will take into account the provisions and objectives of the County Bus Strategy, which is a statutory document.

Provision for cyclists

Policy T3

Improved facilities for cycling in the District will be sought. Cyclists will be provided for as part of highway and traffic management schemes and by developers as part of new developments. Provision will include the development of safe and convenient routes and cycle parking facilities.

Developers will be required as a condition of planning permission to provide cycle parking as part of their developments.

- 7.12 Cycling is an environmentally sustainable form of transport and an alternative to the car for short journeys. It is energy efficient and unlike motor traffic, does not cause pollution. It is also a good form of exercise and of benefit to personal health. It can also be an enjoyable leisure activity. It is important that the needs of cyclists are taken into account by developers and when planning applications are determined. The use of cycles can be encouraged and supported in a number of ways including the development of new routes linking housing with employment, shopping, educational and recreational facilities, traffic management measures on the existing road network and the provision of secure cycle parking. The provision of changing and washing facilities at places of employment can facilitate cycling to work. A map showing desirable cycle links in the District is included in Appendix T1.
- 7.13 Local standards for the provision of cycle parking by developers will be published in a future Supplementary Planning Document on parking. Until the adoption of such a document, parking standards produced by Northumberland County Council in its draft 'Northumberland Cycling Strategy-November 2005' will be taken into account when determining planning applications. Relevant extracts are included in Appendix T2.

Provision for walking

Policy T4

Measures to assist and encourage walking will be sought including the development of a comprehensive network of footpaths and footways. Developers will be required to provide safe, convenient and pleasant routes for pedestrians. Proposals to extinguish or divert public rights of way, or close other footpaths, will not normally be supported unless the diversion or creation of an alternative public right of way is no less convenient to the public or there is an equally convenient alternative route.

- 7.14 Walking is an important means of transport and like cycling, an alternative to the car for short journeys. In urban areas, about a third of all journeys are made on foot. Walking is a vulnerable form of transport, however, and it is important that when routes are planned, the risks are minimised, particularly those arising from pedestrian/vehicular conflicts and threats from crime. Critical locations in terms of avoiding pedestrian/vehicular conflict are town centres and outside school premises. Routes should be attractive and interesting to use and take people where they want to go. It is particularly important that the needs of pedestrians are addressed as part of new developments. A map showing desirable walking routes in the District is included in Appendix T1.

Access for people with reduced mobility

Policy T5

An environment which is accessible to all will be sought. Developers will be required to make appropriate provision for those with reduced mobility as part of their developments.

- 7.15 Many people, including wheelchair users, other people with disabilities, the elderly and carers of young children, experience difficulty in moving around. Their difficulties can be eased if appropriate consideration is given to their needs when new developments are planned. Measures which can assist those with reduced mobility include the use of ramps as well as steps to overcome level changes and the provision of larger car parking spaces at any building used for employment or educational purpose or open to the general public. They may also include the provision of dropped kerbs and the use of appropriate tactile paving at road crossing points.

Traffic implications of new development

Policy T6

When planning applications are determined, the volume and character of traffic likely to be generated by and attracted to the proposed development will be considered. Proposals will only be permitted if:

- a) the existing highway network is adequate to cope with any additional traffic resulting from the development or necessary improvement works will be carried out before the development goes ahead; and***
- b) the proposed arrangements for access and egress will allow the safe and efficient movement of vehicles; and***
- c) internal circulation arrangements will be able to absorb vehicular traffic entering the site without queues forming on existing roads and will include measures to achieve safe traffic speeds; and***
- d) adequate provision is made, in terms of safety and operating efficiency, for servicing and deliveries and for other heavy vehicles such as buses and emergency vehicles.***

A Transport Assessment, including a travel plan and an assessment of accessibility where appropriate, will be required to be submitted with proposals for development that will have significant transport implications.

- 7.16 New development can have a considerable impact from the traffic and highways point of view. New developments vary greatly in terms of scale, character and location but all should provide satisfactory arrangements for access, internal circulation and servicing. Policy T6 seeks to ensure that proper consideration is given to such matters as part of the development control process.
- 7.17 Development which generates a lot of traffic will require the most careful consideration and it is important that the necessary information on the number and type of journeys likely to be generated and the measures required to mitigate the impact is available when proposals are being considered. Transport Assessments and, if appropriate, travel plans and assessments of accessibility will be justified in such cases.

Parking provision in new development

Policy T7

Developers should make appropriate provision in their developments for the parking of motor vehicles and motorcycles. The appropriateness of proposed provision will be assessed in terms of the following:

- a) the scale and type of development; and***
- b) accessibility by public transport, on foot and by cycle; and***
- c) the potential for road safety and environmental problems as a result of increased parking demand in the area; and***
- d) the extent and nature of any parking restrictions in force on highways in the area; and***
- e) county-wide maximum parking standards as set out in Appendix T3 (or any local standards published in a future Supplementary Planning Document).***

- 7.18 The county-wide parking standards will be applied pending the preparation of local standards that the District Council intends to publish as a Supplementary Planning Document. The County Council standards are taken from its publication 'Design Guidance for Residential and Commercial Development in Northumberland – January 2006'.
- 7.19 Policy T7 establishes that car parking will be an important consideration when proposals for development are being considered. The availability of car parking has an influence on the means of transport people use for their journeys. To encourage the use of non-car forms of transport, therefore, and to reduce the amount of land taken for car parking, it is appropriate to minimise the amount of parking in new development.
- 7.20 The level of provision appropriate in new developments is likely to vary according to local circumstances including the availability of alternative forms of transport and the availability of alternative car parking facilities in the area including opportunities for shared use. The appropriate level of parking provision should be determined as an integral part of the consideration of the travel implications of the development. Developers should consider the extent to which demand for parking can be managed through on-street parking and

traffic management measures and improvements to public transport and facilities for cycling and walking. Where significant road safety or environmental problems cannot be mitigated by measures to manage parking demand, it may be necessary to require a certain level of parking provision in new development.

Existing car parks

Policy T8

The redevelopment of existing car parks for other uses will be permitted if the proposal will not result in increased demand for on-street parking nearby.

- 7.21 Car parks can take up a great deal of space in urban areas and can provide the opportunity for development for alternative uses including housing. It is important, however, to avoid the loss of car parks where this could lead to a shortfall in parking space in the area and lead to traffic congestion on nearby streets.

Road schemes

Policy T9

Road schemes which ameliorate serious environmental and/or safety problems or which contribute towards economic regeneration will be promoted and supported.

Development which would prejudice implementation of the following road schemes, as illustrated on the Proposals Map, will not be permitted:

- T9(a) upgrading of Reiverdale Road, Ashington to create a new link road between the A197 Rotary Parkway in Ashington and Woodhorn Road***
- T9(b) upgrading of the East Sleekburn junction on the A189 South East Northumberland Spine Road***
- T9(c) widening of the C404 Barrington Road, Bedlington***
- T9(d) widening and realignment of Wellhead Dene Road, Ashington***
- T9(e) construction of the Pegswood Bypass***
- T9(f) the A192 Hartford Bridge Improvement Scheme***

T9(g) the A197 Woodhorn to Newbiggin Link Road

- 7.22 Policy T9 is consistent with the objectives of the Northumberland Local Transport Plan which establish that road improvements and extensions of the highway network should only take place where necessary to assist economic and community regeneration, improve road safety, reduce unacceptable environmental impacts on local communities and enable new development. The road schemes protected by the policy meet Local Transport Plan objectives.
- 7.23 It is envisaged that Reiverdale Road (T9(a)) will be widened on the west side and extended northwards to provide an alternative all purpose route for traffic between Woodhorn Road and the A197. The new route will enable traffic volume to be reduced and conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles to be removed on Lintonville Road to the west. Improvement of the pedestrian environment in the Lintonville area is very important in terms of the enhancement of Ashington Town Centre.
- 7.24 The East Sleekburn junction on the A189 (T9(b)) is at present the only direct link from the A189 to sites and premises in the Cambois employment area including the north side of Blyth Harbour. The interchange is grade separated but with a single bridge requiring heavy vehicles to negotiate 90 degree angles to get on or off slip roads. The provision of a second bridge and a roundabout will improve the junction and allow the elimination of the sharp bend joining Brock Lane to the existing bridge. The upgrading will assist further economic development in the Cambois area.
- 7.25 Barrington Road (T9(c)) is the only access route to the Barrington Industrial Estate. A high proportion of the traffic on the route is heavy traffic but the restricted width of the carriageway makes it difficult for two heavy vehicles to pass each other. Widening of the road between Choppington Road (the A1068) and the C404 Link Road is important to further economic development at Barrington as well as road safety.
- 7.26 Wellhead Dene Road (T9(d)) is the most direct link between the large residential areas of South West Ashington and areas to the west including the A1068 and Morpeth. The road takes the form of a country lane, however, with a series of bends which restrict forward visibility, particularly through Wellhead Dene. Improvements are required to improve road safety.

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- 7.27 A small section of the proposed Pegswood Bypass (T9(e)) falls within Wansbeck District. The scheme is expected to relieve the village of Pegswood by as much as 80% of total traffic. As well as reducing the impact of through traffic on the village, the scheme will also provide faster and more reliable journeys between Ashington and Morpeth and the A1. Construction is programmed to start during 2005.
- 7.28 The A192 Hartford Bridge Improvement Scheme (T9(f)) is identified as a 'Protected Improvement Line' in the Northumberland Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011. It is a long term proposal of Northumberland County Council (the Highway Authority) to bypass a stretch of road which includes a number of sharp bends and gradients close to the desirable maximum. The new section of road would cross part of the Plessey Woods Country Park and require the construction of a new bridge 50 metres upstream from the existing bridge at Hartford Bridge. Much of the new section of road would be in a cutting. Part of this scheme is within Blyth Valley Borough. The Local Transport Plan indicates that further evaluation is required before a decision regarding implementation of the scheme can be made but in the mean time it should be protected from development.
- 7.29 The A197 Woodhorn to Newbiggin Link Road (T9(g)) is identified as a 'Protected Improvement Line' in the Northumberland Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011. It is a long term proposal of Northumberland County Council (the Highway Authority), to construct a new direct road link from the A189/A197 Woodhorn Roundabout to the B1334 at Front Street, Newbiggin by the Sea. It involves construction of a new single carriageway road along the line of the former Ashington to Newbiggin by the Sea railway. The new road would remove a proportion of traffic from the existing A197 and B1334 approaches to the town and improve the environment for frontage properties as well as creating a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists. The Local Transport Plan indicates that the scheme meets Local Transport Plan objectives, has a positive appraisal and should retain protected status.

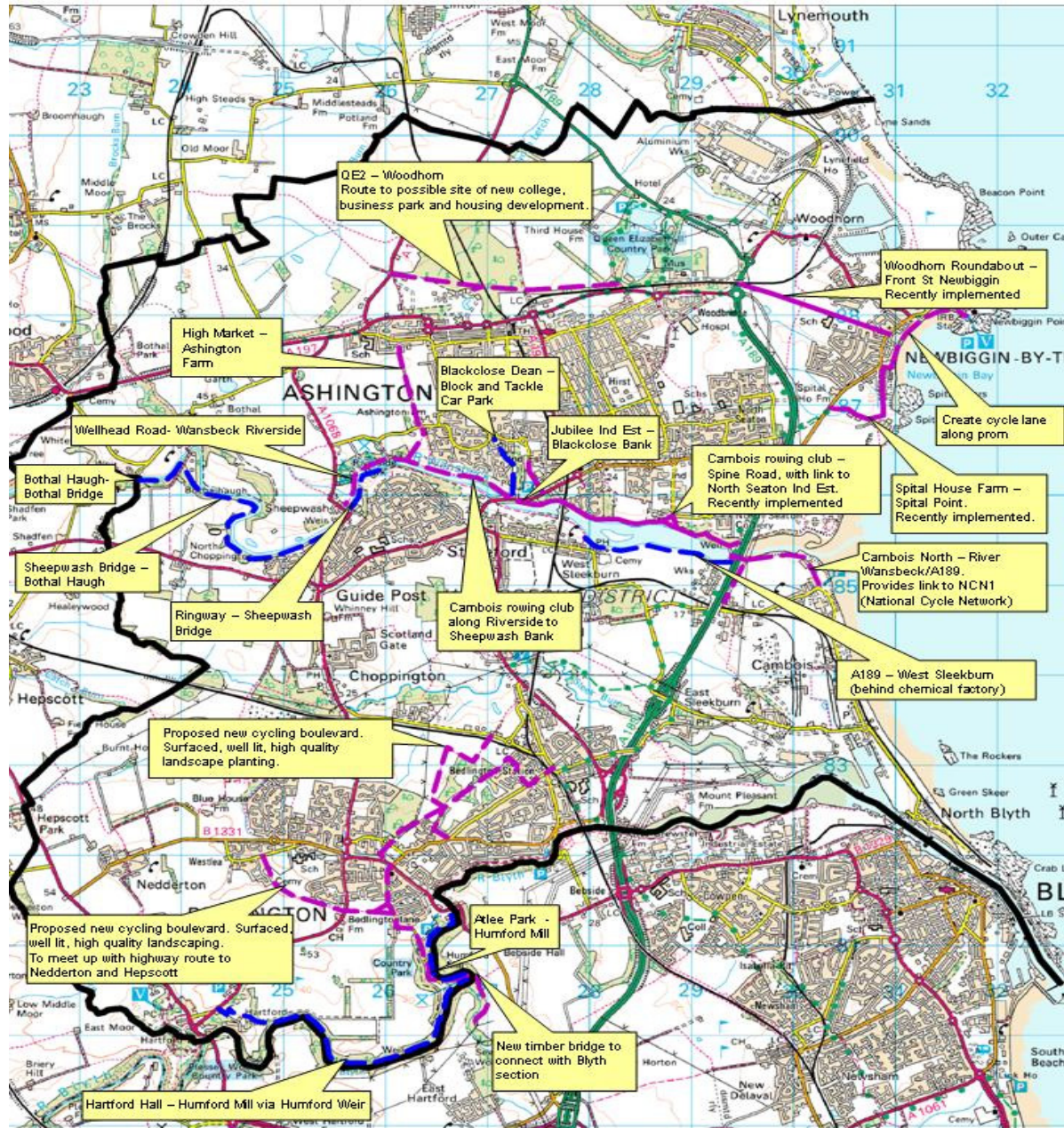
Traffic management

Policy T10

The implementation of traffic management measures will be supported and promoted where there is evidence of conflict between vehicles and other road users and/or traffic congestion.

- 7.30 Well designed traffic management measures can contribute to local plan objectives in a number of ways. They can enhance the quality of the environment by improving road safety and reducing noise and local air pollution. They can also promote the use of non-car modes of transport by allowing public transport to operate more efficiently and improving conditions for walkers and cyclists. Town centres can benefit from traffic management schemes which give priority to pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7.31 Examples of traffic management measures include speed reduction measures, new pedestrian crossings, pedestrian and cycle priority schemes, junction improvements, carriageway narrowing etc.

Appendix T1: Map showing desirable cycling and walking routes.



Legend

Desirable new walking links (not currently public rights of way – need upgrading)
 Desirable new cycling links (currently footpaths requiring upgrading)
 Cycling links recently implemented
 All cycling routes are also permitted walking routes.



Appendix T2: Extract from the draft Northumberland Cycling Strategy

To be read in conjunction with Policy T3

Annex 1: Cycle Parking Standards

The location and design of cycle parking facilities are crucial in terms of their effectiveness. The document 'Cycle-friendly Infrastructure', published jointly by the Department of Transport, Institute of Highways and Transportation, Cyclists touring Club and Bicycle Association, should be consulted for more detail. Cycle parking spaces should also be located as close as possible to the main entrance(s) to any facility.

Minimum standards for cycle parking are set out in Table 1. Should it appear that, in particular circumstances, this provision may be inadequate to meet the demand for cycle parking then additional provision may be required.

In central areas of the County's main towns, and in some other more local centres, provision for cycle parking for specific developments, particularly long stay parking may not be appropriate. In such circumstances a combined payment towards the provision of more general cycle parking facilities may be required.

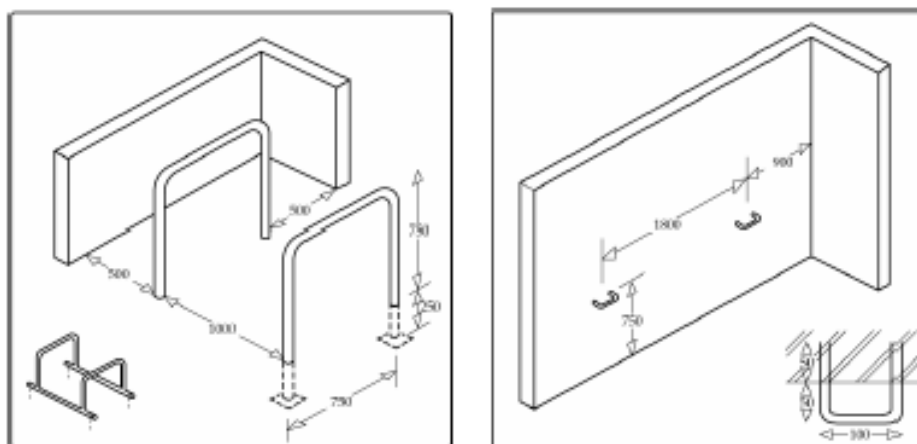
Short stay cycle parking

Catering for visitors expected to stay for under two hours, it is recommended that short stay facilities should be sites as close as possible to the entrance to the building they serve. They should be in a secure location where they can be overlooked from the building or by passers by. They should not block the footpath, and should be grouped together and signed.

Facilities should be easy to use and must minimise the potential of damage to the bike; stands which support the bike by the wheel only are not acceptable. 'Sheffield' type stands or wall mounted loops are the most appropriate designs. A Sheffield stand should be 750mm high and longer than 700mm, and if at least 1000mm exists between stands then each can accommodate two bikes. Wall loops should be at a height of 750mm, project 50mm from the wall, and be at least 1800mm apart (Figure 1).

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Figure 1: Cycle parking stands – suggested dimensions



Long stay cycle parking

Catering for commuters or visitors expected to stay about 2 hours or more, a secure position is more important than accessibility, although both would be ideal. A roof or other protection from the weather is essential. Suitable designs include cycle lockers, or areas set aside within buildings, or in supervised car parks. They will often incorporate their own locking device, which may be money, token or key operated. Their location should be well signed.

Cycle Parking – Minimum Standards

Land Use

1. Hotels/motels/guest houses

2. Restaurants/cafes/public houses/licensed clubs/hotel bars open to non-residents

Where hotel restaurants and bars are open to the public category 2 may also apply.

3. Fast food/hot food take-away shops

4. Retail

a) general retailing, supermarkets under 4000m² GFA, superstores/hypermarkets over 4000m² GFA, non-food retail warehouses, DIY stores, garden centres

Requirements for general retailing may be reduced/eliminated for small shops serving purely local needs, or in local shopping centres where alternative parking is available.

Cycle parking

Minimum provision

1 space per 8 bedrooms

1 space per 50m² public area (4 spaces minimum)

1 space per 200m² GFA (minimum of 4 spaces)

1 space per 200m² GFA (minimum of 4 spaces)

5. Cash & Carry warehouses	Cycle parking 4 spaces
6. Storage and distribution warehouses	2 spaces
7. Industry	1 space per 500m ² GFA (min 4 spaces)
8. Offices	1 space per 300m ² GFA
9. Car sales	2 spaces minimum
10. Garages/service stations/car repair workshops	1 space per 200m ² GFA (min 2 spaces)
11. Education	
a) schools	1 space per 5 pupils
b) colleges of further education (e.g. university, teacher training and technical colleges)	1 space per 5 students
12. Places of worship	1 space per 100 seats (min 4 spaces)
13. Places of entertainment: cinemas, theatres, bingo halls, concert halls (including public halls with fixed seating)	1 space per 100 m ² floorspace (min 4 spaces)
14. Community centres and other public halls (including public halls without fixed seating)	1 space per 100m ² floorspace (min 4 spaces)
15. Art galleries, museums and exhibition halls	1 space per 300m ² of public floorspace (min 4 spaces)
16. Hospitals	6 spaces per 100 beds
17. Clinics, health centres, doctors, dentists, veterinary surgeons	1 space per 3 consulting rooms (min 2 spaces)
18. Libraries	1 space per 500m ² GFA (min 4 spaces)
19. Sports facilities	1 space per 20 patrons able to use facilities at any one time (min 4 spaces)
20. Touring caravan and camping sites	1 space per 10 tent spaces (min 4 spaces)

Cycle storage

- 11 The reduced amount of provision for car parking envisaged in future housing development means that they are less likely to have spare garage space for storage of cycles. Space should be provided space for storage of cycles for those living in the house, as well as visitors parking. Cycle storage may be provided in a number of ways, for example through dedicated cycle lockers, or as part of other storage facilities such as garages. In general, residential development should provide a minimum of at least 1 cycle parking space per dwelling. The requirements for cycle

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storage and parking for special residential uses are set out in Table 1 below.

Parking guidelines – special residential uses

	Minimum Cycle Parking Provision
Dwelling	1 space per dwelling
Elderly/nursing home	6 spaces per 100 residents
Sheltered accommodation	1 space per 5 flats
Semi retirement accommodation (where units are self contained)	1 space per 5 flats
Purpose built student accommodation	1 space per 5 students
Community housing for the disabled or other special types of hostel	Assessed on individual circumstances

Appendix T3: Maximum Parking Standards

This table should be read in conjunction with Policy T7. The figures in column A indicate maximum provision in normal circumstances. The figures in column B indicate maximum provision in areas such as town centres with good public transport access and/or availability of public parking.

A. Housing developments

		In Curtilage Parking		Communal Parking	
		A	B	A	B
General Purpose	1-2 Bed	2	1	1.5	0.75
	3-4 Bed	3	2	2.5	1
	5 + Bed	4	3	3	2
Aged Persons Non-Sheltered	Non Sheltered	1	1	1	0.5
		A		B	
Aged Persons Sheltered Housing	Warden Resident staff Residents Visitors	1 per staff 1/4 residents 1/4		1 1/2 staff 1/6 1/6	
Residential Homes/Care Homes	Staff Residents Visitors Operational	1/1 peak staff levels 1/4 bedrooms 1/4 bedrooms 50 sq m min		1 + 1/2 staff 1/8 bedrooms 1/8 bedrooms 50 sq m min	
Day Care	Staff Patients Operational	1/1 1/10 50 sq m min		1/2 1/20 50 sq m min	

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B. Commercial developments

MEDICAL		A	B
Hospitals	Staff Out Patients Visitors Operational	1/3 1/3 beds 1/3 beds 200 sq m min + 100 sq m per 1000 sq m floor space	1/5 1/5 beds 1/10 beds 200 sq m min + 100 sq m per 1000 sq m floor space
Clinics/Surgeries	Medical Staff Admin Staff Patients Operational	1/1 1/3 4/consulting room 50 sq m min	1/1 1/5 2/consulting room 50 sq m min
EDUCATIONAL		A	B
At Schools and Playgroups it is essential to provide space for parents and contract buses to set down/pick up pupils. The visitor provision shown below includes an allowance for this facility.			
Nursery Schools, playgroups etc.	Staff Visitors Operational	1/1 1/5 children 50 sq m min	1/1.5 1/10 children 50 sq m min
First Schools	Teachers Visitors Operational	1/1 1/5 pupils 50 sq m min	1/1 1/10 pupils 50 sq m min
Middle Schools	Teachers Visitors Operational	1/1 1/10 pupils 50 sq m min	1/1 1/20 pupils 50 sq m min

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EDUCATIONAL CONT'D	A	B
High Schools Teachers Staff Visitors/Students Operational	1/1 1/3 1/20 students 50 sq m min	1/2 1/5 1/40 students 50 sq m min
Colleges Lecturers Staff Visitors/Students Operational	1/1 1/3 1/5 students 50 sq m min	1/2 1/5 1/10 students 50 sq m min
RETAIL	A	B
Shops (up to 1000 sq m) Staff Customers Operational	1/100 sq m gross 1/20 sq m gross 150 sq m	1/150 sq m gross 1/30 sq m gross 100 sq m
Supermarkets (over 1000 sq m) Staff Customers Operational	1/100 sq m gross 8/100 sq m gross 600 sq m	1/150 sq m gross 8/100 sq m gross 600 sq m
Non-Food Retail (over 1000 sq m) Staff Customers Operational	1/100 sq m gross 4/100 sq m gross 600 sq m	1/200 sq m gross 4/100 sq m gross 600 sq m
OFFICES	A	B
Staff Visitors Operational	1/30 sq m gross 1/150 sq m gross 50 sq m min	1/50 sq m gross 1/300 sq m gross 50 sq m min

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INDUSTRIAL		A	B
Warehouses	Staff	1/200 sq m gross	1/300 sq m gross
	Operational up to 1000 sq m over 1000 sq m gross floor space	150 sq m 600 sq m	100 sq m 600 sq m
Industry	Staff	1/50 sq m gross	1/75 sq m gross
	Operational	150 sq m min + 100 sq m per 100 sq m	100 sq m min + 70 sq m per 1000 sq m
Car Repairs	Staff	1/40 sq m gross	1/50 sq m gross
	Customers Operational (for breakdown truck)	3/50 sq m Service Area 50 sq m min	3/50 sq m Service Area 50 sq m min
SERVICE INDUSTRIES		A	B
Hotel/Guest Houses	Staff	1/3 staff	1/5 staff
	Guests	1/1 bedroom	1/1 bedroom
	Restaurant	1/5 sq m	1/10 sq m
	Bar	1/2.5 sq m	1/5 sq m
	Function Rooms	1/5 sq m	1/20 sq m
	Operational	50 sq m min	50 sq m min
Restaurant	Staff	1/3 staff	1/5 staff
	Customers	1/5 sq m	1/10 sq m
	Bar	1/2.5 sq m	1/5 sq m
	Operational	50 sq m min	50 sq m min
Public House	Staff	1/3 staff	1/5 staff
	Customers	1/2.5 sq m	1/5 sq m
	Operational	50 sq m min	50 sq m min
	If there are rooms to let or function rooms to let consider as hotel		
MISCELLANEOUS		A	B
Places of Worship		1+1/10 seats min 10	1+1/25 seats min 5
	Operational	50 sq m min	50 sq m min
Assembly Halls	Staff	1/2	1/5
	Visitors	1/5 sq m	1/20 sq m
	Operational	50 sq m min	50 sq m min

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Garages Car Sales Staff Sales and Customers Operational	1/40 sq m gross 1/200 sq m of Display Area 50 sq m min	1/50 sq m gross 1/240 sq m of Display Area 50 sq m min
Libraries Staff Customers Operational	1/2 staff 1/30 sq m 50 sq m	1/3 staff 1/30 sq m 50 sq m min



RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

Chapter 8

Introduction

- 8.1 Participation in sport and physical activity is important for all the residents of Wansbeck, not least because of its health benefits. It is an objective of the Local Plan to ensure that the recreational needs of residents can be adequately provided for. Policies in this chapter of the plan address provision for recreation and open space in the District. They cover both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities including playing fields, children's play areas, sports centres, parks and allotments. Opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding and for access to the coast and countryside are also considered.
- 8.2 The main feature of the strategy expressed through the policies is the identification and safeguarding of those existing recreational facilities in the District which are judged to be most important and most valued. They include the District's town and country parks and major sports grounds. Policies also seek to control development on other non-designated recreational areas and to control new recreational development

Safeguarding existing parks and open spaces

Policy REC1

A network of strategically important parks and open spaces is designated and shown on the Proposals Map.

Permission will not be granted for development on a designated site unless:

- a) the predominantly open character of the area is maintained; and***
- b) the development is incidental and beneficial to the recreational or amenity use of the land.***

- 8.3 The designated network includes those areas of the District judged to make the most significant contribution towards meeting the community's needs for open space. Whilst safeguarding the spaces for the current and future residents of Wansbeck, the policy acknowledges that in certain circumstances development may be justified e.g. where the development is small scale and related to the recreational use of the space such as changing facilities, club houses etc.

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- 8.4 Sites identified make an important contribution in terms of one or more of the following functions:
- the visual character or image of the District or a neighbourhood
 - provision of outdoor sports and play
 - nature conservation
 - provision for informal recreational activities
 - green lung or corridor
- 8.5 The majority of spaces are publicly owned. They include both town and country parks including a number of areas such as the Queen Elizabeth II Park, Bedlingtonshire Golf Course and Gallagher Park which were created in the 1970's and 80's as part of schemes to reclaim former deep and opencast mining sites. A number of the sporting facilities were originally provided for and by men working at the many collieries in the area and date back much earlier in the century.
- 8.6 Sites included in the network are listed in Appendix REC1.

Policy REC2

Planning permission for development on open spaces not designated as being of strategic importance will only be granted if there is shown to be a surplus of open space by way of an assessment of open space needs and opportunities in the area that there will be no significant loss to the community in terms of either:

- a) visual amenity; or***
 - b) provision for play and recreation; or***
 - c) nature conservation; or***
 - d) use for community events***
- 8.7 As well as playing fields, sports pitches and other areas for organised sport, open spaces include parks, gardens and areas used for informal recreation. They are important local resources and essential to all communities. Once built upon, open space is likely to be lost to the community forever. A cautious approach to any proposals involving the loss of space is therefore necessary i.e. not just proposals involving spaces judged to be of strategic district wide importance (the REC1 sites).

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- 8.8 Policy REC2 will apply to all non REC1 sites including school playing fields, small sites of more local importance and privately managed or owned sports grounds. Any proposal judged to lead to a deficiency, now or in the future, of open space in an area will be resisted including space which is not publicly accessible but which is considered to make a valuable contribution to the amenity of an area.
- 8.9 When determining applications involving the loss of open space, the authority will have regard to the most recent local assessment of open space needs and opportunities. An open space will not be judged surplus to requirements unless the assessment indicates that it is not required to meet needs for any form of open space.
- 8.10 Sites covered by this policy are listed in a schedule in Appendix REC1 and shown on the Proposals Map.

Policy REC3

Planning permission for developments on playing fields will not be permitted unless:

- a) the proposed development is ancillary to the use of the site as a playing field and the quantity or quality of facilities and their use is not adversely affected; or***
 - b) alternative playing field provision of equivalent or better quantity and quality is provided in a suitable location prior to the commencement of development; or***
 - c) the proposed development is for another indoor or outdoor facility, the benefit of which would outweigh the loss of the existing facility; or***
 - d) an open space assessment has been undertaken which demonstrates that the proposal will not result in a deficiency of playing fields or any other form of open space now or in the foreseeable future,***
- 8.11 Policy REC3 seeks to protect existing playing fields which contribute to meeting local needs for open space. It establishes that a key consideration when planning applications involving playing fields are determined will be the most up-to-date assessment of open space needs and opportunities in the District. Such a study is currently in the course of preparation. Playing fields will not be judged surplus to requirements unless confirmed by this or any future study.

8 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

- 8.12 Sites covered by this policy are listed in a schedule in Appendix REC1 and shown on the Proposals Map.

Policy REC4

Development resulting in the loss of allotments will not be permitted unless replacement allotments of equal quality and convenience are provided in advance or it can be demonstrated that:

- a) there is no longer a need for the allotments; and***
- b) the allotments are not required to make good any deficiency in other forms of open space; and***
- c) they are not essential to local amenity or nature conservation.***

- 8.13 Allotment gardens are a valued form of open space in the District which should be afforded protection. In providing opportunities for people to grow their own produce, allotments contribute to the promotion of sustainability and good health. As with other forms of open space, once developed they are lost for ever. Policy REC 4 sets out the exceptional circumstances when it may be appropriate for allotments to be built upon. Assessments of open space needs in the District will be an important consideration. Sites covered by this policy are listed in a schedule in Appendix REC1 and shown on the Proposals Map.

Provision of new facilities

Policy REC5

Development which will improve provision for outdoor sports and recreation will be permitted on sites within settlement limits (as defined on the Proposals Map) provided that the facility will be accessible by a choice of means of transport.

Proposals for development on sites outside settlements will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:

- a) an alternative site is not available within a settlement; and***
- b) the development would not be visually intrusive and would not harm the character or appearance of the area; and***
- c) the facility will be accessible by a choice of means of transport.***

- 8.14 The provision of additional recreational facilities can have major benefits to the community. Policy REC5 gives preference to developments within existing urban areas. If a site within a settlement cannot be found, it seeks to ensure that development only proceeds if it can be integrated into its countryside or other open setting.
- 8.15 There is a diversity of recreational uses and some facilities can assimilate into countryside situations more easily than others. The components of a project and its details are particularly important when the acceptability of a proposal in landscape terms is being assessed. Issues often associated with recreational projects include the amount of hard surfaces proposed (including car parks and artificial playing surfaces), the scale, siting and design of any ancillary buildings or structures, whether fencing, flood lighting or changes in land form are proposed and the measures proposed to minimise the impact.
- 8.16 To accord with the objectives of the Local Plan to minimise the need to travel, it is important that new facilities can be accessed by a choice of means of transport.

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(Policy REC6 was deleted from the plan before adoption).

Provision by developers

Policy REC7

Planning permission will not be granted for residential development unless the developer meets the anticipated need generated by the development for additional indoor and outdoor sports provision.

If provision can more appropriately be met by either new or improved facilities off-site, the developer can enter into an agreement to make a financial contribution towards a communal fund established by the local planning authority for sports provision and improvement. Details of a commuted payments scheme will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

- 8.17 New housing development increases local needs for sports provision and it is appropriate that developers provide for this need. The Wansbeck Playing Pitch Strategy (September 2002) considered supply and demand for playing pitches and other outdoor facilities and concluded that a local standard of 0.8 hectares of playing pitches per 1000 people should be adopted for planning purposes. At an average occupancy rate of 2.29 people per dwelling (as indicated by the 2001 Census), the standard requires the provision of 18m² per dwelling. This local standard may be revised in the near future. The Playing Pitch Strategy is in the process of review as part of an assessment of open space, outdoor sport and recreation in the District. In any event, the most recently developed standards will be applied when developers' proposals for sports provision are assessed.
- 8.18 In certain circumstances, it will not be appropriate for the developer to meet needs on site. Such circumstances include where the site is of insufficient size to make beneficial provision and other cases where improvement of existing facilities off-site is desirable. To provide clarity for developers, details of a scheme for financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision will be prepared and published in a Supplementary Planning Document.

Children's play

Policy REC8

Planning permission will not be granted for residential development unless the developer meets the anticipated need generated by the development for additional children's play facilities. Play areas should form an integral part of the design of the development taking into account local circumstances such as the type and scale of development proposed and the extent of existing provision in the area. They must be designed and located to provide for safe and constructive play and avoid nuisance to neighbouring dwellings.

If provision can more appropriately be met by either new or improved facilities off-site, the developer can enter into an agreement to make a financial contribution towards a communal fund established by the local planning authority for pitch provision and improvement. Details of a commuted payments scheme will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

- 8.19 Communal play areas are important because they give young children the opportunity to begin to socialise and to develop physical skills. The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) recommends a standard for play provision of 0.8 hectares per 1000 people. At an average occupancy rate of 2.29 people per dwelling in Wansbeck (as indicated by the 2001 Census), the standard requires the provision of 18m² per dwelling. A local standard of provision is being developed at the present time as part of an assessment of open space, outdoor sport and recreation in the District. In due course, this local standard will be applied when developers' proposals for the provision of children's play are assessed.
- 8.20 In certain circumstances, it may not be appropriate for the developer to meet needs on site. Such circumstances include where the site is of insufficient size to make beneficial provision and other cases where improvement of existing facilities off-site is desirable. To provide clarity for developers, details of a scheme for financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision will be prepared and published in a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 8.21 New housing developments should be designed from the outset to accommodate the play needs of children who might live in the new housing area. When determining planning applications, the Council will require developers to demonstrate how they propose to provide for play. In developments of under 50 new dwellings, the most appropriate form of provision may be a single equipped play area for

toddlers and young children with space for informal play. In larger developments, a variety of play opportunities for children of different age groups will normally be sought. Safety will be a major consideration; play areas should be overlooked by neighbouring dwellings but not be so close as to provide disturbance.

Caravan Sites

Policy REC9

Proposals for new static holiday caravan sites, touring caravan sites, holiday chalet or cabin developments and camping sites will not be permitted in the Green Belt. Proposals for sites elsewhere in the District will only be permitted if:

- a) the development would not be visually intrusive; and***
- b) it would not harm the character or appearance of the countryside or coastline.***

- 8.22 Self catering holidays are popular and can bring economic benefits to an area. Caravans are not attractive, however, and can be very intrusive in the landscape.
- 8.23 The above policy seeks to protect the countryside from harmful developments and to ensure that developments only take place where they can satisfactorily be assimilated into the local landscape. It establishes that developments are inappropriate in the Green Belt. Factors such as the topography of the proposed site, existing and proposed landscaping and the design and layout of the development will be particularly important considerations when the likely impact on the character and appearance of sites elsewhere in the District are being assessed. Developments in open locations such as the undeveloped coast or which intrude into the local landscape or views are unlikely to be acceptable in terms of the policy.

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Policy REC10

Extensions to or developments within existing holiday caravan and camping sites in the District will only be permitted if:

- a) the development would be no more visually intrusive than existing and it would not harm the character or appearance of the countryside or coastline; and***
- b) the standard of amenity enjoyed by visitors would not be reduced.***

- 8.24 There are three holiday caravan sites in the District. Two static caravan developments have a coastal location (Sandy Bay and Church Point) and the third is located within the Wansbeck Riverside Park, adjacent to the River Wansbeck. The three sites have been established for many years and the Council recognises their importance to the local economy. All sites are, however, located in important landscape areas of the district.
- 8.25 The policy recognises that the caravan site owners may wish from time to time to improve their developments and introduce additional pitches and/or facilities. It seeks to ensure that when proposals for such are being considered, the impact on the local landscape and the quality of holiday likely to be enjoyed by visitors are determining factors.
- 8.26 The policy recognises that in exceptional circumstances, well designed proposals for extension of the site involving the removal of caravans from existing parts of the development combined with landscaping and screening and changes in internal site arrangements could result in an overall less intrusive development.

Access to the countryside and coast

Policy REC11

Improvements to the network of recreational footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways in the District will be sought. When new routes are planned, the impact on existing uses and interests will be taken into account and potential harm minimised.

Existing routes will be protected.

- 8.27 Walking, cycling and horse riding are popular, informal leisure activities. To support these important activities requires the provision of safe routes which link together and enable access to areas of open space, the countryside and coast.
- 8.28 The basic framework of a route network exists, mainly in the form of public rights of way, but there are gaps and weaknesses, particularly for cyclists and horse riders. Improvements can be achieved in a number of ways including through planning decisions and agreements with landowners. There is a statutory duty on the Highway Authority to prepare a Rights of Way Improvements Plan for its area setting out how it proposes to improve public rights of way for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and people with mobility problems. The Plan will provide the framework by which improvements to the network of public rights of way will be achieved in the District. It will be complemented by the Access for All Strategy for South East Northumberland produced by Greening for Growth and local authority partners.

Cultural and tourism opportunities

Policy REC12

Development which improves tourism and cultural interest in the District will be encouraged and supported.

The focus for the improvement of tourist attractions and facilities will be:

- a) the continued development of the Woodhorn project (see Proposals Map); and***
- b) the improvement of existing recreational assets including the country parks and coast; and***
- c) public realm improvements in towns such as Ashington, Bedlington and Newbiggin by the Sea***

8.29 Wansbeck is not a major holiday destination but it does have strength in its ability to attract the day visitor. The main opportunities for the development of tourism in the District lie in increasing the attractiveness of the area as a day visitor destination.

8.30 The principal tourism asset in the District is 'Woodhorn' – the Northumberland Museum, Archives and Country Park. The visitor attraction and research destination is based on the remaining pit buildings at the former Woodhorn Colliery. Its main feature is a landmark new building accommodating displays about the culture and mining heritage of the area, galleries for travelling exhibitions and events and new facilities for the Northumberland County Records and Archives including a study centre. A new Tourist Information Point is also included. Further improvements to Woodhorn are envisaged as the focus for the development of tourism in the District.

8.31 The District's country parks (Wansbeck Riverside Park, Bedlington Country Park and the QE II Country Park) and its coast are also recognised as significant assets to tourism. The improvement of user facilities here will help both to attract the day visitor and improve the quality of life for local people. Investment in general environmental improvements in the main settlements including improved landscaping, play areas, street furniture, public art, signage etc. will also contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the area to visitors and assist the tourism industry.

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- 8.32 Tourism must be developed in a sustainable manner in the same way as other forms of development and only that which is environmentally acceptable and in line with other policies in the plan will be permitted.

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Appendix REC1 Schedule of open spaces

		Play areas	Allotments	Amenity green spaces	Civic spaces	Playing fields	Other outdoor sports facilities	Parks, formal gardens & country parks	Relevant Policies
OS1	Queen Elizabeth II Country Park						√	√	REC1
OS2	Bedlington Country Park	√						√	REC1
OS3	Wansbeck Riverside Park	√		√		√		√	REC1 REC3
OS4	Plessey Woods Country Park							√	REC1
OS5	Gallagher Park, Bedlington	√				√			REC1 REC3
OS6	Doctor Pit Woodland			√					REC1
OS7	Newbiggin Golf Course						√		REC1
OS8	Bedlingtonshire Golf Course						√		REC1
OS9	South Park, Bedlington			√					REC1
OS10	West Lea Open Space	√		√		√			REC1 REC 3
OS11	Jennings Field, Bedlington Station	√				√			REC1 REC 3
OS12	Hirst Park, Ashington	√				√	√	√	REC1 REC 3
OS13	People's Park, Ashington					√		√	REC1 REC 3
OS14	Ashington Cricket Ground					√			REC1 REC 3
OS15	Memorial Park, Newbiggin by the Sea							√	REC1
OS16	Doctor Pit Park, Bedlington	√				√	√	√	REC1 REC 3

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		Play areas	Allotments	Amenity green spaces	Civic spaces	Playing fields	Other outdoor sports facilities	Parks, formal gardens & country parks	Relevant Policies
OS17	Stakeford and Bomarsund Welfare					√	√		REC1 REC 3
OS18	Ashington Recreation Ground					√			REC1 REC 3
OS19	Newbiggin Welfare					√			REC1 REC 3
OS20	Guide Post Miners Welfare					√			REC1 REC 3
OS21	Milburn Park, Newbiggin by the Sea						√	√	REC1 REC 3
OS22	The Paddock, North Seaton	√				√		√	REC1 REC 3
OS23	Cleasewell Hill Park, Guide Post	√				√		√	REC1 REC 3
OS24	Cambois Foreshore			√				√	REC1
OS25	Grange Park, Bedlington Station	√						√	REC1
OS26	Collingwood Playing Fields, Newbiggin by the Sea			√		√			REC1 REC 3
OS27	Church Point, Newbiggin by the Sea			√					REC1
OS28	Wembley Terrace Playing Field, Cambois					√			REC1 REC 3
OS29	Selbourne Terrace Playing Field, Cambois	√				√			REC1 REC 3
OS30	Northfield Playing Field, Cambois	√		√					REC1
OS31	Spittal Open Space, Newbiggin by the Sea	√		√					REC1

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		Play areas	Allotments	Amenity green spaces	Civic spaces	Playing fields	Other outdoor sports facilities	Parks, formal gardens & country parks	Relevant Policies
OS32	Newbiggin Sports Centre Fields	√		√		√		√	REC1 REC 3
OS33	Northumberland College, Ashington					√			REC 2 REC3
OS34	North Blyth Play Area	√							REC 2
OS35	Wembley Play Area, Cambois	√							REC 2
OS36	Church Avenue Play Area, West Sleekburn	√							REC 2
OS37	Cambridge Road Play Area, Stakeford	√							REC 2
OS38	Eastgreen Swings, Choppington	√		√					REC 2
OS39	Westgreen Toddlers Play Area, Choppington	√		√					REC 2
OS40	The Grange Play Area, West Nedderton	√							REC 2
OS41	Shire Farm Grove Play Area, Ashington	√							REC 2
OS42	Langdale Play Area, Ashington	√							REC 2
OS43	Bywell Road Play Area, Ashington	√							REC 2
OS44	Ashington Leisure Centre Play Area	√							REC 2
OS45	Atlee Terrace Play Area, Newbiggin by the Sea	√							REC 2
OS46	Moor Estate Play Area, Newbiggin by the Sea	√							REC 2
OS47	Spital Burn Play Area, Newbiggin by the Sea	√							REC 2

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		Play areas	Allotments	Amenity green spaces	Civic spaces	Playing fields	Other outdoor sports facilities	Parks, formal gardens & country parks	Relevant Policies
OS48	North Seaton Colliery Play Area	√							REC 2
OS49	Spital Allotments, Newbiggin by the Sea		√						REC2 REC 4
OS50	Bomarsund Allotments		√						REC2 REC4
OS51	Cambois Allotments		√						REC2 REC 4
OS52	Seaton Hirst Allotments, Ashington		√						REC2 REC4
OS53	Allgood Allotments, Bedlington		√						REC2 REC4
OS54	North Seaton Pigeon Allotments		√						REC2 REC4
OS55	North Seaton Allotments		√						REC2 REC4
OS56	High Market/Wansbeck Allotments, Ashington		√						REC2 REC4
OS57	Woodhorn Road Allotments, Ashington		√						REC2 REC4
OS58	Hirst East End Allotments, Ashington		√						REC2 REC 4
OS59	Newbiggin by the Sea Allotments		√						REC2 REC 4
OS60	East Sleekburn Allotments		√						REC2 REC 4
OS61	Wilson Avenue Allotments, Cambois		√						REC2 REC 4
OS62	Ridge Terrace(West) Allotments, Bedlington		√						REC2 REC 4

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		Play areas	Allotments	Amenity green spaces	Civic spaces	Playing fields	Other outdoor sports facilities	Parks, formal gardens & country parks	Relevant Policies
OS63	Ridge Terrace (East) Allotments, Bedlington		√						REC2 REC 4
OS64	Milburn Terrace Allotments, Bomarsund		√						REC2 REC 4
OS65	Green Lane Allotments, Ashington		√						REC2 REC 4
OS66	Nursery Park Allotments, Ashington		√						REC2 REC 4
OS67	Dr Pit Allotments, Bedlington		√						REC2 REC 4
OS68	West Sleekburn Allotments		√						REC2 REC 4
OS69	Hirst Terrace Garden Plots, Bedlington		√						REC2 REC 4
OS70	Allgood Terrace Garden Plots, Bedlington		√						REC2 REC 4
OS71	Rothsay Terrace Garden Plots, Bedlington		√						REC2 REC 4
OS72	Victoria Terrace Garden Plots, Bedlington		√						REC2 REC 4
OS73	Pioneer Terrace Garden Plots, Bedlington		√						REC2 REC 4
OS74	Ashington Leisure Centre Bowling Green						√		REC2
OS75	Bedlington High School Bowling Green						√		REC2
OS76	Welwyn, Bedlington Station					√			REC2 REC3
OS77	Bedlington Cricket Club					√			REC2 REC 3

8 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

		Play areas	Allotments	Amenity green spaces	Civic spaces	Playing fields	Other outdoor sports facilities	Parks, formal gardens & country parks	Relevant Policies
OS78	Liddles Field, Bomarsund	√				√			REC2 REC 3
OS79	Promenade and Quay Wall, Newbiggin by the Sea				√				REC 2
OS80	Newbiggin by the Sea Piazza				√				REC 2
OS81	Laburnum Terrace, Ashington				√				REC 2
OS82	Station Road Pedestrian Area, Ashington				√				REC 2
OS83	Wansbeck Square, Ashington				√				REC 2
OS84	Front Street, Newbiggin by the Sea				√				REC 2
OS85	Bedlington Market Place				√				REC 2
OS86	The Square, Guidepost				√				REC 2
OS87	Eastgate and Eastgreen, Choppington			√					REC 2
OS88	Scotland Gate, Choppington			√					REC 2
OS89	Guidepost Roundabout			√					REC 2
OS90	Morpeth Road, Guidepost			√					REC 2
OS91	Morpeth Road Estate, Guidepost	√		√					REC 2
OS92	Sheepwash Bank, Guidepost			√					REC 2
OS93	Cleaswell Hill Estate, Guidepost			√					REC 2
OS94	Riversdale Avenue, Stakeford			√					REC 2

8 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

		Play areas	Allotments	Amenity green spaces	Civic spaces	Playing fields	Other outdoor sports facilities	Parks, formal gardens & country parks	Relevant Policies
OS95	Half Moon Roundabout, Stakeford			√					REC 2
OS96	Stakeford Crescent			√					REC 2
OS97	Riverbank, Stakeford			√					REC 2
OS98	Argyle Terrace, Newbiggin by the Sea			√					REC 2
OS99	Front Street - Health Centre, Newbiggin by the Sea			√					REC 2
OS100	South Ridge, North Seaton			√					REC 2
OS101	Newbiggin Road, North Seaton			√					REC 2
OS102	Garden City Villas, Ashington			√					REC 2
OS103	Lane End, North Seaton			√					REC 2
OS104	New Queen Street, Newbiggin by the Sea			√					REC 2
OS105	Hirst High, North Seaton			√					REC 2
OS106	Alexandra Court, Ashington	√		√					REC 2
OS107	Woodhorn Road, Ashington			√					REC 2
OS108	Greencroft/Green Lane, Ashington			√					REC 2
OS109	Briardene, Ashington			√					REC 2
OS110	High Market Corner, Ashington			√					REC 2
OS111	Station Road, Ashington			√					REC 2
OS112	Library Gardens, Ashington			√				√	REC 2
OS113	Hartford Road Verges			√					REC 2

8 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

		Play areas	Allotments	Amenity green spaces	Civic spaces	Playing fields	Other outdoor sports facilities	Parks, formal gardens & country parks	Relevant Policies
OS114	Westlea Estate, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS115	The Golden Mile, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS116	Redhouse Farm, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS117	Hartlands Estate, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS118	Meadowdale/Chesters, Bedlington	√		√					REC 2
OS119	Bishops Meadow/Cumberland, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS120	The Chesters, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS121	Front Street East, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS122	Green Lane Allotments (2), Ashington		√						REC2 REC4
OS123	Millfield Estate, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS124	Poplar Grove, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS125	Stead Lane, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS126	Stead Lane North Estate, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS127	Kings/Queens Estate, Bedlington Station	√		√					REC 2
OS128	Ravensworth Terrace, Bedlington Station			√					REC 2
OS129	Burnside, Bedlington Station			√					REC 2
OS130	A1147 Corridor, Bedlington Station				√				REC 2

8 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

		Play areas	Allotments	Amenity green spaces	Civic spaces	Playing fields	Other outdoor sports facilities	Parks, formal gardens & country parks	Relevant Policies
OS131	Front Street West, Bedlington				√				REC 2
OS132	The Oval, Stead Lane, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS133	Tomlea Avenue, Bedlington			√					REC 2
OS134	A1068 Corridor			√					REC 2
OS135	Ashington Alexandra First School					√			REC2 REC 3
OS136	Bedlington Whitley Memorial First School					√			REC2 REC3
OS137	Ashington Central First School					√			REC2 REC3
OS138	Ashington Community High School					√			REC2 REC3
OS139	Bedlington the Station First School					√			REC2 REC3
OS140	Bedlingtonshire High School					√			REC2 REC3
OS141	St Benet Biscops High School					√			REC2 REC3
OS142	Bothal Middle School					√			REC2 REC3
OS143	Cambois First School					√			REC2 REC3
OS144	Choppington First School					√			REC2 REC 3
OS145	Cleasewell Hill School					√			REC2 REC3
OS146	Coulson Park First School					√			REC2 REC3

8 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

		Play areas	Allotments	Amenity green spaces	Civic spaces	Playing fields	Other outdoor sports facilities	Parks, formal gardens & country parks	Relevant Policies
OS147	Guidepost Middle School					√			REC2 REC3
OS148	Ashington Hawthorn First School					√			REC2 REC3
OS149	Hirst High School					√			REC2 REC3
OS150	Newbiggin by the Sea Moorside First School					√			REC2 REC3
OS151	Mowbray First School Guidepost					√			REC2 REC3
OS152	Newbiggin by the Sea by the Sea Middle School					√			REC2 REC3
OS153	Guidepost Ringway First School					√			REC2 REC3
OS154	Seaton Hirst Middle School					√			REC2 REC 3
OS155	St Aidans R.C First School, Ashington					√			REC2 REC3
OS156	St Benedicts R.C Middle School					√			REC2 REC3
OS157	Bedlington Stead Lane First School					√			REC2 REC3
OS158	West Sleekburn Middle School					√			REC2 REC3
OS159	Wellbeck Community First School, Ashington					√			REC2 REC3
OS160	Meadowdale Middle School					√			REC2 REC3
OS161	Wembley Terrace Allotments, Cambois		√						REC2 REC4



COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Chapter 9

Introduction

- 9.1 The life of the community is supported and sustained by a wide range of essential facilities and public utilities. Community facilities include health care facilities, educational establishments, social services uses, places of worship and the emergency services. Utilities include electricity, gas and water supplies, sewerage and telecommunications. They are provided by both public and private sector organisations and provision often has major land use implications. This chapter sets out the policy framework for the making of planning decisions connected with provision.

Safeguarding existing community facilities

Policy CF1

Planning permission for development involving the loss of a community facility will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that either:

- a) alternative facilities of equivalent community benefit will be provided in a suitable location ; or***
 - b) the facility is no longer required; or***
 - c) the facility is no longer viable.***
- 9.2 Policy CF1 seeks to prevent development which would diminish community service provision. Sites for new development are often difficult to find within existing communities and once land and buildings are lost to an alternative use, it is unlikely that they can ever be returned.

The provision of new community facilities

Policy CF2

Development which will improve the provision of community facilities will be permitted in the District's town centres as defined on the Proposals Map.

Proposals for major community facilities will only be permitted on sites outside town centres if it can be demonstrated that:

- a) the development will fulfil an identified need; and***
- b) no site is available within a town centre; and***
- c) no edge of centre site is available; and***
- d) the facility will be accessible by a choice of means of transport.***

Proposals for small scale facilities to provide for the needs of a local neighbourhood will be permitted if they are well located in relation to the community they will serve.

- 9.3 Policy CF2 seeks to ensure that important community facilities are properly located. It is appropriate that major developments such as sports centres, hospitals etc. are located where possible in town centres where the fullest use can be made of public transport and where they can contribute to the vitality and viability of the centre. It will be more appropriate for smaller facilities such as health centres, dentists, libraries and schools which serve a more local catchment to be located close to the population they will serve.
- 9.4 Proposals for development in the Green Belt will also be subject to policy GP2 which seeks to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

Utilities infrastructure

Policy CF3

Applications for development involving the provision or alteration of utilities infrastructure will be permitted provided that buildings, plant and apparatus are designed, located and landscaped so as to minimise the visual impact.

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- 9.5 Development by utility companies is essential to the quality of life but can also be visually intrusive and detract from local amenity. Policy CF3 supports the provision and maintenance of essential services whilst ensuring that the environmental implications are taken fully into account. The policy will apply to investment by the electricity, gas and water industries (including investment in waste water treatment processes and infrastructure).

Telecommunications development

Policy CF4

Proposals for telecommunications development which will not have an adverse visual impact on the built or natural environment will be permitted.

Proposals likely to have an adverse visual impact will be permitted only if:

- a) the importance of the development outweighs the environmental harm; and***
 - b) the development is sited and designed to minimise its impact; and***
 - c) there are no feasible alternatives to the development.***
- 9.6 Policy CF4 recognises the social and economic benefits of modern telecommunications and the need to facilitate the growth of new and existing systems. It also recognises that the visual impact of telecommunications is often an issue.
- 9.7 Telecommunications developments include masts, towers, antenna, aerials, poles and overhead wires. Some small telecommunications apparatus such as television aerials does not constitute development which requires planning permission. Other minor development, including some satellite television antennas, is permitted under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) order 1995. Policy CF4 applies when either a full planning application or an application for prior approval is determined.

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- 9.8 If a proposal is likely to lead to visual harm, the Council will wish to explore with operators the feasibility of alternatives such as sharing existing masts or other locations or re-siting in a less damaging location. The significance of the proposed facility, particularly if it forms part of a national network, the technical and operational constraints faced by operators and any legal requirement to provide a service will also be relevant.
- 9.9 Proposals for development in the Green Belt will also be subject to policy GP2 which seeks to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.
- 9.10 The authority is aware of public concerns about the health effects of exposure to radio waves (or electro-magnetic fields) from mobile phone base stations and transmitters. It is the Government's view, however, that if a mobile phone base station meets the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) for public exposure, it should not be necessary for a local planning authority when processing an application for planning permission or prior approval to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them. Reference to the health implications of telecommunications development has accordingly been omitted from Policy CF4.

Renewable Energy

Policy CF5

Well designed and sustainable renewable energy projects will be encouraged and supported. In assessing such projects the following matters will be taken into account, including any mitigation measures proposed:

- a) the landscape and visual effects, including cumulative effects;***
- b) the impact on living conditions;***
- c) the impact on nature conservation interests, archaeological interests or the built heritage;***
- d) the effect on public health and safety;***
- e) the wider economic, social and environmental benefits.***

9 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- 9.11 Renewable energy sources include the sun, the wind, tidal power, the fall of water and the burning of naturally arising wastes and plant material. The exploitation and development of such energy sources can contribute to limiting the emission of CO₂ and other green house gasses, the gasses which cause global warming. The Government seeks to minimise energy use and to move towards a higher proportion of energy generated from renewable resources. It is committed towards the achievement of 10% of electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010 and is aiming to double that figure to 20% by 2020.
- 9.12 Renewable energy resources can usually only be exploited where they occur. In the case of wind energy, for example, in areas exposed to high winds. There are a number of windmills in the District already including the nine turbines erected on the East Pier at Blyth Harbour.
- 9.13 The potential impacts of renewable energy schemes are diverse and vary according to the type of energy being harnessed and the location. Visual impact is often a major impact associated with wind farms; in other types of renewable energy scheme issues such as air emissions, dust, odour and water protection may be more important. Whilst recognising the benefits of renewable energy projects, policy CF5 seeks to ensure that the environmental impacts, whatever they may be are fully taken into account.
- 9.14 The potential for renewable energy development in the North East of England has been considered as part of work for the North East of England Regional Renewable Energy Strategy (March 2005). The document suggests that as a predominantly urban area, there are significant potential constraints to wind development in Wansbeck particularly the need for separation from housing, roads and pylons. Nature conservation interests on the coast and visibility to radar at MOD Brizlee Wood and Newcastle Airport are also identified in the document as potential constraints. The study suggests that, if constraints can be overcome, there is the potential for small or medium sized wind developments in the Alcan area extending into Castle Morpeth District, in the Cambois area and at the Port of Blyth. The re-powering of the Harbour Wall wind farm may also be a possibility. In addition to electricity from wind power, the study suggests that there is potential to increase the amount of biomass fuelled electricity produced at the Alcan Power Station from 5mw to 10mw.
- 9.15 The suggestions set out in the Regional Renewable Energy Strategy are not exhaustive. There is likely to be scope for a range of small to

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medium sized renewable energy schemes to come forward, for instance, projects for combined heat and power, perhaps linked with district (community) heating. The Council will encourage and support schemes that meet the objectives of the policy.

- 9.16 Proposals for development in the Green Belt will also be subject to policy GP2 which seeks to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

Water supply and drainage

Policy CF6

When considering all development proposals, the authority will take into account the availability of water supply, surface water drainage and sewage disposal facilities. Development will only be permitted if adequate services can be provided prior to occupation and without harm to the environment and existing uses.

Sustainable drainage systems to control and manage surface water run-off should be incorporated into new development schemes. Proposals for the long term maintenance and management of such systems should be established at the planning application stage.

- 9.17 New development increases demand for water supply and sewerage and there can be significant implications for the environment. Where existing sewer systems are under pressure, for example, pollution of water courses may occur unless systems are upgraded and new infrastructure is provided. Increased abstraction of water in some locations may result in reduced flow rates in rivers which may be detrimental to amenity, water quality, nature conservation and water based recreation. Policy CF6 will ensure that best use is made of existing resources and potential adverse impacts are minimised.
- 9.18 Traditional piped methods of surface water drainage can contribute to the incidence and severity of flooding, the pollution of water courses and loss of habitats. By detaining, slowing and treating rainfall, sustainable methods of drainage can prevent such problems from occurring and so reduce the negative impact on the environment. Sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) use techniques to control and manage surface water run-off as close to its origin as possible before entering a watercourse. Schemes can include measures such as recycling, filter strips, swales and drains, permeable surfaces,

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infiltration devices, balancing ponds and basins. Adequate reasons are required if non-sustainable drainage techniques are proposed.

Planning conditions and obligations

Policy CF7

Where necessary to the grant of planning permission and in order to meet a planning need arising from a proposed development, the authority will apply planning conditions or seek to enter into a planning obligation with the developer. Circumstances where planning obligations to be negotiated will include where additional social, physical or environmental infrastructure is required to be provided in order for the development to go ahead.

- 9.19 The provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allow local planning authorities to grant planning permission subject to conditions or to enter into planning obligations with developers regarding their development. By the use of planning conditions and obligations, authorities can ensure that proper consideration is given to environmental concerns and to the interests of the local community. They can be used to enhance the quality of a development and enable development proposals to proceed when it would otherwise have been necessary to refuse planning permission
- 9.20 Circumstances likely to justify the imposition of restrictions on developers through the use of planning conditions or obligations include:
- Where particular features of a proposed development are essential for it to go ahead such as parking, landscaping, the provision of adequate access and play areas
 - Where the amenities of the local neighbourhood are at risk from the new development and restrictions need to be imposed
 - Where existing site features such as trees, hedges or other features of nature conservation interest need protection
 - Where measures are required to offset the loss of wildlife habitat or open space
 - Where the repair or restoration of historic buildings or other buildings of local importance is required

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- Where affordable housing is required to be provided as part of a residential development
 - Where a financial contribution towards the provision new infrastructure or other community services or facilities which would not have been necessary but for the development. Such provision which might include transport related infrastructure, public transport services, waste management facilities, social, educational, recreational, sporting or other community facilities.
- 9.21 Where possible, the authority will grant permission subject to conditions rather than seeking to enter into a planning obligation with a developer. Where for legal reasons this is not possible, obligations will be used. Planning obligations can restrict the use of land or require it to be used in a specified way and require payments to be made to the authority.

Proposals

Policy CF8

Land at Alexandra Road, Ashington forming part of the site of the former Hirst Welfare is allocated as an area for community and recreational uses. Development will be permitted on the site provided that it will be of benefit to community recreation provision for the local residents.

- 9.22 Hirst Welfare is an extensive area of unused land that at one time formed part of a major community and recreational resource for the town including a community building and an extensive playing field area. The land is very well placed in relation to existing and proposed new housing areas and a good location to provide for community needs. The western part of the site has now been developed for a Community Resource Centre which will provide a variety of activities for residents of East Ashington.

Policy CF9

Land at Moorhouse Lane, Ashington is designated as an area for health service uses. Development will be permitted within the area for purposes associated with the provision of health services.

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- 9.23 The designated area, as shown on the Proposals Map, incorporates the site of the existing Wansbeck General Hospital together with some previously undeveloped land to the east. The policy supports the continued development of facilities on the site including possible future hospital expansion. The hospital is an extremely important community facility for both Wansbeck residents and residents of neighbouring districts.

Policy CF10

Mixed use development involving the provision of community facilities and new housing will be permitted on land at Alnwick Drive, Bedlington provided that:

- a) it can be demonstrated by way of an up to date and comprehensive open space assessment for the area that the site will not be required to make good any open space deficiency in the area; and***
- b) a comprehensive development scheme for the whole site is prepared.***

- 9.24 The site, as shown on the Proposals Map, is a disused area of land within the large Meadowdale housing area in West Bedlington. At one time it was envisaged that it would be needed for a new school but this is now unlikely. It is appropriate nonetheless to reserve at least part of the site for community uses such as shops. There is a lack of facilities in the area and this is the only site which could meet any needs arising during the plan period. A mix of community uses and new housing is considered to be the most sustainable and achievable development solution for this 1.7 ha site. It could accommodate in the region of 20 dwellings in a mixed-use development. However, an up to date open space assessment for the area has not yet been completed. Until such a study has been completed and confirms the site will not be required to make good any shortage of open space in the area, it is appropriate to delay development of the site. Comprehensive development will bring about a more efficient use of the land which at present is unsightly and detracts from the quality of the local environment.

Policy CF11

Land West Lea, Bedlington is allocated for cemetery purposes.

- 9.25 The allocation of part of the West Lea open space for cemetery purposes will facilitate the extension of Bedlington Cemetery, an

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important community facility. Space for expansion will be required during the plan period because the adult burial section of the cemetery has only 3 to 4 years of space whilst the cremated burials section is already full.

Policy CF12

Land to the north of Rotary Park Way, Ashington is allocated for educational, community and recreational uses. A traffic impact assessment must accompany any planning application and it will be a requirement of development that safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle links to Ashington Town Centre to the south are provided.

- 9.26 Policy CF12 facilitates the development by Northumberland College of a new college to replace existing premises at College Road, Ashington. A new campus-style development, known as the Northumberland Learning Park, is proposed including general and specialist teaching space, administration, social space, a learning resource centre and a range of vocational facilities. As well as a college sports hall, the proposals also include sports pitches and a sports hall for use by local schools and the broader community. The area allocated also allows for a possible further phase of development involving the transferral of existing high school services in Ashington to the campus.
- 9.27 The Learning and Skills Council National Committee formally approved the College's Principle Capital funding application in September 2004. No formal commitment has been made at present by the Local Education Authority with regard to the possible schools element of the project.
- 9.28 As well as bringing clear direct benefits in terms of a major enhancement of educational and community facilities, the proposed development will also assist the regeneration of Ashington Town Centre. The site, which once formed part of Ashington Colliery and was reclaimed for agricultural purposes, is situated adjacent to the town centre.
- 9.29 Notwithstanding the clear benefits, the project raises a number of transport issues which are required to be resolved including accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, the options for vehicular access and the implications on traffic movements in the surrounding area. Such issues will need to be resolved and a sustainable access solution reached before planning permission can be granted. Links to and from the town centre are particularly important and necessary to maximise regeneration benefits.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

Accessibility	The ability to conveniently reach key services at reasonable cost, in reasonable time and with reasonable ease.
Adopted plan	A development plan which has been through all the statutory processes.
Affordable housing	Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.
Agri-environmental schemes	Schemes whereby farmers and land owners receive payments to deliver more effective environmental land management including the conservation of wildlife, the enhancement of the landscape, the protection of historic features and improved public access to the countryside.
Allocation	Land identified in the Plan for a specific use.
Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)	A report submitted annually to the Government by the local planning authority which assesses progress with the Local Development Scheme and the effectiveness of planning policies.
Article 4 Direction	Legal means by which an authority can remove permitted development rights.
Biodiversity	The range of life forms which constitute the living world and the habitats and ecosystems within which they exist.
Brownfield site	An existing building or land which has been previously developed.
Business cluster	A network of specialised creative, industrial or high-tech businesses concentrated within a particular location where co-location may enhance competitive advantage.
Business Park	An area planned for employers seeking an attractive and spacious environment.
Circular	A Government document which clarifies and explains matters of planning law and policy.
Commuted sum	A financial payment made by a developer to provide or contribute to the provision of facilities needed as a consequence of the development.
Conservation Area	An area of special architectural or historic interest designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

Contaminated land	Land which has been polluted over a certain period of time by the activities or processes which have been carried out above or below the land e.g. industry, traffic movement, tipping.
Defra	Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Density	The intensity of development in a given area. For housing, density is measured in terms of the number of houses per hectare.
Development Brief	A document setting out advice to developers on how to satisfactorily develop a particular site.
Development Control	The process of determining applications for planning permission.
Development Plan	A statutory document produced by local planning authorities and including policies and proposals for the development and other use of land in their area.
Green Belt	A long term statutory designation of land which seeks to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.
Greenfield sites	Sites not previously developed including agricultural land and parks.
Greening for Growth	A partnership established deliver a long term programme of environmental improvements and community action as a regeneration measure in South East Northumberland. Succeeded by Groundwork Northumberland.
Groundwork Northumberland	A body set up in Spring 2005 to work with local organisations and develop projects which will improve the quality of the local environment, the lives of local people and the success of local businesses.
Infrastructure	The facilities required to be in place for land to be developed e.g. roads, water supply, drainage, electricity supply etc.
Intermediate affordable housing	Housing at prices and rents above those of social rent, but below market price or rents. It can include shared equity products (e.g. Homebuy), or other low cost homes for sale or intermediate rent.
Listed Building	Buildings or structures of special architectural or historic interest which appear on a list compiled by English Heritage on behalf of the Government.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

Local Development Scheme	The local planning authority's time-scaled programme for the preparation of its local plan and/or other local development documents.
Local Nature Reserve	An area of importance for nature conservation, education and public enjoyment which has been designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
Local Transport Plan (LTP)	A strategic document prepared by the local transport authority to provide an integrated and sustainable approach to transport planning at the local level. The Northumberland LTP is the relevant document for Wansbeck.
Mixed use development	A development which includes two or more different uses within the overall scheme.
MOD	Ministry of Defence
Permitted development	Certain forms of generally minor development which do not require planning permission.
Planning obligation	A legal agreement entered into by a developer relating to the form, content or timing of a development or to requirements that must be met before the development is occupied.
Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG)	A document setting out the Government's advice on a particular aspect of planning. They are gradually being replaced by Planning Policy Statements.
Planning Policy Statement (PPS)	A document setting out the Government's advice on a particular aspect of planning. They are gradually replacing Planning Policy Guidance Notes.
Primary shopping area	The most important shopping area of a town, usually characterised by having the highest rents and pedestrian flow, where development on ground floors is primarily restricted to retailing.
Prior approval	A procedure relating to telecommunications developments, for example, whereby if a local planning authority does not respond to a developer's application within a certain time, permission is deemed to be granted.
Public Realm	All space to which the public has ready physical and visual access.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

Ramsar site	Area identified under the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. Ramsar sites embrace the ecological importance of wetlands generally and are all also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
Section 106	The section of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that provides for the creation of Planning Obligations (defined above).
Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs)	Locally important wildlife or geological sites.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	Sites of national importance defined under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 by English Nature within which protection is afforded to ecological or geological features.
Social rented housing	Rented housing owned and managed by local authorities and registered social landlords for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	An area recognised as being of international importance to birds under the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 79/409. All SPAs are also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
Structure Plan	Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan produced by Northumberland County Council. Part of the Development Plan for the District providing the strategic context for the Local Plan.
Sui Generis uses	Uses not falling within any prescribed class of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes Order) 1987.
Supplementary Planning Guidance	Planning Guidance which supplements the policies and proposals of the development plan giving more detailed advice on a particular topic or site. It does not have the same status as a development plan but the local planning authority will take it into account as a material consideration.
Sustainable development	Development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and aspirations.
Town and Country Planning Act 1990	The major legislation governing land use planning.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

Town centre	Area where mixed commercial uses predominate, providing a broad range of facilities and services which fulfil a function as a focus for the community and public transport
Tree Preservation Order (TPO)	An order made under Section 198 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (or its predecessors) to prevent the felling or pruning of trees considered to be of high amenity value without consent.
Urban Housing Capacity Study (UHCS)	A study produced for a local planning authority area examining the potential capacity of urban areas to accommodate extra housing on new or redeveloped sites or by the conversion of existing buildings.
Use Classes Order	The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 which places uses of land and buildings into different categories.
Wildlife Corridor	Linear linking of wildlife habitats which has the effect of allowing wildlife to move freely.
Windfall sites	Sites which come forward for development on an ad-hoc basis and are not identified in local plans.