

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

Patrick Whitehead MRTPI
IPE Ltd

Your Ref: 02/PW/LNP
Our Ref:
Enquiries to: David English
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Date: 27 March 2018

By email only:
steve.carnaby@intelligentplans.co.uk

Dear Mr Whitehead,

Independent Examination into the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Thank you for your correspondence received by email on 14 March 2018 concerning the ongoing independent examination of the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan. I am pleased to note that you have now completed your site visit and that progress is being made on the examination.

Firstly, I can confirm that your letter raising questions about Policy LNP8 (Use of Affordable Housing for Local Needs) has been posted on the County Council and Parish Council websites as requested.

I note that you are seeking clarification about:

- whether there is substantive evidence to justify the introduction of controls over occupation of new affordable housing in Longhorsley; and
- whether the County Council has any issues with the intention to control occupation of affordable housing by giving preference to people in need in Longhorsley or those with a local connection.

These matters have been the subject of some discussion between the County Council and the Parish Council during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. We understand from our discussions that the intention to create these controls has arisen through comments made at various consultation and engagement events held by the Parish Council during plan preparation. We understand that there are local concerns about the availability of affordable housing to serve local people in need; and that there is a perception that there is a lack of affordable housing to serve people who are in need or have a local connection with the Parish.

We are not aware of any substantive evidence to justify the introduction of specific controls which create a preference for lettings and sales of any new affordable housing to people in need in Longhorsley Parish or those with a local connection.

The County Council would therefore support modification to the policy in this respect should you be minded to make recommendations to that effect.

Similarly, the County Council recognises its obligations in respect of the Housing Acts. Whilst we recognise the desires of the Parish Council in relation to the opportunity for local people to gain preference in the allocations process, without substantive evidence to justify the need for more local controls, the County Council would raise concerns about the intention to introduce controls on letting beyond those defined in the Common Allocations Policy.

Our approach set out in the Common Allocations Policy, does, in rural parishes such as Longhorsley, provide sufficient priority in letting houses as they become available to people from the local area, whilst recognising the need to give priority to those in greatest absolute need. In rural areas the policy would be to include preference to people in need in adjoining parishes. The County Council's position in this matter is that we would prefer adherence to the terms of letting set out in the Common Allocations Policy. We would therefore support modification to the Neighbourhood Plan to this effect. This should provide sufficient assurance to the Parish Council that as much preference as is reasonable, having regard to all relevant circumstances, is given to people in need of affordable housing who either live in or have a local connection to the Parish.

I have discussed the response provided here with the Longhorsley Parish Council who have confirmed their agreement with our response.

I hope these comments provide sufficient information to allow you to deal with the questions you have raised. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish further clarification on this or any other matter associated with the examination of the Plan.

Yours sincerely

David English
Planning Manager (Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure)

cc Paul Brannan, Chair of Longhorsley Parish Council;
cc Gillian Turner, Clerk to Longhorsley Parish Council