



HEXHAM neighbourhood PLAN 2020-2036

Made Plan - July 2021

Rich in heritage, looking to the future

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Acknowledgements by Hexham Town Council

This Hexham Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) has been produced with the contribution of the people who live in or have businesses in Hexham. All views expressed have been considered. The finalisation of the Plan has taken longer than anticipated. The Plan now becomes a very important building block for the future development of Hexham. Since it seeks to look sixteen years ahead, it will be reviewed within that time frame to ensure that residents' wishes continue to be met.

On behalf of the Town Council we would like to thank the Steering Group who have driven the Plan by giving unstintingly of their time; Northumberland County Council for their help and guidance; and all those who participated and gave their opinions. These opinions were received at nine public forums and at many Steering Group meetings. It is this community input that gives us the confidence that Hexham can continue to develop as a caring community and a good place to live.

The Plan sets out a vision for the area that reflects the thoughts and feelings of local people with a real interest in their community. The Plan sets objectives on key themes including the character of the town centre, housing, the natural environment, the local economy and community wellbeing. It builds on current planned activity and indicates what the Town Council and its partners will work towards.

The coming into force of the Plan will mean that the wishes of the community of Hexham, as expressed in the document, will be taken into account in decision making processes in relation to all planning applications. The Plan becomes an essential tool for the Town and County Councils providing Hexham-specific policies and guidance to be taken into account in determining planning decisions. The Town Council will be monitoring very closely the implementation of the Plan.

Councillor Robert Hull, Mayor of Hexham

Councillor Tom Gillanders, Mayor (2017-2019) and current chair of the Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan Committee

Foreword

Hexham was granted a market charter as early as October 1222. Now in 2020 it falls on our shoulders to do our best to ensure that it remains, long into the future, a thriving, attractive, historic market town, a town that residents will always be proud of.

It has been vital for the Town Council, on behalf of the people of the town, to take advantage of the new local powers provided via the neighbourhood plan provisions of current national legislation. A very committed Steering Group, on behalf of the Town Council, has conducted extensive consultation, put the Plan together section by section and taken the Plan over many formal hurdles, from site, environmental and heritage impact assessments to its final assessment and approval by an independent examiner.

In order to withstand the serious contemporary threats to small town viability - on-line shopping, increased customer mobility and the market strength of national names in out-of-town retail - Hexham must make the most of its significant comparative advantages (location, history, architecture, people) and use these to retain its special and robust character.

This is precisely where a Neighbourhood Plan for Hexham fits in.

An effective Neighbourhood Plan will be a key component of the town's future development. It can secure the sustainability and improvement of many of Hexham's desirable features, including:

- its heritage assets which tell 'the Hexham story',
- homes suitable for local people within an expanding population,
- its parks, green spaces and access to the surrounding countryside,
- the quality of life it offers its residents and neighbours,
- its attraction to residents and visitors as a market town with much to offer,
- premises appropriate for modern businesses that will trade, via the internet, beyond the town and its environs.

Once the Neighbourhood Plan for Hexham has been made, any new development that requires planning permission must be assessed against the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. These policies have been developed through consultation with the communities of Hexham and reflect what they think is important for the future of the area. Nine quarterly public forums between April 2015 and April 2017 have served the purpose of judging what is important to the people of Hexham and of pulling this together to formulate this Plan.

Hexham's population of 11,829 (at the 2011 census) and an almost equally large population in its hinterland of rural villages can then continue to depend on this attractive market town as their retail, services, leisure and employment hub, for many years to come.

Dave Clegg

Chair and Co-ordinator of the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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INTRODUCTION

What is a Neighbourhood Plan, and how does it fit into the Planning System?

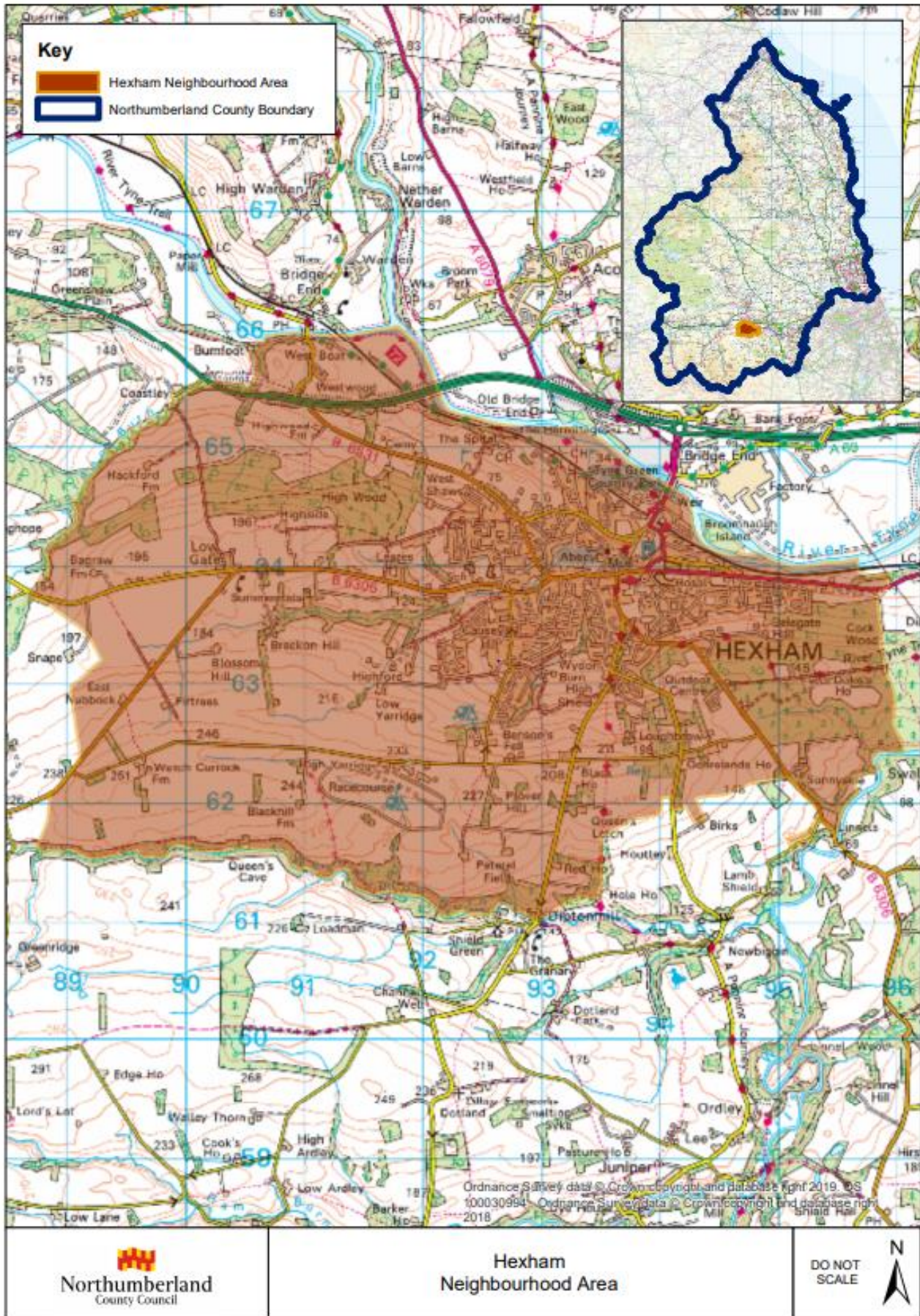
In April 2012 the Localism Act 2011 introduced new powers to allow local communities to shape development in their areas by preparing a neighbourhood development plan (usually referred to as a 'neighbourhood plan').

This Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for Northumberland and will be used to help the County Council decide whether to approve or refuse planning applications in Hexham Parish (the Neighbourhood Area). The Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to national planning policy (contained in the National Planning Policy Framework). It should also be in general conformity with strategic policy in the Tynedale District Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2007 (Tynedale Core Strategy), the Tynedale District Local Plan 2000 (Tynedale Local Plan). The Neighbourhood Plan has also taken into account relevant information relating to the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

The policies in the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan will be used by planning officers and elected Council Members at the County Council to determine planning applications. It will also be used by planning inspectors when deciding planning appeals. Policies in it will take priority over relevant policies in the former Tynedale plans. Matters that are not covered in the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan will still be determined in line with the existing Tynedale Core Strategy and Tynedale Local Plan until such time as the County Council produces its own local plan for the County.

The Hexham Neighbourhood Area, designated for the purposes of 61G(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, comprises the Parish of Hexham. Northumberland County Council formally designated the Neighbourhood Area on 22nd April 2015. The Neighbourhood Plan relates only to this Parish and to no other Neighbourhood Areas and is the only Neighbourhood Development Plan to cover the designated area.

HEXHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – MADE PLAN – July 2021



Hexham Town Council is the designated qualifying body entitled to prepare a neighbourhood plan for the area. The Plan has been prepared by a delegated Steering Group consisting of town councillors and local residents, with input and assistance from a qualified (RTPI) planning consultant and Northumberland County Council.

A statutory pre-submission consultation (according to Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012) took place over the six weeks of 16th March to 29th April 2018. An additional Regulation 14 consultation took place between Friday 5th October and Friday 16th November 2018.

Both consultations included an invitation to comment on the environmental reports produced in the process of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan and its revised draft. Both pre-submission consultation draft plans incorporated a number of recommendations made in the SEA process and reports.

Why have a plan for Hexham?

People in Hexham want to see development that expresses the aspirations of the local community and reflects what is special and important about Hexham. The Hexham Neighbourhood Development Plan (hereafter referred to as “the HNP” or “the Plan”) will provide locally specific planning policies which will provide clear guidance as to what kind of development will or will not be allowed in the Neighbourhood Area (Hexham Parish).

This means that the residents and businesses of Hexham will have a greater say in how the town develops as a living, working, sustainable community. The Plan additionally contains a number of ‘Community Projects’ which cover other issues raised by the community but which are not planning issues. Many of these Community Projects were identified in the Hexham Town Plan 2014 and Vision 2020.

What evidence have we used to prepare the Plan?

Extensive evidence has been used to prepare the Plan. These documents include the evidence already collected by Northumberland County Council to inform their Local Plan, which is currently at examination. Nevertheless, much of the evidence is current and has been a useful resource in the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan. In addition, the Steering Group has gathered its own evidence. For example, the Town Council commissioned, in partnership with Northumberland County Council, a full Housing Needs Assessment for Hexham which was conducted in June 2016. The Town Council also commissioned AECOM (through Locality) to produce a suitability assessment of thirteen potential brownfield housing sites under consideration by the HNP Steering Group (2016 Site Assessments). Specialist research has been commissioned to produce a detailed statement of significance for the former Hexham Workhouse as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset. Reference has appropriately been made to other national planning advice and policy guidance. A full list of evidence-based documents is contained on the [Neighbourhood Plan website](#).

What consultation has taken place?

The starting point for the HNP was the consultations that took place in Hexham 2012 to 2014, in particular the Well-Being Survey (2012) and the Hexham Town Plan Survey (2013). In 2014 a Hexham Vision 2020 and Town Plan 2014 was produced after open consultation. One of the priorities identified in the Town Plan 2014 was the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for Hexham.

The first stage of the HNP consultation was by questionnaire, seeking the local community’s views on a ‘vision’ for the HNP and a series of ‘objectives’, the outline for which had been discussed at the first HNP Public Forum in April 2015, based on the results of previous consultations. This consultation questionnaire was delivered to every household in the Parish. The consultation included Statutory Bodies and

organisations identified in the Regulations. A total of over 200 responses were received, either via post, the website or e-mail. A detailed response was received from Queen Elizabeth High School 6th form students, who conducted a consultation of pupils in the school. Focussed visits were conducted at sheltered housing associations and the Hexham East Residents Association. Direct responses were encouraged from residents at a stall in the Hexham Market Place on a local Farmers' Market day. Two consultation events were held in tandem with Northumberland Core Strategy consultation events in Hexham.

The Steering Group has engaged the local community through direct consultation via a series of quarterly Public Forum events over the two years of the Plan's development, each focussing on a specific objective and linked topic areas. The website www.hexhamneighbourhoodplan.co.uk has been regularly updated with information about the content and outcomes of the quarterly Forum meetings.

As already described, a Pre-submission consultation [Regulation 14] was undertaken in March and April 2018, and this was followed by a further Regulation 14 consultation in October and November of 2018 (due to a number of major changes to the Neighbourhood Plan and, in particular, changes to housing allocations).

Each of three town newsletters per annum over the HNP's production period has informed residents of the progress that the HNP is making. More detail on the consultation undertaken is provided in the Community Consultation Statement submitted with the HNP for examination.

How the Plan has progressed

This version of the Neighbourhood Plan is the Made Version which includes those modifications recommended by the independent examiner following examination of the Submission Version of the Plan. Modifications were recommended and made to ensure the Plan meets the 'basic conditions'.

A referendum was held on 6th May 2021. Everyone who lived in the Neighbourhood Area and was registered to vote was given the opportunity to decide whether they would like the Plan to be brought into force (made). A majority vote of 81.5% in favour of the Plan was cast and the Plan has now been made and is part of the statutory development plan for the Parish.

1 HEXHAM TODAY

1.1 National and Local Planning Policy Context

- 1.1.1 The HNP must be in general conformity with strategic policies contained in the current development plan. The current development plan for the Neighbourhood Area consists of 'saved' policies in the Tynedale Local Plan (2000) and 'saved' policies in the Tynedale Core Strategy (2007), where these policies are in conformity with the current National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.1.2 Northumberland County Council is in the process of producing a local plan for Northumberland. The Hexham Neighbourhood Plan is broadly aligned with the objectives and strategic policies in the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.
- 1.1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) (NPPF) combined with National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides the most up to date advice from Central Government on planning policy. The NPPF and NPPG supersede policy contained in some of the local planning documents.
- 1.1.4 Neighbourhood plans should provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency and should give a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal.
- 1.1.5 This plan seeks to give clarity to developers and to the local community about the kind of development that is encouraged.
- 1.1.6 All the above consultations together identified a number of key issues, some of which could be addressed through the planning policies and some which would need to be addressed through Community Projects or through the Hexham Town Plan.

1.2 Population and Housing

- 1.2.1 Hexham has an ageing population, a pattern which is expected to continue and become more significant. There are fewer young people living in Hexham than the national average - most significantly in the cohort of 20 - 45 year olds.
- 1.2.2 Land prices, house prices and market rents in Hexham are higher than the Northumberland County average. A lack of certain types of housing has been raised as a key issue by the local community, in particular a lack of affordable housing. A Housing Needs Assessment was undertaken in 2016 by Arc4 which covered the Housing Market Area (HMA) of Hexham, Acomb and Sandhoe. This involved the distribution of a detailed questionnaire to every household in the HMA. Information for Hexham was compiled independently of Acomb and Sandhoe.
- 1.2.3 In Hexham, over 25% of forms were returned. These were analysed and the conclusion was that there is an acute shortage of affordable housing in Hexham, as well as an imbalance in the range of market housing available to meet the needs of the area.
- 1.2.4 Survey responses to the vision and objectives questionnaire revealed that people supported the concept of having new housing in Hexham, particularly where it would improve the stock of housing for young families, as well as providing affordable housing for people to buy and rent. The location of development was considered important, especially promoting brownfield sites in more accessible areas of Hexham, thus reducing the need to travel by car. The incorporation of green spaces into development encouraging biodiversity was also considered especially important.

Key Issues:

- *An ageing population and declining proportion of working age people;*
- *An imbalance in the community age structure;*
- *Lack of affordable housing in Hexham;*
- *A lack of provision of key types of housing (market and social) such as smaller 2- and 3-bedroom properties;*
- *A need for more bungalows and more housing for older people;*
- *The desirability of encouraging housing on accessible sites close to the town centre.*

1.3 Natural Environment, Health and Well-Being

- 1.3.1 Hexham has large areas of green space within the built-up town itself that is surrounded by countryside that is relatively accessible on foot or by bicycle. A number of streams or 'burns' come into Hexham from the hills to the south and west, providing important wildlife corridors and recreational routes for people and linking the town to the wider area. Hexham has three allotment areas which are well used, with waiting lists. Some areas of the town are characterised by the presence of a significant number of mature trees and hedgerows, which are highly valued and give Hexham its distinctive feel as a 'town in the country'.
- 1.3.2 Around Hexham are areas of woodland (Dukes House Wood is the best known) which are heavily used by the local population for walking and other recreational activities. The River Tyne is the focus for a number of water sports, as well as providing recreational space and routes to the countryside. Watersmeet, part of the River Tyne corridor in Hexham, is designated a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest).
- 1.3.3 Within Hexham, Tyne Green, the Sele and Hexham Parks are the largest and best known green spaces. There are many others around the town, and these are also highly valued by people living locally to them.
- 1.3.4 Survey responses show that residents consider Hexham to be a great place to live. The accessibility of the newly built hospital, the Wentworth Leisure Centre, the Queens Hall (theatre and galleries), the Forum Cinema and the parks and Tyne Green were all cited as being important for the quality of life in Hexham as well as being closely linked to a healthy arts-based local economy.

Key Issues:

- *to maintain and enhance Hexham's green spaces, and designate those that are especially highly valued as Local Green Spaces;*
- *to protect Assets of Community Value, and to encourage the provision of more community facilities;*
- *to increase the number of allotments so they are sufficient to meet the needs and desires of the current population;*
- *to protect and enhance local wildlife and biodiversity;*
- *to improve air quality, particularly on the streets that carry significant amounts of traffic or waiting traffic (Priestpopple, Battle Hill, Hencotes, Haugh Lane, Market Street and the Market Place)*

1.4 Built Environment

- 1.4.1 Hexham is a historic abbey market town. The abbey building itself dates from the 12th century, and the centre of Hexham has a wealth of Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings, a Registered Historic Park and Garden and Scheduled Monuments. It has a designated Conservation Area which once extended much further than its current limits. The historic environment is highly valued by residents and visitors alike. The density, quality and variety of Hexham's architectural legacy are unique across north east market towns.
- 1.4.2 There are some buildings which people felt deserved better protection. A list was compiled and work undertaken with the Hexham public to identify non-designated assets of special character (buildings which are not listed). In particular, the Workhouse was mentioned during many consultations as a heritage asset which could be the key to heritage-led regeneration in an important part of the town.
- 1.4.3 It was felt that there is the opportunity to encourage better design, and that opportunities have been missed in recent developments in Hexham to contribute to place-making and take opportunities to make design more relevant to Hexham.

Key Issues:

- *to identify locally important non-designated heritage assets within the Neighbourhood Plan;*
- *to seek more locally distinctive design in new development, which respects the special character of Hexham;*
- *to seek 'heritage-led' regeneration, particularly on some of the town's brownfield/Previously Developed Land sites in the Conservation Area where heritage assets present an opportunity for constructive re-use.*

1.5 Transport and accessibility

- 1.5.1 Hexham has excellent public transport links along the Tyne Valley to Newcastle (east) and Carlisle (west). There are regular bus and train services to Newcastle, Carlisle and communities between and beyond; less regular buses serve communities in the wider Tynedale area. Newcastle International airport is a twenty-five minute car drive away.
- 1.5.2 A key issue for some people in Hexham is the perceived lack of sufficient parking in the town, and the management of parking and traffic congestion at certain times of day. People were particularly concerned about the impacts of increasing amounts of traffic in the town centre, and on safety for children walking to school in the town. Some people felt that parts of Hexham should give priority to pedestrians to make the town centre a more pleasant environment in which to work, live and shop.
- 1.5.3 Northumberland County Council has recently re-established a Northumberland Walking and Cycling Board which will examine further the role of walking and cycling as a means to improve health and increase economic and environmental improvement opportunities.
- 1.5.4 Key Issues:
- *Public realm improvement opportunities, particularly in the Market Place;*
 - *Car parking problems, traffic congestion;*
 - *Opportunity to improve accessibility throughout the town by way of improved cycle/pedestrian links.*

1.6 Local Economy

- 1.6.1 Hexham has a thriving local economy. Consultation revealed that people in Hexham really value the variety and availability of local shops. There was a general feeling that there are too many charity shops, and that there is potential for an increased range of independent shops in the centre of Hexham. There was a desire to see a limit on the number of 'out of town' supermarkets.
- 1.6.2 There is significant support for the further provision of facilities for small businesses similar to the rural enterprise hubs that have so far been successful. There is some evidence that there may be a lack of larger offices (a step up from individual business hubs) for expanding businesses.
- 1.6.3 It was felt that Hexham could take greater advantage of tourism through the provision of more accommodation for tourists and making Hexham a visitor destination in its own right. The surrounding area and in particular the North Pennines AONB, the wider Tyne Valley, Northumberland National Park, Hadrian's Wall and the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park are all significant attractors in the surrounding visitor economy. Hexham is close to all these areas and could benefit further from tourism.
- 1.6.4 Hexham is an 'arts town' and the arts and heritage contribute to the local economy, as well as to the quality of Hexham as a place to live.

Key Issues:

- *Potential to attract more tourism trade to Hexham as a heritage and retail destination and as a gateway to the surrounding area;*
- *Potential to increase provision of smaller business units and/or live-work units;*
- *Evidence of a lack of 'next step' office space – one level up from small business units.*

2 VISION AND OBJECTIVES



2.1 Vision for the Town

- 2.1.1 Based on community consultation and key issues identified in the process, the following vision has been agreed for the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan:

Hexham will continue to be the creative, enterprising heart of the Tyne Valley. The medieval Abbey and market town will remain true to its heritage and Hexham will be an attractive place for all people across the generations who live, work and visit here.

Objectives

This vision is supported by 5 key objectives:

Objective 1: Sustainability:

All policies in the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan, read together, will contribute to the delivery of truly sustainable development. New development must be built to high environmental standards, located where people can walk/cycle to town, and it must have a positive impact on the social, environmental and economic objectives for the town.

Policies to achieve this objective:

- POLICY HNP1:** Sustainable Development
POLICY HNP2: High Quality Sustainable Design

Objective 2: Our Built and Historic Environment:

Hexham's built environment will retain and improve on its essential character and significance as an historic market town, with high standards of design applied to new and old buildings. New development throughout Hexham will underline local character, distinctiveness, diversity and sustainability.

Policies to achieve this objective:

- POLICY HNP3:** Design in the Hexham Conservation Area
POLICY HNP4: Non-designated Heritage Assets
POLICY HNP5: Shop Front Design in the Conservation Area
POLICY HNP6: Hexham Market Place
POLICY HNP7: Designated Heritage Assets

Objective 3: Housing

Hexham will have the right number, type and size of new homes needed for a growing local population over the Plan period to support the services and facilities required to function as a main town in Northumberland. New housing will have energy efficiency at its heart. It will be in the right place, look good and be well connected to the rest of Hexham. The necessary infrastructure will be in place to make new build viable giving desirable and sustainable places to live.

Policies to achieve this objective:

- POLICY HNP8:** Housing Allocations
HNP8.1 to HNP8.10 Site Allocations Policies
POLICY HNP9: New Housing Development
POLICY HNP10: Affordable Housing Provision
POLICY HNP11: Housing for Older People
POLICY HNP12: Rural Exception Sites for Affordable Housing

Objective 4: Natural Environment, Health and Well-Being:

Hexham's residents of all ages will enjoy improved health and well-being through good access to leisure, sport, heritage, arts, public transport and other facilities in Hexham. Accessible and well-linked green spaces (including to the surrounding countryside) will mean a better natural environment for residents and a more wildlife-friendly Hexham.

Policies to achieve this objective:

- POLICY HNP13:** Local Green Spaces in Hexham
POLICY HNP14: Tyne Green Country Park and Tyne Green
POLICY HNP15: Wildlife Corridors
POLICY HNP16: Allotments
POLICY HNP17: Hedgerows, Trees and Verges in Hexham
POLICY HNP18: Dark Skies

POLICY HNP19: Community Facilities

POLICY HNP20: Community Renewables Schemes

POLICY HNP21: Walking and Cycling in Hexham

Objective 5: Local Economy

Hexham's local economy will be secure into the future, supporting its existing industry and business, with a special focus on the role of Hexham as a growth area for small business and enterprise and as a local tourism hub linked to Hadrian's Wall, the Northumberland National Park and the North Pennines AONB.

Policies to achieve this objective:

POLICY HNP22: Primary Shopping Area in Hexham

POLICY HNP23: Hotel and Tourism Accommodation

POLICY HNP24: New Business Units

POLICY HNP25: New Car Parking Facilities

3 PLANNING POLICIES

- 3.1.1 Land use planning policies provide clarity on what development will be supported in the Neighbourhood Area, and what criteria will be used to establish whether a proposal is acceptable or not.
- 3.1.2 The policies of the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan form part of the development plan for the area. Any planning application must be in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.¹
- 3.1.3 Where issues have been raised by the local community that are not land-use planning matters, 'Community Projects' have been proposed. A full list of Community Projects is available at the end of the Plan.
- 3.1.4 The Plan is sub-divided into chapters which cover the policies that have been identified to deliver the 5 Objectives, which in turn seek to deliver the overall vision for Hexham.

Reading the policies:

- 3.1.5 Each planning policy itself is contained within a purple box. Each policy is followed by an explanation of that policy, providing more information and background to the specific policy and assisting its interpretation.
- 3.1.6 The Plan is to be read as a whole. Cross-referencing within policies is kept to a minimum. All policies should be read in conjunction with each other. Clarity on the meaning of words and definitions both in policies and supporting text is provided in the glossary at the end of the Plan.
- 3.1.7 The Plan, read as a whole, seeks to promote sustainable development in Hexham.

¹ section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

4 PLANNING POLICIES: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Objective 1: Sustainable Development

All policies in the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan, read together, will contribute to the delivery of truly sustainable, high quality development. New development must be built to high environmental standards, located where people can walk and cycle to the town centre, and it must have a positive impact on the social, environmental and economic objectives for the town.

- 4.1.1 The widely accepted definition of 'sustainable development' is that agreed by the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 1992 which states: ***"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."***
- 4.1.2 This sustainable development policy seeks to balance environmental, social and economic needs both for the present and the future. The policy gives an overall direction to the Plan, clarifying what kinds of development will be supported to achieve sustainable development in the Neighbourhood Area.
- 4.1.3 Other policies in the Plan relate specifically to some of these criteria. This policy sets the context for the rest of the Plan.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Policy HNP1: Sustainable Development

Within the settlement of Hexham, outside of the Green Belt (as identified on the Policies Map), the development of any of the following will be supported:

- a) new market and affordable housing to provide a mix of housing types and tenures to support the growth of Hexham as a sustainable community;
- b) proposals which provide new community facilities in central and accessible locations, including supporting the development of Hexham as a Dementia Friendly town;
- c) proposals that provide new and/or retain, improve and expand existing community facilities in Hexham including indoor and outdoor sports and recreational facilities, health facilities, allotments and facilities associated with the arts and heritage;
- c) provision for education, including relocation and/or re-building of school buildings;
- d) increased opportunities for local employment including in the tourism sector;
- e) development in places that will reduce the need to travel by car and increase opportunities to travel by public transport, walking or cycling;
- f) development to support the regeneration of Hexham and make the best use of previously developed land.

Within the Green Belt, development proposals will be determined in accordance with national Green Belt policy.

HIGH QUALITY SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

POLICY HNP2: High Quality Sustainable Design

All new development in the Neighbourhood Area should achieve high quality design by responding positively to local character through attention to scale, massing, height, density, access and landscaping. Development must respect residential amenity and not detract from highway safety.

Development proposals should, where possible, seek net biodiversity gains and, where loss is unavoidable and mitigation not possible, provide compensation by the creation of enhanced habitats at or near the site.

The conservation of water and reduction of run-off through the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be supported, as will the incorporation of embedded renewables and low carbon building technologies to reduce the carbon footprint of development.

Policy Explanation:

- 4.1.4 The Town Council would like to see opportunities being taken wherever possible to embed carbon reduction measures into the design of new developments and the conversion of existing buildings. Adding features such as solar panels, and rainwater harvesting systems can assist in 'greening' a development. In addition a holistic approach, at an early design stage, can result in high quality schemes that minimise carbon emissions in the long term.
- 4.1.5 The incorporation of embedded renewables is becoming more mainstream and can now contribute significantly to the value of a property². There are numerous examples in Hexham where this has been achieved in new housing development, most recently in the Hexham Gate development on Corbridge Road. These houses were constructed to Level 3 Code for Sustainable Homes (now no longer in place), and incorporated built-in energy-saving features, superior insulation, solar photovoltaics, mechanical ventilation systems and under-floor heating, to reduce energy costs and improve their carbon footprint.
- 4.1.6 The NPPF makes it clear that plans should seek to protect and enhance the natural environment and that policies should recognise the wider benefits of ecosystem services and should capture multiple benefits from land use including wildlife, recreation, mitigation of flood risk and carbon storage. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) have a central role to play in delivering these benefits.
- 4.1.7 SuDS offer opportunities to improve the local environment, not only for future occupants of housing, but for local wildlife. The use of permeable paving for driveways and hard-standing areas is now standard practice. Integrated SuDS can significantly reduce the contribution that new development makes to localised flooding as well as providing benefits to wildlife, green spaces and people. Relevant features should be included within the design and layout of new developments at an early stage to secure the best outcome for flood risk management and enhancements to biodiversity, landscape and recreational areas.

² DECC *Energy efficiency in buildings* 17 June 2013

- 4.1.8 The publication by DEFRA of 'Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems' gives guidance on how to minimize the potential for surface water and sewer flooding. In accordance with Building Regulations requirements there is a hierarchy of preference for managing surface water: a) Discharge into the ground, b) Discharge to a surface water body; c) Discharge to a surface water sewer or lastly d) Discharge to a combined sewer.
- 4.1.9 Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards for non-housing developments can be viewed at <http://www.breeam.com/why-breeam>. The BRE Home Quality Mark provides a set of standards that replace the old Code for Sustainable Homes. Although these standards cannot be insisted on in new housing development, the Town Council would like to see new housing development meet the equivalent of a four-star rating. More information about the Home Quality Mark is available at <http://www.homequalitymark.com/>.
- 4.1.10 Proposals that seek to incorporate high standards of energy efficiency, conserve water and incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems can result in a net benefit for biodiversity and a high quality of living for future occupants. They can also result in an increase in property values, and benefits to the local economy. Hexham has been identified as an area with high land and market house values, with the result that the viability of delivering these elements of the policy is not considered proportionately to be a significant barrier.
- 4.1.11 The incorporation of rain-water harvesting systems, grey water recycling and the highest standards of insulation all contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of a building. Other techniques, such as the incorporation of 'green' roofs, can also have multiple benefits, such as the reduction in water run-off and a net gain in biodiversity.
- 4.1.12 In considering design matters, it is noted that the provision of adequate external storage space for bins, recycling and cycles is important in any new development. Cycle storage facilities should be secure and convenient to access. Bin and recycling stores should not detract from the visual quality of the street scene.
- 4.1.13 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. A key purpose of this duty is to embed consideration of biodiversity as an integral part of policy and decision-making. The government set out its commitment to biodiversity in the '*Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*'.
- 4.1.14 There are many ways biodiversity can be incorporated into development schemes. Provision can be made for the retention of habitats (such as trees, hedgerows, stone walls etc.). The careful design and layout of a development with biodiversity in mind (for example 'green' roofs) can ensure that negative biodiversity impacts can be reduced and mitigation measures incorporated, to secure an overall improvement for biodiversity.
- 4.1.15 The Environment Agency would like to see a 25 – 100% gain in like-for-like or like-for-better habitat to secure consistency with the objectives of the Government's 25 year Environment Plan.
- 4.1.16 Modern design can be effective in placemaking, and the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to support modern design, where it is carefully thought out, and respects the character of the area in which it is proposed. Poor design where little thought has been given to local context, character, materials and features will not be supported.

5 PLANNING POLICIES: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Built Environment Objective:

Hexham's built environment will retain and improve on its essential character and significance as an historic market town, with high standards of design applied to new and old buildings. New development throughout Hexham will underline local character, distinctiveness, diversity and sustainability.

The policies emerging from this objective are contained in this part of the plan. These policies are:

POLICY HNP3: Design in the Hexham Conservation Area

POLICY HNP4: Non-designated Heritage Assets

POLICY HNP5: Shop Front Design

POLICY HNP6: Hexham Market Place

POLICY HNP7: Designated Heritage Assets

Introduction

- 5.1.1 The benefits of good design in the way people use and experience a place are well documented and recognised as a key part of sustainable development. Good design that sits well in its context, not only makes an attractive place to live and work but also has far reaching beneficial effects including on local people's health, the vitality of a place, its economy and tourism. Hexham welcomes carefully considered development, where the approach takes into account the character of the surroundings, mindful also that the Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of designated heritage assets (listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments and listed parks and gardens).
- 5.1.2 Hexham has a rich and long-established history centred around the Abbey. It is this history that has created the high-quality built environment which is now a key feature of the town and contributes to its attractiveness as a place to live and work in, as well as a place to do business.



Figure 1: Hexham's dynamic roofscape and Grade I listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments clearly visible from a distance

- 5.1.3 Hexham's topography means the historic core is visible from all directions, both above and below the town. In the majority of long views, the Abbey has retained its position as the most visible and tallest building, around which over the centuries the cluster of development along narrow chares and streets has developed.
- 5.1.4 The serrated historic roofscape is unplanned but each historic building has typically contributed to create an overall impressive, haphazard silhouette. The sloping topography and continuity provided by the natural slated roof material and brick or natural stone chimneys gives primacy in views to not only the Abbey, but also to the imposing medieval buildings of the Moot Hall and Old Gaol. These are distinctive features which reinforce the religious and civic character of the town.
- 5.1.5 In full leaf, the many mature trees around Hexham and particularly in the town centre soften and add colour to the long views into the town.
- 5.1.6 Within the town the gently curving narrow chares, and pedestrianised streets, form an interesting and diverse centre to the town which has developed organically around the Abbey and Market Place. The scale of the buildings, which are typically 2 - 3 storeys, are constructed of a limited palette of high-quality materials such as brick (including examples of the old Hexham brick), natural stone and slate. Some buildings at corners and end points use subtle curves to denote their position on the street. The back streets, such as St Mary's Chare, retain the original stone setts and slightly winding orientation which reinforce their medieval origin. There are many modest buildings which make an unimposing but distinctly functional contribution to the streetscape. Many grander buildings with more ornate detailing and solid stone quoins emphasise the quality of construction and design as part of the town's strong visual character. There are a large number of designated heritage assets within Hexham's historic town centre. These comprise grade I, II* and II listed buildings, listed parks and gardens, the conservation area, and scheduled monuments.



Figure 2: Hexham's roofscape as seen from the Wentworth Car Park

- 5.1.7 The Sele and Abbey grounds, to the west of the Abbey, are large areas of green space and mature trees, laid out with footpaths, with the characterful bandstand at the centre and the Sele itself beyond. These are well maintained and are an important focus for musical and community events and gatherings.
- 5.1.8 Many buildings and areas of Hexham, even those that are modest and unassuming, have had an important role in the town’s manufacturing or agricultural development, especially where these are linked to the manufacture of leather, hat and rope making, wool trading, market gardening and agricultural service industries. Whilst many of these industries have disappeared or are now reduced, they are still celebrated as part of Hexham’s heritage. Many in the local community are still involved, particularly in agriculture, on the farms located within Hexham’s hinterland, from the Pennines to the Scottish border.

DESIGN IN THE HEXHAM CONSERVATION AREA

POLICY HNP3: Design in the Hexham Conservation Area

Development must conserve the Hexham Conservation Area and its setting. Development that enhances the Hexham Conservation Area or its setting will be supported. Development proposals impacting on the Hexham Conservation Area or its setting should consider their impact on important views into and out of Hexham, including of historic roofscapes and the historic buildings of the Abbey, Moothall and Old Gaol; and on the historical layout of the town’s streets including the narrow chares.

Policy Explanation:

- 5.1.9 Local character (Hexham local vernacular) is important in Hexham and is characterized by the town’s Conservation Area and its setting. Particularly important to this character are the domestic and human scale of some buildings and the larger scale of important and prominent civic buildings. The topography of Hexham is unique and it provides opportunities for views into and out of the town from a great range of places around a 360-degree panorama.
- 5.1.10 There are dramatic views of all of the town of Hexham both from the north looking south and vice versa, with its distinctive serrated historic roofscape clearly visible. Whilst the serrated roofscape is interrupted by the flat roofs of the 1960’s Studio nightclub building to the west, and the Beales building to the rear of Fore Street, it is otherwise sustained.
- 5.1.11 Historic rooftops and the three prominent Grade I listed buildings (Hexham Abbey, Moot Hall and Old Gaol) are examples of medieval heritage, distinct in their height, scale and mass within the town. These buildings form the defining features of the conservation area and of Hexham as a whole. They can be seen from the entrance into Hexham over the river, from walking routes between the river and the town, and from farther afield, across the valley, from both north and south. These buildings were designed to be imposing and assert an architectural, quasi-manorial dominance over the town. Their presence within the Conservation Area and in views to and from the town underlines their own significance.
- 5.1.12 The layout of the town’s streets, including the narrow chares, constitutes an important part of the development of the town and the Policy seeks to ensure that this is incorporated positively into any development proposal rather than eroded or lost.

- 5.1.13 A full assessment of the special character of the Hexham Conservation Area can be found in the Hexham Conservation Area Appraisal (2009, adopted 2012). In addition, an Extensive Urban Survey has been carried out for Hexham, which provides a full assessment of the archaeological significance of the town. This is available on the Northumberland County website [here](#)
- 5.1.14 Under-enforcement of changes to some of Hexham’s listed buildings without the necessary consents is a constant problem in Hexham, and parts of Hexham’s Conservation Area are considered to be ‘at risk’ due to neglect of buildings, erection of signs on some of the listed buildings and works to listed buildings which do not have the benefit of listed building consent. Enforcement related issues mean that the problem continues unrelentingly and undermines what should be a high-quality historic environment which contributes so highly to the significance of Hexham as a historic market town.

NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

POLICY HNP4: Non-designated heritage Assets

Development including renovation or alterations affecting a non-designated heritage asset or its setting, whether locally listed or identified in the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan List of Heritage Assets (Annex A), should be designed having regard to the significance of the asset. Where development would lead to the loss of significance of a heritage asset (whether defined in Annex A or not), the developer will be required to record that loss in a manner proportionate to the importance of the asset and the impact and make the results of this work publicly accessible.

Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, developers will be required to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Policy Explanation:

- 5.1.15 There are a number of buildings and sites in the Neighbourhood Area that make a positive contribution to local character and sense of place because of a distinctive heritage value. The NPPF offers protection to non-designated heritage assets. Although such heritage assets may not be nationally designated or even located within the boundaries of a conservation area, they may be offered an additional level of protection by the local planning authority if they are identified on a formally adopted local list of non-designated heritage assets. The Local Planning Authority can also identify non-designated heritage assets on a case-by-case basis. The list identified in this Plan provides a definitive list in addition to other non-designated heritage assets which may also be identified. Northumberland County Council is in the process of formulating a list of local non-designated heritage assets, or a ‘local list’, but at the present time, no such list exists. The policy, as worded, seeks to ensure that if and when the County Council do formulate a ‘local list’, that this policy will then apply to that list as well as the list identified in this Plan in Annex A.
- 5.1.16 Hexham Town Council, through consultation with Hexham Civic Society and interested residents and organisations, is developing a list of buildings and structures that are of local historic interest in the Neighbourhood Area, based on the criteria outlined in Historic England's *Local Heritage Listing Advice Note (2016)*. In identifying a non-designated heritage asset, a robust methodology must be used, which identifies the significance of the heritage asset, to help inform what impacts should be considered when determining planning applications affecting those heritage assets. So far, one heritage asset has been assessed in detail, the former Hexham Workhouse, which is perhaps one of

the most important non-designated heritage assets in the Neighbourhood Area.

- 5.1.17 All these assets may be submitted to the County Council for inclusion in the local list. The proposed assets are shown at Annex A.
- 5.1.18 Hexham, with its origins in the Anglo-Saxon period, has a rich and important archaeological resource. This has been catalogued in the Extensive Urban Survey for Hexham, and this document provides an important resource for developers when considering whether a proposal is likely to impact on unknown archaeology.³

SHOP FRONT DESIGN IN THE CONSERVATION AREA

POLICY HNP5: Shop Front Design in the Conservation Area

Historic shop fronts in Hexham Conservation Area should be retained and their restoration will be supported. Changes to shop fronts in the Conservation Area should demonstrate how they have taken account of the most recently adopted shopfront design guidance for Hexham and must be of high quality, using traditional scale, proportions and materials, and they must respect the host building and the street scene.

Policy Explanation:

- 5.1.19 In a market town such as Hexham, shops and commercial premises are a key element of the Conservation Area and have a considerable impact on its overall appearance. Achieving a high standard of design in relation to shops and other businesses is important in underpinning the commercial success of Hexham. The attractiveness of such an area is critical to attracting and retaining businesses, thus contributing to the vitality and viability of the town centre. Well-designed shopfronts and other commercial frontages make the street attractive to shoppers, thus helping to support the local economy as well as enhancing the street scene.
- 5.1.20 Inappropriately designed shop fronts can significantly erode the quality of the street scene and adversely affect the setting of nearby listed buildings. [The Hexham Shopfront Design Guide](#) (published by Northumberland County Council in 2018) contains guidance to assist developers, retailers, design professionals and building owners to prepare designs for shopfronts and other commercial premises which respond well to local character. It provides the Council with a set of criteria against which to assess the quality of proposed works when determining applications for planning permission and listed building consent.
- 5.1.21 Many shop fronts in Hexham are within the Conservation Area. Many of these buildings are also listed, meaning that listed building consent would be required for any alterations to shop frontages. Historic shop fronts may be more modern in some cases (for instance, from the Art Deco period).

³ <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-1019-1/dissemination/pdf/Hexham.pdf>



Figure 3: Example of a traditional shop front on Market Street in the Hexham Conservation Area

Principles of good shopfront design

- 5.1.22 A good shopfront is more than just large windows, a door and a sign. It is important to consider all the individual components which make up a shopfront and how they go together to form the finished design, including especially the proportions of each element. This involves understanding the host building and the space available for the shopfront where no single element should dominate. The choice of materials and colour also needs careful consideration to ensure that they are sympathetic to the overall building and the street scene.
- 5.1.23 Where an entirely new shopfront is required, and there is good historical evidence of an appropriate earlier design, such as an old photograph, the Town Council would like to see the earlier design replicated. Sometimes unsympathetic later shopfronts are found to have covered older, more traditional shopfront elements. This can be good news and means that the older elements can be refurbished as part of an overall appropriate scheme.
- 5.1.24 Contemporary designs are sometimes acceptable if they are of high quality, use traditional scale and proportions, and respect the host building and the street scene. New frontages should represent locally distinctive characteristics in terms of design, scale, massing, height and materials.

HEXHAM MARKET PLACE



Figure 4: Market Square in Hexham on market day

POLICY HNP6: Hexham Market Place

Proposals for the regeneration of the Market Place and other parts of the public realm within Hexham will be supported where the scheme conserves or enhances the setting of listed buildings including where relevant, Hexham Abbey and the special character and historic interest of other buildings, structures and historic ground surfaces in and around the area that contribute to the sense of place.

Development in the Market Place must not harm highway safety and should pay particular regard to pedestrians and cyclists and the needs of visitors with a disability.

Proposals that incorporate public art will be supported where they meet criteria outlined in this policy.

Policy Explanation:

- 5.1.25 A recent consultation has been conducted by the consultancy firm Sustrans on behalf of Hexham Town Council and Northumberland County Council into the future of the Market Place in Hexham. The consultation received over 400 responses, and there is a clear consensus that any development or regeneration of the Market Place must respect the very special local character and setting of the Abbey and other historic buildings in and around the Market Place.
- 5.1.26 The safety and accessibility of the market place for all users and in particular people with a disability, pedestrians and cyclists were considered to be of paramount importance.

DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

POLICY HNP7: Designated Heritage Assets

Proposals either within, or affecting the setting or character of any of Hexham's listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens and the Hexham Conservation Area must ensure that they conserve these assets and their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight will be given to the asset's conservation. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.

Substantial harm or loss of grade II listed buildings or the grade II parks and gardens referred to in this policy should be exceptional.

The two registered parks in Hexham are shown on the Policies Map and are:

- a) Hexham Parks (comprising the Sele, the Abbey Grounds and Hexham House Grounds) (Grade II), and
- b) St Andrew's Cemetery (Grade II)

Assets of the highest significance in Hexham are the Grade I and II* listed buildings and the Scheduled Monuments. The three scheduled monuments in Hexham are shown on the Policies Map and are:

- c) Remains of medieval priory and Anglo Saxon monastery under and around Hexham Abbey and its precincts
- d) Hexham Manor Office (or gaol)
- e) Hexham Bridge

There are six Grade I listed buildings in the Neighbourhood Area and these are shown on the Policies Map:

- f) The Priory Church of St. Andrews (Hexham Abbey)
- g) The claustral buildings of the former Augustinian Priory of St Andrew
- h) The Moot Hall
- i) The Manor Office
- j) St. Wilfrid's Gateway (The Priory Gatehouse)
- k) The Spital (at Hexham Golf Club)

There are 20 grade II* listed buildings, which are set out at the end of the Plan (Annex B). There are a further 151 listed buildings in Hexham, many of which are within the Hexham Conservation Area and its setting.

Policy Explanation:

5.1.27 For a town of its size, Hexham has a high number (176) of listed buildings, mostly in the Conservation Area. They are a major asset for the town and they play an important role in creating the architectural landscape of the town centre. They are protected by relevant policy in the NPPF and strategic policies in the development plan. However, there is a need for them to be monitored to ensure they are not threatened by neglect, decay or underuse. Equally their preservation and use are important as part of using heritage assets to encourage economic development for the benefit of the town. The Town Council will seek to encourage stone and brickwork maintenance

and repairs are carried out appropriately to ensure the future wellbeing of premises.

- 5.1.28 The main buildings and monuments that contribute to the significance of Hexham's historic environment are listed in the policy. Elsewhere in the town are numerous designated and non-designated heritage assets, all of which play a key role in the conservation area and the street scene in Hexham.
- 5.1.29 The Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England is maintained by Historic England. There are two Grade II registered Parks in Hexham: the Hexham Parks (comprising the Sele, the Abbey Grounds and Hexham House Grounds) and St. Andrew's Cemetery. Registered parks and gardens are designated heritage assets.
- 5.1.30 The Hexham Parks have historic significance but also have significance in forming important open spaces in the heart of the town. The Hexham Parks are also allocated as Local Green Space which reflects the significance of these parks for recreational value as well as historic value. The combination of these open green spaces and the Grade I listed buildings creates a unique atmosphere that contributes to the character of the conservation area in the heart of Hexham.
- 5.1.31 St. Andrew's Cemetery is located on the West Road, outside the main built up area of Hexham and within the Green Belt. Both registered parks and gardens are particularly important for their veteran trees.

6 PLANNING POLICIES: HOUSING

The objective in relation to new housing in Hexham is:

Hexham will have the right number, type and size of new homes needed for the local population. New housing will have energy efficiency at its heart. It will be in the right place, look good and be well connected to the rest of Hexham. The necessary infrastructure will be in place to make new build viable giving desirable and sustainable places to live.

6.1.1 The policies emerging from this objective are contained in this part of the Plan. These policies are:

POLICY HNP8: Housing Allocations

HNP8.1: The Workhouse

HNP8.2: The Telephone Exchange

HNP8.3: Land at Edgewood

HNP8.4: Land West of Station Road

HNP8.5: Bog Acre Cottage and Haulage Site

HNP8.6: Priestpopple County Buildings

HNP8.7: Graves Yard

HNP8.8: Broadgates

HNP8.9: Police Houses

HNP8.10: Bus Depot and Land at Chareway Lane

POLICY HNP9: New Housing Development

POLICY HNP10: Affordable Housing Provision

POLICY HNP11: Housing for Older People

POLICY HNP12: Rural Exception Sites for Affordable Housing

6.1.2 To achieve the vision of a sustainable community, Hexham's housing must contribute to the town's economic and commercial vitality by offering a supply and mix appropriate to the diverse needs of different ages and income ranges within the town's population. Hexham is constrained on all sides by green belt or the River Tyne. The Neighbourhood Plan has therefore sought to look for brownfield sites within the town that could deliver the proportion of new housing identified as being needed in Hexham.

6.1.3 Hexham has a very different housing 'picture' from other parts of Northumberland. In order to see clearly what the housing situation is in Hexham, a Housing Needs Survey (HNS) was commissioned and carried out in 2016. Questionnaires were distributed to every household in Hexham, and the response rate was over 25%. The results of this survey revealed some key issues in Hexham:

- an acute shortage of affordable housing;
- a shortage of the right 'type' of dwelling, and particularly 2 and 3 bedroomed houses;
- a shortage of a mix of housing for older people.

6.1.4 The policies in this section seek to redress, as far as possible, the imbalance in housing availability and need through policy interventions to encourage more provision of affordable housing, housing for older people, and the right mix of types of market housing for purchase or rent.

6.1.5 A large proportion of housing needed in Hexham can be provided on sustainably located brownfield

sites in Hexham, fulfilling multi-functional benefits of regeneration and providing much needed affordable and market housing, particularly affordable housing and housing for the elderly in more central, accessible locations.

- 6.1.6 To inform the selection of sites for allocation, a Site Options and Assessment was carried out by AECOM, contracted to Locality and on behalf of the Town Council. A number of sites were identified which could deliver much needed housing in more accessible and sustainable parts of Hexham. Consultation with residents assisted with the initial list of housing sites.
- 6.1.7 A number of the sites identified are already on the Northumberland County Council 'Brownfield Land Register', a system which was introduced through The Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017.
- 6.1.8 One site (Site 10) is located in Flood Zone 3 on the current Environment Agency maps. Work has been completed to reduce the flood risk on this site, and the policy requires that any proposal on any site at risk of flooding must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment.
- 6.1.9 A sequential test has taken place to ensure alternatives to sites most at risk of flooding are investigated. However, given the shortage of housing land in Hexham (due to constraints of Green Belt tightly drawn around Hexham), there are no alternative sites. In order to meet the housing requirement over the Plan period, it has been necessary to consider sites in locations potentially at risk of flooding. It is considered that this flood risk can be mitigated, and it should be noted that Northumberland County Council has identified the same land for housing in the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

HOUSING SITE ALLOCATIONS

POLICY HNP8: Housing Site Allocations

The following sites, also shown on the Policies Map, are allocated for housing development in Hexham:

- HNP8.1: The Workhouse (Old Hospital), Dean Street and Corbridge Road
- HNP8.2: The Telephone Exchange, west of Eastgate
- HNP8.3: Land at Edgewood
- HNP8.4: Land west of Station Road
- HNP8.5: Bog Acre Cottage and Haulage site
- HNP8.6: Priestpottle County Buildings
- HNP8.7: Graves Yard
- HNP8.8: Broadgates
- HNP8.9: Police Houses
- HNP8.10: Bus Depot and Land at Chareway Lane

Housing development will also be supported on windfall sites within Hexham, outside the Green Belt.

Policy Explanation:

- 6.1.10 The Green Belt is drawn tightly around the built-up area of Hexham. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to alter Green Belt boundaries and the emerging Northumberland Local Plan does not propose to remove land from the Green Belt in the Neighbourhood Area to deliver housing. Given this, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to provide for the delivery of the Neighbourhood Area's

housing requirement within Hexham, outside the Green Belt. The Neighbourhood Area’s identified housing requirement over the plan period, agreed with Northumberland County Council, is a minimum of 530 dwellings.

- 6.1.11 Hexham’s housing requirement is considered in detail in the evidence base supporting the Neighbourhood Plan and the background Housing Report contained within the evidence base identifies provision for at least 587 dwellings over the plan period, taking into account, for example, dwellings already built and anticipated windfall figures.
- 6.1.12 There was a high level of support within the local community for bringing forward brownfield land for housing and mixed-use (mix of housing and employment/live-work units) development. This is because many of the brownfield sites in Hexham are situated in the most highly accessible (and therefore, sustainable) locations in the town, and because their development would regenerate and improve the appearance of parts of the town.
- 6.1.13 The allocation of these sites achieves multiple objectives of contributing to the overall sustainability of the town, reducing the need to travel by car, regenerating and improving the appearance of run-down areas and supporting development in the most highly accessible locations.
- 6.1.14 The sites are allocated for housing development. Site Assessments for suitability for housing were carried out on a number of sites in Hexham. Included in these assessments were the two school sites of Hexham Middle School and Queen Elizabeth’s High School. If these schools merge, the number of new homes on suitable sites in Hexham could increase significantly, well over and above the minimum housing requirement. These sites are not designated for housing at this stage but could come forward during the Plan period.

LIST OF ALLOCATED HOUSING SITES:

There follows a list of 10 allocated housing sites and these are numbered HNP8.1 – HNP8.10:

POLICY HNP8.1: The Workhouse Site (Old Hospital), Dean Street and Corbridge Road

This site is allocated for housing development. Any proposal on this site must demonstrate through a Design and Access Statement how the following have been incorporated into the scheme:

- a) Retention of existing buildings, which are non-designated heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the Hexham Conservation Area. This will be best determined through submission of a Heritage Statement; and
- b) How the development will conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Hexham Conservation Area; and
- c) High quality landscaping along the frontage and within the development; and
- d) Safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

New build on undeveloped parts of the site will be appropriate and should comprise high density development due to the central location of the site.

The site can accommodate at least 80 dwellings.

6.1.15 A key principle for any development on this site will be the retention and where possible interpretation of the historic buildings related to the Workhouse. This can be best determined through a Heritage Statement that will explain how any scheme on the site respects the significance of the non-designated heritage asset and has particular regard to the character and appearance of the Hexham Conservation Area.

6.1.16 The total site is 1.3ha.

POLICY HNP8.2: The Telephone Exchange

This site is allocated for housing development. Any proposal on this site must demonstrate through a Design and Access Statement, how the following have been incorporated into the scheme:

- i) safe removal of existing buildings without significantly impacting on the amenity of nearby residents;
- ii) safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists; and
- iii) how the scheme conserves the setting of the Hexham Conservation Area.

The site can accommodate at least 20 dwellings.

Policy Explanation:

6.1.17 The Telephone Exchange site consists of two adjacent sites currently occupied by a telephone exchange and the associated outbuildings and car park. The site is located very close to the centre of Hexham and well situated for services and facilities. This proximity means that it could have an impact on the setting of the Conservation Area, in particular on the roofscape due to the site's size and elevated position.

6.1.18 While still in use as a telephone exchange, there is an expectation that they will become available over the plan period. Being situated in an established residential area the sites would be a logical option for redevelopment once available.

6.1.19 The site is particularly suitable for affordable housing, or older people's housing, due to its central location. The site is 0.6 hectares.

POLICY HNP8.3: Land at Edgewood

This site is allocated for housing development. Any proposal on this site must demonstrate through a Design and Access Statement, how the following have been incorporated into the scheme:

- i) High quality landscaping along the frontage and within the development; and
- ii) Safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

The site can accommodate no more than 5 dwellings.

Policy Explanation:

6.1.20 Land at Edgewood represents a small 'greenfield' infill opportunity within an established residential area. Trees are an important feature on this site, and where possible, trees should be retained, and high-quality landscaping incorporated.

- 6.1.21 Due to the need to retain mature trees, the site may deliver less than, and no more than 5 dwellings.

POLICY HNP8.4: Land West of Station Road

This site is allocated for housing development. Any proposal on this site must demonstrate through a Design and Access Statement, how the following have been incorporated into the scheme:

- i) Retention of historic buildings and structures on the site where possible and viable;
- ii) How the development will conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Hexham Conservation Area;
- iii) Safe removal of existing buildings; and
- iv) Safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

The site can accommodate at least 10 dwellings.

Policy Explanation:

- 6.1.22 This site is a brownfield site at the edge of the town centre that is occupied by buildings and businesses, but for which availability for redevelopment in the future has been confirmed. The site offers a sustainable location with good access to central Hexham, being close to services and facilities, and Hexham railway station. There are some historic buildings and structures on the site, and these should be incorporated into the overall design of any scheme, unless it has an impact on viability, or if it not physically possible to provide the required number of dwellings.
- 6.1.23 The site is not immediately available but there should be no obstacle in the longer-term once demolition and clearance have been completed.

POLICY HNP8.5: Bog Acre Cottage and Haulage Site

This site is allocated for housing development. Any proposal on this site must demonstrate through a Design and Access Statement, how the following have been incorporated into the scheme:

- i) Safe removal of existing buildings;
- ii) Protection of the amenity of nearby properties; and
- iii) Safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

The site can accommodate around 6 dwellings.

Policy Explanation:

- 6.1.24 Bog Acre Cottage and Haulage sites comprises two linked pieces of land for which there is confirmed interest in redevelopment for housing and have been the subject of a recent withdrawn planning application. The agent confirms that a revised application is due to be submitted in the near future. One parcel comprises a former garage building that is vacant, with the other site comprising a single dwelling and vacant land. Together they represent an opportunity for infill on brownfield land close to the town centre once cleared.

POLICY HNP8.6: Priestpopple County Buildings

This site is allocated for housing development. Any proposal on this site must demonstrate through a Design and Access Statement, how the following have been incorporated into the scheme:

- i) Retention of existing buildings, which are non-designated heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the Hexham Conservation Area;
- ii) How the scheme conserves or enhances the character of the Hexham Conservation Area;
- iii) High quality landscaping along the frontage and within the development; and
- iv) Safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

The site can accommodate at least 8 dwellings.

Policy Explanation:

6.1.25 This site is in use at the present time but could come forward for a small-scale housing development. It is in a prominent part of the conservation area, and so any scheme here would have to be sensitively designed.

6.1.26 The site is 0.2 hectares.

POLICY HNP8.7: Graves Yard

This site is allocated for housing development. Any proposal on this site must demonstrate through a Design and Access Statement, how the following have been incorporated into the scheme:

- i) Retention of any existing buildings which are non-designated heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the Hexham Conservation Area;
- ii) High quality landscaping along the frontage and within the development; and
- iii) Safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

This site could accommodate at least 8 dwellings.

Policy Explanation:

6.1.27 In use at the present time but could come forward for a small-scale housing development. It lies on the edge of the town centre within an easy walking distance. The site is quiet with no through access, although a good access road already exists.

6.1.28 The site is 0.2 hectares.

POLICY HNP8.8: Broadgates

This site is allocated for housing development. Any proposal on this site must demonstrate through a Design and Access Statement, how the following have been incorporated into the scheme:

- i) Retention of any existing buildings which are non-designated heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area;
- ii) High quality landscaping along the frontage and within the development; and
- iii) Safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

This site can accommodate at least 4 dwellings.

Policy Explanation:

- 6.1.29 This site has been used recently as a pottery, hardware warehouse and bakery. Two-thirds of the site is already vacant and the pottery owner's intention is to close in 2019. It is within the conservation area and any proposal here will have to pay careful attention to the detailed design of any development.
- 6.1.30 The site area is 0.1 hectares and is therefore a small site that could accommodate in the region of 4 dwellings or up to 10 apartment units.

POLICY HNP8.9: Police Houses land adjacent to the Police Station

This site is allocated for housing development. Any proposal on this site must demonstrate through a Design and Access Statement, how the following have been incorporated into the scheme:

- i) Safe removal of existing buildings;
- ii) Retention where possible of trees and high quality landscaping;
- iii) How the development will conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Hexham Conservation Area; and
- iv) Safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

This site can accommodate at least 20 dwellings.

Policy Explanation:

- 6.1.31 The Police Houses site has recently been sold for development, and it is anticipated that the site could deliver in the region of 20 houses. There is currently a very low-density housing development on the site, which were the original police houses associated with the police station.

POLICY HNP8.10: Bus Depot and Land at Chareway Lane

This site is allocated for housing development. Any proposal on this site must demonstrate through a Design and Access Statement, how the following have been incorporated into the scheme:

- i) Retention of existing structures of historic interest where possible and viable;
- ii) Conservation or enhancement of the setting of the House of Correction (Grade II listed building) including structures attached to that building;
- iii) Safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists; and
- iv) How the scheme can be landscaped to contribute positively to the wildlife corridor running opposite the site frontage.

The site can accommodate at least 30 dwellings.

In addition to the above, a site-specific flood risk assessment (FRA) must be submitted with any planning application on this site. This FRA must include at least:

- a) an assessment of the condition and location of existing flood defences in discussion with the Environment Agency; and
- b) an assessment of the risk of existing flood defences failing; and
- c) an assessment of the extent, duration, velocity, depth and rate of onset of flooding, as well as identification of likely affected properties, infrastructure and communities; and
- d) details of how any loss of floodplain will be compensated for elsewhere on the site; and
- e) evidence to demonstrate that there will be no increase in flood risk elsewhere as a result of development on this site.

Policy Explanation:

- 6.1.32 This site is currently in use as a bus depot, and land and buildings to the rear are used as a joiner's yard and a caravan park. Part of the site was put forward as a proposed site in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.
- 6.1.33 Anti-flood measures have been added as late as 2017 to protect further the site and existing properties at Tyne Green and further engineering work is being undertaken by the Environment Agency, commencing April 2018. However, the Environment Agency have made it clear that any development on this site will require a site-specific flood risk assessment (FRA) which must include an assessment of the issues identified in the policy; the existing flood defences must be re-assessed in any new proposal in case they have failed over time, for example because of lack of maintenance and that any development on this site must ensure it does not contribute to flooding elsewhere.
- 6.1.34 There is a Grade II listed building adjacent to this site (the House of Correction). The Town Council would like to see development take opportunities to enhance the setting of this listed building and ensure that any scheme does not compromise its setting. The Town Council would also like to see the retention of historic structures around the listed building and that are linked with the history of the site and their incorporation into any proposals.
- 6.1.35 The site is 1.2 hectares.

NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

POLICY HNP9: New Housing Development

Residential development proposals should demonstrate how they have taken account of:

- a) existing trees, hedgerows, wildlife corridors and heritage assets;
- b) patterns of cycle, pedestrian and vehicular movement and highway safety;
- c) high quality design having regard to Building for Life 12 Third Edition (2015); and
- d) contribution towards a mix of housing types, including local need for more two- and three-bedroom houses and bungalows.

Sites in Flood Zones 2 or 3 on the Environment Agency Flood Maps must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment.

Policy Explanation:

- 6.1.36 The policy seeks to ensure that a number of issues are addressed through a Design and Access Statement, where required. Some small schemes for single dwellings do not require a Design and Access Statement, thus the policy states: ‘where required’.
- 6.1.37 All new housing will be delivered within the built-up area of Hexham. In order to secure high standards of development, this policy seeks to ensure that new housing developments fulfil a number of key principles relevant to Hexham.
- 6.1.38 Building for Life principles are widely regarded as providing a comprehensive guide to excellence for design and layout of housing developments, and the NPPF.
- 6.1.39 Sites in Flood Zones must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment which will demonstrate that the development of the site will not lead to increased flooding, and that mitigation can be provided. Early communication will be necessary with the Environment Agency on any site within a Flood Zone.
- 6.1.40 Hexham Town Council will encourage applicants to engage on all major housing applications in the Neighbourhood Area. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF advocates early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes and reconciling local and commercial interests. This will be particularly welcomed at sites that are particularly important to people in Hexham, or are adjacent to a wildlife corridor, or are particularly prominent in the street scene; for example the Workhouse Site, both of which is in the Conservation area and highly prominent in the town.
- 6.1.41 The 2016 Housing Needs Survey for Hexham⁴ identified a particular shortfall in availability of 2 and 3 bedroomed houses, and bungalows. In order to achieve balanced growth and to cater for demand, the Town Council would like to see proposals for housing development ensure that they provide a mix of dwelling types, and in particular, cater for the need for more 2/3 bed houses and bungalows.

⁴Hexham Housing Needs Assessment (2016) for Hexham Town Council and Northumberland County Council by Arc 4 Consultants

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION

POLICY HNP10: Affordable Housing Provision

All housing developments of 10 units or more must provide affordable housing in accordance with the Development Plan. At least 10% of any affordable housing should be for purchase.

Policy Explanation:

- 6.1.42 There are many ways of delivering affordable housing. Given the acute shortage of affordable housing identified in Hexham, it is necessary to ensure that the Plan provides as much support as possible for a variety of methods of delivering affordable housing. Policy HNP10 refers to housing contributions/provision required from market housing schemes of 10 units or more. There are, however, other ways that affordable housing can be provided.
- 6.1.43 Policy HNP10 supports these alternative mechanisms for delivering affordable housing; for example, through Registered Social Landlords, local Community Trusts, Community-led Housing Schemes, self-build projects and through rural exception sites as defined in the NPPF.
- 6.1.44 The detailed Housing Needs Assessment undertaken for the Hexham Neighbourhood Area identified a strong need for affordable housing in Hexham. The report concludes that there is a net annual imbalance of 68 affordable housing units (resulting in an average of 45 new dwellings needed per annum), and there is a clear case for requiring a high commitment to delivery of affordable housing. Even if every new house built in Hexham over the Plan period were to be affordable, the anticipated need would still not be entirely met over the first 5 years of the Plan.
- 6.1.45 From the Housing Needs Survey, projections to the end of March 2021, key factors influencing policy are:
- over 50% of needs are for 2 bedrooms, including general need and older person need,
 - the highest level of need overall (79%) is for 2 or 3 bedroom homes,
 - the need among older people is for 1 and 2 bedroom units.

HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

POLICY HNP11: Housing for Older People

The provision of housing for older people, including extra-care housing, later-living schemes and sheltered housing, in the town centre and in areas within Hexham outside the Green Belt well served by public transport will be supported.

Policy Explanation:

- 6.1.46 Hexham has an ageing demographic. The 2011 census showed Hexham had a smaller proportion of its population of working age than the County as a whole and a significantly larger proportion aged over 65 years. This population is projected to increase, with the increase in people over 75 anticipated to reach 62.1%. The Housing Needs Assessment showed that there was a need for additional housing for older people, and particularly for extra-care and sheltered housing (defined in the Plan glossary).

- 6.1.47 The policy supports the provision of housing for older people in central and accessible locations. This means housing should be provided in the town centre of Hexham. If not within the town centre, then it is important that sites are well served by public transport, enabling occupiers to easily access services and facilities by public transport.

RURAL EXCEPTION SITES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

POLICY HNP12: Rural Exception Sites for Affordable Housing

The development of small sites on the edge of the built-up area for rural exception affordable housing will be supported.

Policy Explanation

- 6.1.48 Paragraph 145 in the NPPF states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are ‘limited infilling in villages and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites)’. Rural exception sites are defined in the glossary of the NPPF as:

‘Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority’s discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.’

7 PLANNING POLICIES: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Objective 4: Natural Environment, Health and Well-Being

Hexham's residents will enjoy improved health and well-being through good access to leisure, sport, heritage, arts, and other facilities in Hexham. Accessible and well-linked green spaces (including to the surrounding countryside) will mean a better natural environment for residents and a more wildlife-friendly Hexham.

The following policies seek to achieve the above objective:

POLICY HNP13: Local Green Spaces in Hexham

POLICY HNP14: Tyne Green Country Park and Tyne Green

POLICY HNP15: Wildlife Corridors

POLICY HNP16: Allotments

POLICY HNP17: Hedgerows, Trees and Verges in Hexham

POLICY HNP18: Dark Skies

POLICY HNP19: Community Facilities

POLICY HNP20: Community Renewables Schemes

POLICY HNP21: Walking and Cycling in Hexham

Introduction

- 7.1.1 Residents in Hexham strongly value their local green spaces along with the biodiversity and recreational opportunities that green spaces provide, both within, and on the edge of the town.
- 7.1.2 Hexham has a wealth of community facilities related to heritage, leisure and the arts, and these are also highly valued, not only by residents within Hexham but by people in the surrounding rural areas, for whom Hexham is their retail and services town.
- 7.1.3 These policies all seek to fulfil the objective which is to improve the overall health and well-being of residents in the town, through the provision of accessible and well-linked green spaces, a better natural environment for residents and wildlife, and support for valued community facilities.
- 7.1.4 Specific issues identified in local consultations in relation to Natural Environment, Health and Well-being were:
 - to protect 'wildlife corridors' which are so highly valued in Hexham;
 - to protect valued green space in the town as 'Local Green Space';
 - to ensure that Dukeshouse Wood remains an asset for the local community, and continues to be used and managed for that purpose;
 - to support existing community facilities and provide more to help with other plan objectives;
 - to value Tyne Green Country Park, and allow appropriate development there that is related to the use of the area;
 - to support the conservation of the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park;
 - to maintain the special character of Hexham, through protecting trees, hedgerows and verges which are important to the 'street scene' and public realm.

LOCAL GREEN SPACES IN HEXHAM

POLICY HNP13: Local Green Spaces in Hexham

The sites listed below and shown on the Policies Map are designated as areas of Local Green Space:

LGS 1: Hexham Parks (the Sele, the Abbey Grounds and Hexham House Grounds)

LGS 2: Cricket Club at Leazes Lane

LGS3: Tennis and Cricket Club at Eilansgate

LGS4: Green space at Highford Park

LGS5: Wydon Reservoir

LGS6: Children's play areas in the Priestlands estate

LGS7: Bowling Green, Elvaston Road

LGS8: Dene Park Play Area, Corbridge Road

LGS9: Bell Terrace Play Area

LGS10: Priestlands Dene Play Area

These Local Green Spaces will be protected in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt.

Policy Explanation:

- 7.1.5 The designation of valued green spaces that serve the local community in Hexham is an essential dimension of planning for a sustainable town and part of the wider balance of delivering sustainable development in the town.
- 7.1.6 Paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies the circumstances in which local green space can be identified:
- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
 - where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
- 7.1.7 A variety of green spaces are identified in Northumberland County Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities assessment (2012). A number of sites were identified in that document as being worthy of protection and improvement. Those sites were listed and separated into different categories: outdoor sports facilities, allotments, semi-natural greenspace and amenity green space.
- 7.1.8 Extensive consultation with the local community has revealed which of these green spaces are really demonstrably special to the local communities. Background papers illustrate each green space, provide maps, and illustrate how they are 'demonstrably special' in terms of the criteria outlined in the NPPF and NPPG.
- 7.1.9 There are some areas which are not included as Local Green Space but have been identified through community consultation as being important. These areas are not included because they are covered by other policies in the Plan or are already protected because they are in the green belt.

TYNE GREEN COUNTRY PARK AND TYNE GREEN

POLICY HNP14: Tyne Green Country Park and Tyne Green

Tyne Green Country Park and Tyne Green are shown on the Policies Map.

New development which is directly related to the recreational enjoyment of Tyne Green Country Park will be supported where it does not have a negative impact on biodiversity, is flood resilient and does not impact negatively on the purposes of the Green Belt as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Development Plan.

Development proposals which improve pedestrian and cycle access to Tyne Green Country Park from the town centre and from existing and proposed areas of housing will be supported.

Policy Explanation:

- 7.1.10 Tyne Green Country Park was gifted to the Hexham Local Board of Health in 1887 by Wentworth Blackett Beaumont (later Lord Allendale), in commemoration of the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria, to be managed as ‘public pleasure grounds’.
- 7.1.11 Restoration work and environmental improvements have been grant-aided by the Countryside Commission which recognised the area of some 19 hectares as a ‘country park’ in 1982. Today, this picturesque area of Tyne Green is highly valued by the local community. Every year in the autumn hundreds of people come to watch the salmon leap. Sea Trout and Dace are also prevalent in the river, and this area is the northernmost stronghold for Dace, which is a highly prized coarse fish species, the catches of which support several very high profile angling matches on the river. The Tyne Green area of the Tyne is one of the few places where the public can buy day tickets for fishing, the vast majority of the rest of the river being controlled by Estates, clubs and individuals.
- 7.1.12 There are a number of recreational clubs (golf, canoeing, rowing and open water swimming) which use Tyne Green, and the recently opened Sandstone Way (Hexham to Berwick) cycle route begins here, joining with a number of other cycle routes on the National Network. There are also footpaths and bridleways, most notably the footpath along the bank of the Tyne to Warden.



Figure 5: Tyne Green with Hexham Bridge

- 7.1.13 Public amenities and activities at Tyne Green include a municipal golf course, a circular walking trail, fishing, a children's play area, picnic benches and barbeques. Parts of Tyne Green have significant nature conservation value, and there are a variety of valuable habitats along the banks of the river.
- 7.1.14 A fish pass was built in 2016. There is potential for a visitor centre to further interpret and explain the interesting wildlife and habitats along this stretch of the Tyne.
- 7.1.15 The current club house on Tyne Green, used by the rowing and canoeing clubs, was recently refurbished.
- 7.1.16 The Tyne is prone to flooding, with a significant flooding event experienced in the winter of 2015, raising important issues related to catchment management beyond the Neighbourhood Plan boundaries. There is also the need to ensure that any development on Tyne Green which will be within the flood zone is designed to be resilient to flooding.

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

POLICY HNP15: Wildlife Corridors

Development proposals must respect the wildlife corridors identified on the Policies Map. Proposals for development must ensure that there is no negative impact on the integrity of the wildlife corridor or on the water quality of riverine systems and they should take opportunities to enhance the biodiversity value. External lighting requiring planning permission must not impact negatively in areas along wildlife corridors where darkness is characteristic. Development should not result in the further fragmentation of wildlife corridors shown on the Policies Map.

Policy Explanation:

- 7.1.17 A wildlife corridor is a link of wildlife habitat, generally native vegetation, which joins with other areas of similar wildlife habitat. Corridors are critical for the maintenance of ecological processes including allowing for the movement of animals and the continuation of viable populations.
- 7.1.18 Community consultation revealed that there are a number of wildlife corridors that are highly valued by residents, both for their inherent nature conservation value and also for their recreational value.
- 7.1.19 The main 'wildlife corridor' running through the Neighbourhood Area is the River Tyne. The River Tyne is identified as a strategic wildlife corridor in the Northumberland Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- 7.1.20 The Conservation Area Appraisal for Hexham⁶ summarises how the wildlife corridors, or 'green fingers', are integral to the built form of Hexham:

Hexham's elevated position on a glacial terrace overlooking the Tyne valley is of immense visual importance. With a rural backdrop of fields and tree clad slopes, views of the town dominated by the silhouette drawn by the medieval buildings spread across the scarp of the terrace are extremely attractive. The terrace is cut by burns which not only provided the running water to encourage Saxon settlement and drive early industry, but also created a landform over which later roads and buildings twist and turn to create a development pattern and built form which displays subtlety and frequent surprise. The burn valleys draw tentacles of wooded countryside into the town, splitting the built-up area.⁵

⁵ Hexham Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009, adopted 2012) p.8



Figure 6: Wildlife corridor along Cockshaw Burn

- 7.1.21 Under the provisions of Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, the government was required to publish a list of priority species and habitats which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.
- 7.1.22 Lowland mixed deciduous woodlands are a priority habitat, and include oak, birch, ash, sycamore, holly and hazel. They provide home to a wide range of fungi and plants, including many 'ancient woodland' species, such as bluebells and wood anemone. Many species of bird and other animals depend on them. They also have a role to play in the removal of pollutants, absorption of noise, soil protection, flood regulation and maintenance of water quality. They are also a source of recreation. Their importance in the urban context is therefore important.
- 7.1.23 The wildlife corridors in Hexham all comprise areas of priority habitat. Some are linked to fragments of ancient woodland, which follow the existing burns that run through Hexham, eventually reaching the Tyne, the main wildlife corridor in the Neighbourhood Area. These wildlife corridors double up as substantial green spaces within the built-up area of Hexham.
- 7.1.24 The wildlife corridors identified along the burns into Hexham are: Cockshaw Burn, Halgut Burn, Skinners Burn, Wydon Water (whose source is Wydon Reservoir) and, towards the east of Hexham, the watercourse at Bogle Hole.
- 7.1.25 The River Tyne is the main wildlife corridor into which all the burns feed. The Tyne itself supports a wide range of priority species, including otters and kingfishers. It supports one of the largest salmon populations in the country, and along its western banks is the Tyne Watersmeet SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest).
- 7.1.26 To the south, Dipton Mill Burn which runs along the southern boundary of the Parish and comprises a large area of ancient woodland, as well as a number of Local Wildlife Sites is also designated as a wildlife corridor.
- 7.1.27 There are areas of ancient woodland on the periphery of Hexham, some are mapped and some are not due to their size.⁶ These stretches of woodland reach into Hexham along the burns.

⁶ Small fragments of ancient woodland (under 2ha) are not mapped on the government GIS system

ALLOTMENTS



Figure 7: Allotments at Wydon Burn, Hexham

POLICY HNP16: Allotments

Existing allotment sites identified on the Policies Map in Hexham will be retained and protected. Where development affecting existing allotment sites is unavoidable, alternative sites in the vicinity, which are of equivalent or larger size, with an equivalent or greater level of accessibility and quality (including fertility and soil quality), and equivalent or superior facilities must be provided before the development can commence.

The allotments identified on the map are:

ALT1: Quatre Bras Allotments

ALT2: Woodside Allotments

ALT3: Wydon Burn Allotments

The provision of new allotments within the Neighbourhood Area will be supported.

Policy Explanation:

- 7.1.28 The links between actively growing food and health and well-being are well established. Allotments are highly valued by the local residents that use them, and there are waiting lists for the more popular (easily accessible) allotment sites in Hexham. Since 2012 there have been consistently more people waiting for allotments than allotments available.⁷
- 7.1.29 The National Allotment Society (NSALG) recommends a minimum provision of 2 standard size allotments (250 square metres) per 100 households. At 2011, Hexham had 6017 households. There are currently 88 full size allotment units in Hexham. This equates to a deficit of approximately 30 allotment units for the town at present. This deficit is borne out by the long waiting lists for allotments.

⁷ Hexham Town Council Allotment records

- 7.1.30 The Town Council is keen to see that allotments, wherever possible, are provided within easy walking distance of the communities they serve.

HEDGEROWS, TREES AND VERGES IN HEXHAM

POLICY HNP17: Hedgerows, Trees and Verges in Hexham

The loss of healthy trees and hedgerows in the Neighbourhood Area will not be supported. Where loss of trees as part of a development proposal is unavoidable, then at least 2:1 replacement should be provided of the same species or other native species. Where the loss of a hedgerow is unavoidable, new species-rich hedgerows should be planted on site. Robust reasons must be provided as to why they cannot be provided on site. In these cases, alternative provision may be sought elsewhere in Hexham.

Proposals involving the loss of green verges that contribute to the street scene in Hexham will not be supported.

Policy Explanation:

- 7.1.31 Paragraph 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- 7.1.32 Trees and hedgerows are key features contributing to the character of Hexham. They also help join wildlife corridors reaching into the town and contribute positively to the character of different areas of Hexham. Trees within the Conservation Area are automatically protected from felling without consent. Elsewhere, trees may be protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Historic hedgerows are particularly important as they tend to be made up of a wider variety of species. Hedgerows are identified as a priority habitat for conservation in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The Hedgerow Regulations (2007) prevent removal of certain hedgerows without prior notice.
- 7.1.33 ‘Species rich’ hedgerows may be understood as those which contain 4 or more native woody species on average in a 30m length.
- 7.1.34 Within the Conservation Area of Hexham, trees cannot be removed without planning permission. The extent of the Conservation Area has been significantly reduced since its initial designation. This means that some trees could be under threat of removal without the need for planning consent. A Community Project is therefore proposed to identify trees which are important to the street scene and to work with Northumberland County Council to secure Preservation Orders for these trees.
- 7.1.35 A number of verges and green spaces along streets in Hexham were identified by residents as important to the setting of the street scene and public realm. These spaces have not been proposed as Local Green Spaces, as they have a street amenity value rather than a recreational, biodiversity or historic value.
- 7.1.36 Examples of important verges identified by the local community are:
- Old Grammar School verge (between Wentworth Car Park and Hallgate),
 - Bankside between Haugh Lane and Market Street,
 - Loosing Hill/Priestpopple verges and trees,
 - verges on Hallstile Bank,
 - verges and slopes around Windmill Hill,
 - verges along the south side of West Road (at Shaws Park),
 - verges and green spaces in the estates,

- verges in the east end of Hexham that have a particularly important role to play in the street scene as well as providing breathing space within relatively high-density areas of housing.

DARK SKIES

POLICY HNP18: Dark Skies

Development should respect the dark sky environment of Northumberland National Park.



Figure 8: Hexham Abbey at night

Policy Explanation:

7.1.37 Many responses to the consultations cited dark skies as being important. Many people thought that Hexham could become a better place for viewing dark skies and that Hexham has an important role to play in reducing contribution to light pollution given its proximity to the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park (Gold Tier) - the largest area of protected dark sky in Europe. The ancillary benefits to the visitor economy of Hexham are potentially significant. This is a growing area of tourism known as 'astro-tourism' and Hexham will benefit from those visiting the area to view the night sky, especially during the autumn and winter months when tourism is otherwise quiet.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

POLICY HNP19: Community Facilities

There will be a presumption against the loss of valued community facilities including those registered as Assets of Community Value. Robust justification to demonstrate there is no longer a need for that community facility, or that the community facility is no longer viable, will be needed to justify any loss.

The following community facilities are valued:

- The Queens Hall Arts Centre
- The Forum Cinema
- The Moot Hall
- The Old Gaol
- The Torch Centre
- Hexham Leisure Centre and grounds
- Hexham Community Centre
- Gatehouse Adult Education Centre
- The Tynedale Centre (Haugh Lane)
- The ADAPT Centre (Burn Lane)

The creation of new community facilities in accessible locations in Hexham will be supported.

Policy Explanation:

- 7.1.38 Extensive consultation shows that the community facilities identified above are highly valued in Hexham and are considered by residents as essential to the social fabric of the town and to the well-being of the local population. The churches, and in particular Hexham Abbey, provide - in addition to their primary purpose - important community venues for events and gatherings. However, as these are ecclesiastical buildings, their management is likely to continue in the current form and they are therefore not listed in the policy.



Figure 9: The Forum Cinema - managed by Hexham Community Partnership

- 7.1.39 The variety of shops, pubs, cafés and restaurants also contribute to the social and cultural fabric of the town. As these are local businesses, they are not listed as community facilities.

COMMUNITY RENEWABLES SCHEMES

POLICY HNP20: Community Renewables Schemes

Proposals for renewable energy developments including community renewables schemes will be supported subject to their demonstrating that they respect and respond positively to heritage assets or their settings, or sites designated for nature conservation value, or to residential amenity.

Policy Explanation:

- 7.1.40 There is support in Hexham for community renewable initiatives, the most notable one being the Hexham River Hydro Project, which did not come to fruition. This policy seeks to support any such future schemes, should they come forward in the Neighbourhood Area, whilst ensuring that heritage assets and their settings, or sites designated for their nature conservation value, are not unduly harmed by any such development. Such sites would include wildlife corridors identified in the Plan. In addition, it is important that any community renewables schemes do not unduly harm local residential amenity, in terms of noise, pollution, safety or other impacts on amenity. These issues should all be addressed at planning application stage.

IMPROVEMENTS FOR WALKING AND CYCLING IN HEXHAM

POLICY HNP21: Improvements for Walking and Cycling in Hexham

Proposals to improve the cycle and pedestrian network in Hexham will be supported.

Proposals for development which result in the loss of off-road pedestrian access routes will not be supported unless they provide an alternative link which is the same distance (or less) and of equivalent safety for future users. New alternative links must also be well landscaped and should assess potential effects on biodiversity (and identify risks) which should be avoided and if not possible, mitigated, and as a last resort, compensated.

Proposals which improve pedestrian and cycle links between Hexham town centre and the countryside, including Tyne Green and the National Cycle Network, will be supported.

Policy Explanation:

- 7.1.41 Footpaths, cycle-ways and lanes are closely linked to wildlife corridors in many cases. There are also pedestrian routes that link places in the town that could be lost through development (e.g. the route down to Haugh Lane from the old Gilesgate Baths building). The Town Council will seek to ensure that these important links are either incorporated into development or are replaced by a route which is shorter/more direct than the one lost.
- 7.1.42 The County Council is in the process of preparing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Hexham. LCWIPs, as set out in the Department for Transport's Cycling and Walking Strategy, are a new strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements and will enable a long-term approach to developing networks and ensure the authority is well positioned to make the case for future investment in Hexham.

8 PLANNING POLICIES: LOCAL ECONOMY

Objective for the Local Economy:

Objective: Hexham's local economy will be secure into the future, supporting its existing industry and business, with a focus on the role of Hexham as a growth area for small business and enterprise and as a local tourism hub linked to Hadrian's Wall, the Northumberland National Park and the North Pennines AONB.

The following policies seek to achieve this objective:

POLICY HNP22: Primary Shopping Area in Hexham

POLICY HNP23: Hotel and Tourism Accommodation

POLICY HNP24: New Business Units

POLICY HNP25: New Car Parking Facilities



Figure 10: Market Street in Hexham's Conservation Area

- 8.1.1 Market towns such as Hexham are a vital element in the visitor economy across the North East and Hexham needs to make the most of its natural and cultural heritage and distinctiveness to develop an excellent visitor welcome. Hexham has a key role to play as a gateway to the Northumberland National Park, North Pennines AONB and Hadrian's Wall; as a base to explore these attractions and the many individual local Roman sites as well. Hexham is a visitor destination in its own right; tourist attractions such as Hexham Abbey and Visitor Centre, the Old Gaol, the Market Place and Shambles, the Queen's Hall, Forum Cinema and the historic parks and gardens in the centre of Hexham, as well as a range of town centre events, and the Hexham Races, all attract a large number of visitors to the town.

Industry in Hexham

- 8.1.2 Hexham has a number of industrial estates, some of which are in the Neighbourhood Area, and some of which are just beyond the Neighbourhood Area (on the north bank of the Tyne). In particular, the Egger factory and a number of other larger commercial businesses that are outside the Neighbourhood Area have a significant role to play in providing employment for people in Hexham.
- 8.1.3 Within the Neighbourhood Area, the three main industrial estates are the Burn Lane Industrial Estate, Haugh Lane Industrial Estate, and Bridge End Industrial Estate. All of these have a wide variety of large and small businesses, some offices, some industrial units, some retail/warehouse and also other uses (such as a care home). These areas are highly valued, and the Plan seeks to retain these areas for employment use.
- 8.1.4 The policies in this chapter focus on maintaining the vibrancy of Hexham (in combination with other policies in the Plan) and on encouraging more tourism and small business development opportunities.
- 8.1.5 Hexham has a vibrant retail economy and a number of business parks and industrial estates on the periphery. Employment levels are relatively high, with unemployment currently standing at 3.4% for Hexham, which is a favourable comparison to the rest of the County, at 6.1%.⁸
- 8.1.6 Hexham is particularly valued for its small independent retail offer, although there are a number of ‘chain’ stores, such as M&S, Tesco, Next, Aldi, the Co-op and Waitrose, all of which are located outside the historic town centre. 68% of the retail units in Hexham are regional/independent units, whilst 32% have a nationwide presence, 10% of which are ‘key attractors’.⁹
- 8.1.7 The town centre also has a number of chain retail stores, but a good mix of independent traders, although the 57% of town centre users felt that the ‘variety of shops’ in the town centre was ‘poor’. However, only 7% of units in the defined town centre were vacant in 2014, compared with an overall average vacancy rate of 14% for market towns. Since 2014 some new retail shops have opened and are proving resilient and popular (e.g. Mr Wolf, Penfax and Denize Designs), thus improving the range and quality of the town’s retail offer.
- 8.1.8 Chapter 7 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation to changes in how we shop and use our town centres.
- 8.1.9 **Key issues** which emerged from consultation with businesses and residents in relation to Hexham’s local economy were largely to do with the town centre. The proposals were to:
- promote and continue to support existing businesses in Hexham;
 - continue to promote a wide range of independent shops and the retail offer in Hexham;
 - allow more conversions to residential use above shops;
 - improve the appearance of Hexham’s shopping streets by securing appropriate and well considered shop front design conforming to the latest Shop Front Design Guide;
 - maximise benefits to Hexham from the local tourism economy – Hexham as a ‘hub’ or ‘gateway’ to Hadrian’s Wall, Northumberland National Park and the North Pennines AONB;

⁸ 2011 Census

⁹ Hexham Market Towns Benchmarking Paper (2014) Mike King Consultants

- provide more business units for small businesses and expanding businesses;
- improve the public realm in the town centre to attract an increased number of visitors;
- improve car parking provision and accessibility to shops and services in Hexham;
- mitigate the potential negative impacts out of town retail development;
- support the provision of new shops/retail along Corbridge Road to meet demand in new housing developments;
- promote development on the former Bus Station site to bring it back into use.

8.1.10 Policies in this section seek to address these key issues wherever possible, whilst recognising that the local economy is led by market forces, and the planning system cannot control matters such as which types of shops and business are allowed within each Use Class. Some matters are progressed through Community Actions (at the end of this section), and some are addressed in other parts of the Plan.

PRIMARY SHOPPING AREA IN HEXHAM

POLICY HNP22: Primary Shopping Area in Hexham

Within the defined Primary Shopping Area as shown on the Policies Map, support will be given to new retail developments (Class A1 uses).

Proposals for change of use of ground floor premises within the Primary Shopping Area to non-A1 uses will be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the proposed use will contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre.

On upper floors in the Primary Shopping Area, change of use to residential use will be supported.

Policy Explanation:

- 8.1.11 Many of the changes that could improve the vitality and viability of Hexham's Primary Shopping Area are matters that are outside the scope of planning controls, for instance, improvements to markets, town centre management, business rates, retail unit rents etc.
- 8.1.12 Changes to shopping through an increase in on-line sales, and other influences, have resulted in an increasing number of empty shops in Hexham. This policy supports the provision of A1 retail uses, but also other uses which will maintain the vitality of the town. To measure the 'vitality and viability', consideration should be given to the following:
- likely footfall to be generated by the proposed development (an increased footfall is likely to be a significant benefit to the town);
 - impact of the proposed development on the street scene and appearance of the area (improvements to street scene will lead to increased footfall and visits);
 - new uses which are likely to be an attraction for increased numbers of visitors to Hexham;
 - uses which may provide a 'mix' – for instance, a shop may have an 'online' presence, but continue other compatible town centre uses within the premises;
 - uses which have a community benefit;
 - likely additional employment to be generated by the new use;
 - accessibility of the proposed development for all users.
- 8.1.13 The introduction of flats above shops is generally permitted development, but not in all cases. If a building is listed (which many of the shops in the town centre are) then these permitted

development rights do not apply and full planning permission is required to change the use of any part of a building to a flat. In other cases, this permitted development is subject to a Prior Notification procedure whereby the local planning authority must be notified in advance of an application within a Primary Shopping Area. One consideration as to whether conversion to residential use should be ‘permitted’ is the impact of that use on the viability of the key shopping area.

HOTEL AND TOURISM ACCOMMODATION

POLICY HNP23: Hotel and Tourism Accommodation

Provision of new tourist facilities and improvement of existing tourist facilities and services in the town that will contribute further to developing the tourism offer, including encouraging longer stays, will be supported. Provision of visitor accommodation within the Green Belt inset area of Hexham for visitors will also be supported.

Policy Explanation:

- 8.1.14 There is a real opportunity to further the development of Hexham as a tourist destination with a full range of tourism facilities. The recently developed Hexham Abbey Visitor Centre, the Old Gaol, Hexham’s Historic Parks and leisure facilities at the Wentworth Leisure Centre all offer the potential to attract more people to visit Hexham as a destination in its own right.



Figure 11: Hexham Abbey Visitor Centre

- 8.1.15 The recently constructed fish pass at Hexham Bridge which now attracts a lot of visitors and the development of Hexham House as a wedding venue mean that demand for visitor accommodation is likely to increase in the future. The plan takes a positive approach to tourism development, supporting Hexham’s potential for growth in the tourism sector with the aim of developing a range of facilities to make the town a year-round visitor destination based on longer stays than is presently the case.
- 8.1.16 Hexham will expand its role as a hub for visitors to nearby areas such as Hadrian’s Wall, the Northumberland National Park and the North Pennines AONB. The designation of the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park also attracts many more visitors to the North East. The potential to enhance the role of Hexham in the local tourism economy was identified in the Hexham Market Towns Initiative, conducted in 2009. Although this was some years ago, the principles identified still apply.

- 8.1.17 In order to achieve the further development of Hexham as a ‘hub’ to surrounding areas, Hexham would benefit from additional visitor accommodation as current provision is limited. This will be based on several key types of visitor including holiday makers requiring hotel or B&B accommodation, package travel by coach and tour operators, business travel, and visits to friends and families. Increasingly there is an emphasis on high quality services and access to both heritage and countryside. Accessibility for older tourists is also an important consideration. The plan therefore needs to consider how new tourism facilities and accommodation can be inserted into the wider policy context.
- 8.1.18 There is a particular shortage of self-catering accommodation in Hexham, which is often the preferred choice of accommodation for families visiting an area.
- 8.1.19 The average spend of the 10 million day visitors to Northumberland annually was estimated to be £27.00 per head. Within Hexham, the recently moved Tourist Information Centre dealt with upwards of 13,000 enquiries a month during the summer of 2018.
- 8.1.20 Within the town good sites for future hotels exist. This policy seeks to provide support for the provision of further hotel or other overnight tourism accommodation in the town as well as to support the improved provision of tourist facilities and the creation of new facilities.

NEW BUSINESS UNITS



Figure 12: Rural Enterprise Hub at Northumberland National Park Head Office, Hexham

POLICY HNP24: New Business Units

Proposals for new-build and conversions to accommodate new small-scale business units, offices, enterprise hubs and live-work units will be supported in the Green Belt inset for Hexham.

Policy Explanation:

- 8.1.21 The success of and the demand for the existing rural enterprise hubs on Eastgate and Burn Lane show that there is significant further potential for these smaller business units for sole traders and start-up businesses. The existing rural enterprise hubs are at capacity and have waiting lists. In addition to conventional businesses, Hexham has a strong arts and culture sector and therefore a

large number of professional, voluntary and amateur groups that, through their diverse work, bring additional prosperity to the town.

- 8.1.22 Hexham is a self-designated 'Arts Town', and there are many small businesses which are related to this designation. This policy seeks to support the provision of further small business units within Hexham to encourage the growth of this sector of the economy. There are some small business units located outside the main town (for example on local farms, rural businesses, and small business clusters, such as that at East Peterel Field at Dipton Mill). The policy seeks to support the growth of these kinds of business units which help smaller businesses become established.
- 8.1.23 New business units can be provided through conversion of existing buildings or through the provision of new-build units.
- 8.1.24 An additional policy has been considered to support modern business development, especially IT-based high tech, highly specialised initiatives, of which there are already thriving models in Hexham. This nature of business development is proposed in the Northumberland Local Plan, which can be facilitated in Hexham by superfast broadband, very good transport connections and aspects of Arts Town. Hexham Town Council has sought, in the initial consultation on the draft Northumberland Local Plan, equivalence for Hexham site(s) with proposed NCC Local Plan ECN4 Round2 Enterprise Zones. The outcome of this will determine the framing of an appropriate policy at the time of any future revisions to the HNP.

NEW CAR PARKING FACILITIES

POLICY HNP25: New Car Parking Facilities

Proposals to provide car parking areas to alleviate pressure on parking in the town centre will be supported, where they can be safely accommodated and are readily accessible from the road network. Careful consideration will be given to any impact on the setting of heritage assets. Cycle storage facilities, signage and pedestrian access to the town from these parking areas must be available or provided as part of the new development.

Policy Explanation:

- 8.1.25 As with many Market Towns, the provision of parking in Hexham is a problem which is cited by many businesses, residents and visitors as being a hindrance to Hexham delivering its full economic potential. This policy supports the provision of further car parking facilities in the town.
- 8.1.26 Multi-storey car parks are unlikely to present a positive solution to car-parking issues in Hexham. If multi-storey car parks are considered, then very careful consideration must be given to the impact on the character and appearance, as well as the setting of the Hexham Conservation Area, and any heritage assets in the vicinity. In particular, the impact on the roofscape of Hexham will be a key consideration.

9 MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

9.1.1 It is not in its ‘making’ that the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan will demonstrate its significance for the people and environment of Hexham. The success of the Plan will be judged in its implementation over the period 2019 to 2036 when the value of a neighbourhood plan for Hexham will become clear:

- for the town’s built environment and heritage;
- for its green spaces and natural environment; and
- not least for its residents, in promoting their well-being, appropriate new or converted homes and a commercially viable local economy.

Implementation

9.1.2 The HNP will be an essential tool for Hexham Town Council and in particular for its Planning and Infrastructure Committee. It will provide Hexham-specific policies and guidance that the Council has to consider when assessing and formulating its view on all planning applications submitted for the Neighbourhood Area (the Parish of Hexham).

9.1.3 The HNP will further give councillors and officers robust grounds on which to engage with potential and active developers to secure a consistent application of agreed policies and measures.

9.1.4 In the work of the Northumberland County Council, including the deliberations and decisions to be made within its Tynedale Local Area Council, the HNP will become an integral part of the development plan with its provisions to be applied by the Planning Authority when considering planning applications pertaining to Hexham.

Monitoring and Evaluation

9.1.5 The impacts of the provisions of the HNP will be monitored (evidence collected) and evaluated (evidence judged) to inform any necessary modifications to the Plan over time and to reflect its value in concrete terms.

9.1.6 Monitoring the Plan’s impact against its policies and proposals will be both a regular process (e.g. at each fortnightly meeting of the Council’s Planning and Infrastructure Committee as each individual planning application is assessed) and a six-monthly event, and at dedicated quarterly meetings of the HNP Steering Group, feeding into the Council’s Neighbourhood Plan Committee meetings. These will result in an Annual Report to the Town Council for the annual Town Meeting. The written report, once confirmed by Hexham Town Council, will be circulated by email to the individual residents and organisations that have been members of the HNP Public Forum and a summary will be provided for the town newsletter with circulation to all Hexham households, with requests for comment by Hexham residents. Similarly the report will be available on the Town Council’s website.

9.1.7 There will be four dimensions to monitoring and evaluation:

- its usefulness to the Town Council’s Planning and Infrastructure Committee and the resulting impact on the Council’s decisions relating to planning applications;
- its impact on developments at both the planning application stage and the resulting building phase, ensuring that new developments take place within the policies and guidance contained in the Plan;
- its impact on the local environment and its sustainability over time, for which the scoping schedule for the Strategic Environmental Assessment that the HNP underwent (in Autumn 2017) will provide a practical framework;

- the emerging compliance between the provisions of the County Council’s Local Plan and the HNP regarding development proposals for the as the former emerges over time (in the period 2018 to 2020).

9.1.8 For each of the HNP’s Objectives specific types of evidence and data will be collected. Examples of these are listed below. These lists constitute minimum requirements for monitoring and are not to be regarded as exclusive.

Objective 2 Built Environment

- The numbers of new build and renovated properties, including housing, whose planning and construction give due consideration to their immediate design and architectural environment and the Hexham vernacular in accordance with HNP Policies HNP2 and HNP4, and the proportion of these within the total.
- The numbers and proportion within the total of shop-fronts renovated or re-constructed in accordance with HNP Policy HNP5.

Objective 3 Housing

- The numbers of new build in Hexham Parish and, in the early years, projections based on the reality of these indicate that the overall total of new units will match the allocations to be established in the NCC Local Plan, once determined and published.
- The numbers and proportions of affordable homes in the overall total match the requirements established in the HNP, including the agreed and constructed proportions on sites of 10+ units. (See HNP Policy HNP9)
- Within the provision of affordable homes, the aggregated types and tenures of new homes match the guidance established in HNP Policies HNP 9, HNP10 and HNP11, thus ensuring that the needs of all groups including those with a disability or diminished independence are being met over time.
- The use of the sites allocated for housing or mixed-use in HNP Policy HNP8 will be charted over the life of the plan, as will be planned and completed community-led housing developments.

Objective 4 Natural Environment and Community Well-being

- Monitoring, evaluation and resultant reporting within this Objective will correspond generally to HNP Policies HNP13 to HNP21. Where quantifiable data is in evidence, for example relating to the provision of allotments in the town or relating to the provision of walking and cycle paths that can also serve prams and people with impaired mobility, through fragility, disability or ill health, these will be highlighted.

Objective 5 Local Economy

- In collaboration with Hexham Civic Society and Hexham Town Council, the numbers and proportions within the total of vacant retail premises and the trend in these over time will be registered as a gauge of the vitality of the local economy together with other statistical data that may be available to the Town Council (e.g. footfall data).
- The numbers of business start-ups and the availability of new physical provision for these, e.g. pods, and for transfers of successful start-ups to larger premises will be aggregated over time as signals of an expanding local economy.
- New developments to promote tourism and visitor stays in the town will be aggregated over time.

Over-riding Objective: Sustainability

- 9.1.9 The outcomes of the above monitoring and evaluation will enable on-going conclusions to be drawn regarding the overall sustainability of the town of Hexham, its environment and its economic viability. This will be an important factor for ensuring that both the HNP and the Northumberland Local Plan deliver benefits to the community of Hexham in the coming years.

HNP Enforcement

- 9.1.10 While the enforcement of its provisions is beyond the remit of a Neighbourhood Plan and remains the duty of the Planning Authority (i.e. Northumberland County Council), the existence of a locally well-known and robust Neighbourhood Plan can assist the resolution of issues of planning contravention. For example, in the construction period a developer may diverge from the approved plan to the detriment of the site's neighbours or the local environment. Local knowledge of planning approvals and of the Neighbourhood Plan's provisions will assist early identification of and intervention in such situations that may arise.

Overall Review of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 9.1.11 There will be, probably by 2020, a substantial change in the strategic context in which the HNP will be operating. It is expected that the County Council will produce, consult on and submit to MHCLG for approval its County-wide Local Plan, all in a two-year period running up to 2020. Discussions between Town Council and/or the HNP Steering Group in the intervening period will be aimed at securing mutual compliance in the best interests of each Plan. The HNP will be reviewed in the light of the NCC Local Plan's substantive provisions as they relate to Hexham.

ANNEX A: Hexham's Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Conservation Area (CA) regulations cover the principal central zone in Hexham. Many but not all buildings in the CA are already listed and thus given conservation protection. Beyond the existing listing there are other buildings that contribute to the visual, architectural and social history of the market town. The Hexham Neighbourhood Plan can reflect the significance of these particular buildings and add a presumption of conservation by defining them, with a robust rationale based on the criteria outlined in Historic England's *Local Heritage Listing Advice Note 2016*, as non-listed heritage assets.

A full list, when it is available, will be submitted to the County Council for formal inclusion in the local register which the County Council is currently compiling.

Buildings (1-14) that are considered to justify definition within the HNP as significant non-listed heritage assets are:

1. **The Hexham Workhouse** buildings, which are already the subject of a statement of significance dated November 2017, initiated as part of the HNP preparations.

Other buildings that could be considered of visual, architectural, economic and/or social heritage significance are listed below in the following categories:

- A. Strong character buildings of a general nature,
- B. Places of Gathering for Worship,
- C. Places of Social Gathering - Public Houses.

A. Strong character buildings of a general nature

2. **The Army Reserve Centre**, previously the Territorial Army Regimental Headquarters, "a well-designed building with a strong character, which marks the edge of the town centre at this point" (Hexham Conservation Area Appraisal P.76). This has served the town over many decades in its particular context but could be used for other purposes, so deserving of protection.
3. **The Hexham Community Centre**, which has served the town's residents well in its current capacity over many decades. It was opened as the Abbey Institute, built in brick with stone features, as was the Hexham vernacular in the late nineteenth century.
4. **The Excelsior Building, Battle Hill**, built in brick with stone features and quoins, with a rear yard, it is a building of strong character located to the west of the town's Cattle Market, previously a hub of commercial activity.
5. **The Forum Cinema**, together with a Wetherspoons pub, are both internally designed to maintain the art-deco heritage of the town's cinema dating back to 1937, when the name was chosen to reflect the town's Roman connections.

B. Places of Gathering for Worship (recognising that the Hexham Abbey, St Mary's RC Church on Hencotes and Hexham Central Methodist Church on Beaumont Street are already listed buildings)

6. **The Salvation Army Building**, on Market Street, which was purpose-built in the nineteenth century and bears the inscription to this day of "Blood and Fire", along with the Salvation Army crest. It is still an active centre of social as well as denominational gathering.
7. **St Aidan's Church**, Hencotes.
8. **The Hexham Community Church**, formerly the Primitive Methodist Church, dating from 1909,

imposingly situated on the junction of Battle Hill and Beaumont Street, alongside the listed Benson's Monument and Park Gates.

9. The former Primitive Methodist Meeting House, on Hallstile Bank, commemorated currently by a plaque on N°26 that makes reference to its significance for 30 years from 1830 on Bull Bank (the former term for Hallstile Bank, taken colloquially from the public house at the top of the bank) as the meeting house of the Methodist Ranters.

10. The West End Methodist Chapel, on the West Road.

C. **Places of Social Gathering – Public Houses**, recognising that some Hexham public houses are already listed, including the Heart of Northumberland (formerly the Heart of All England Tavern), the Globe Inn (formerly The Old Globe Inn, hosting in the nineteenth century also the Hexham Assizes), the Royal Hotel and the Coach and Horses Inn, both on Priestpopple.

11. The Old Tannery, in Gilesgate, taking its name from the traditional Hexham business at its rear, and doubtlessly offering sustenance to its workforce.

12. The Grapes Inn, in St Mary's Chare, with its impressive and traditional etched window, brick-built with stone features, including the surround of the horse archway to its side.

13. The Tap and Spile Inn, with its restored tiled frontage, at the corner of Eastgate and Battle Hill, facing onto the Cattle Market and serving in past times the dealers and farmers congregating there.

14. The Fox public House, at the junction of the West Road and the Allendale Road.

ANNEX B: Hexham's Designated Heritage Assets – Grade II Listings

Further to HNP7 Designated Heritage Assets, below is the list of the 20 Grade II* listed buildings and structures that are additional to the Scheduled Monuments and Grade I listed buildings provided in the HNP7 text.

In total there are 232 listed buildings, structures and memorials in Hexham, the majority lying within the Hexham Conservation Area. The full list and the location of the buildings and structures can be viewed at:

<https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/england/hexham-northumberland#.XDNP9S10cWp>

Grade II* Listed Buildings in Hexham

1. 19 and 19a St Mary's Chare, late C17/early C18 2 storeys and attic, stone with rendered front, chamfered quoins to left.
2. 19 and 21 Priestpopple, early C18 3 storeys, rendered with raised quoins and quoined and rusticated window dressings.
3. 20 and 22 Market Street, early C18 or earlier, rendered front, 3 storeys, gabled bays to sides, gabled dormer in centre, kneelers to gables.
4. 22 Market Place, early to mid C18, includes N^o 3 Church Row, painted brick with stone quoins.
5. 24 Market Street, 2 storeys, 2 windows, painted brick, slate roof with tumbled brick in verges and brick chimneys.
6. 27 and 28 Market Place, dated 1749, 4 storeys, hard greystone front, Ashlar with chamfered quoins, brick chimneys.
7. Bridge over Halgut Burn, in grounds of Hexham House, C13, with mid C19 crenellated parapet and overbuilding.
8. Church of St Mary, Hencotes (south side), 1830, Ashlar, segmented wooden ceiling with ribs.
9. Gateway to the Henry King Memorial Almshouses, late C17/early C18, removed from elsewhere, stone, rusticated, pulvinated frieze, bolection architrave, eared.
10. Fandango's Club, St Mary's Chare, C17 with C18 and C19 decoration to front, rendered stone front and chamfered quoins, segmental coach arch to left of centre.
11. Hexham House, dated 1723 with later wings, Ashlar with quoins, cornice and parapet, rich plasterwork inside.
12. High Shield House, Dipton Mill Road, dated 1770 on earlier site, 3 storeys, rubble with quoins, brick quoins to right, tiled roof with tumbled brick in verges.*
13. Holy Island Cottage, dated 1737, formerly listed as N^o 1 Toad Hall, stone with rendered front, door left of centre with chamfered reveals and carved lintel.
14. Holy Island House, dated 1657, 2 storeys and attic, rubble with strings over ground and 1st floors, beam ends to floors exposed, carved lintel.
15. Middle Shield house, Dipton Mill Road, early to mid C18, 3 storeys, Ashlar, horizontal sliding sash windows.*
16. Northumberland Fusiliers War Memorial Gateway, Beaumont Street, late C17 or early C18, removed from White Hart Inn (Fore Street) in 1919, stone, piers, quoins, spandrels.
17. Orchard House, Priestpopple, c. 1825, 2 storeys, built around a courtyard to road, south front Ashlar, right wing rendered with some raised quoins.
18. Shambles, Market Place, covered market erected by Sir Walter Blackett in 1766 with stone columns to front, back columns of wood. 9 x 3 bays. Moulded cast iron gutter, shallow double pitched slate roof.

19. Stable of the Spital, (now at Hexham Golf Club), c. 1802, Ashlar.*
20. The Old Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, off Hallgate, free grammar school and master's house, 1684, and slightly later caretaker's house, Tudor-gothic style.

3 of the above, 12, 15 and 19, lie outside the Hexham Conservation Area.

The above text is from the original listing, with some 2018 revisions, and may not necessarily reflect the current setting of the buildings.

ANNEX C: Glossary

Amenity: A positive element or elements that contribute to the positive character of an area, such as lack of noise and disturbance, openness, landscape, townscape, opportunities for recreation etc.

Affordable Housing: Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.¹⁰

Asset of Community Value: A local authority-maintained list of buildings and land in its area that is of community value as set out in Section 87 of the Localism Act 2011.

Biodiversity: The whole variety of life encompassing all genetics, species and ecosystem variations, including plants and animals.

Brownfield Site: See 'Previously Developed Land'

Brownfield Site Register: This is a 2017 initiative to provide up-to-date and consistent information on previously developed sites which are considered appropriate for residential development. Through the Register a Planning Authority (e.g. Northumberland County Council) can identify suitable brownfield sites and may also grant 'permission in principle' for residential development. The Register is to be updated and published on an annual basis.

Conservation Area: A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (Section 69 of The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act). Conservation area designation is the means of recognising and protecting all the features that contribute towards the special character or appearance of the conservation area. Extra controls apply in conservation areas.

Community Facilities: Local services and facilities that benefit the community, such as local meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings and places of worship.

Core Strategy: A Development Plan Document setting out the spatial vision, objectives and key strategic policies for an area.

Density (of development): The amount of building within an area of land. For housing it is expressed as the number of dwellings per hectare.

Development: Defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as 'the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land.'

Development Plan: The complete set of statutory land use policies and proposals for an area, used in making planning decisions. It includes adopted council development plan documents such as Local Plans, Core Strategies and neighbourhood plans.

Discount Market Value (DMV) Housing: Discount Market Value housing is housing that is sold on the open market, at a discounted rate (normally 30%) to allow people who are unable to access the open market an opportunity to buy their own home. The discount is maintained in perpetuity, through a S106 agreement.

Extra care Housing: Housing designed with the needs of frailer older people in mind and with varying levels of care and support available on site.

¹⁰ Affordable Housing may be re-defined in the proposed Housing Act (currently Housing White Paper 2017).

Evidence base: The information and data gathered by local authorities and used to inform policy development. Evidence base data is also gathered to prepare a neighbourhood plan, and is submitted to the Examiner along with the other Examination Documents.

Green Belt: A land designation with the fundamental aim of preventing urban sprawl by keeping the land permanently open. The purposes of the Green Belt as specified in paragraph 80 of the NPPF are: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and assist in urban regeneration, be encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. The whole is in the green belt, apart from those areas 'inset' within the green belt [see definition of 'inset']

Infrastructure: The physical entities (for example roads, railways, sewers, pipes, telecommunications lines) that are necessary for communities to function and move around.

Inset: A term used to describe a town or village that is surrounded by the Green Belt but is not itself covered (or 'washed over') by the Green Belt designation. This means that Green Belt restrictions do not apply within the settlement concerned in the area defined by the inset boundary.

Landscape sensitivity: Normally refers to the ability of the landscape to absorb development, in relation to valued aspects of its character.

Listed Buildings: A listed building or listed structure is one that has been placed on one of the four statutory lists maintained by (in England) by Historic England. A listed building may not be demolished, extended, or altered without special permission from the local planning authority, which typically consults the relevant central government agency or amenity society, particularly for any demolition or any significant alterations to the more notable listed buildings.

Live-Work Units: An old idea that has been modernised to meet the needs of entrepreneurs, small businesses and professionals. A live-work unit is a space that combines workspace with living quarters.

Local Green Space: A designation that provides special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. They can be identified through Local Plans or by communities in Neighbourhood Plans.

Local Plan: The documents and maps that make up the plan for the future development of a local area.

Major Development: For dwellings, a major development is one where the number of residential units to be constructed is 10 or more. Where the number of residential units to be constructed is not given in the application, a site area of 0.5 hectares or more should be used as a definition of a major development. For all other uses, a major development is one where the floor space to be built is 1000 square metres or more, or where the site area is 1 hectare or more.

Material consideration: A matter that should be taken into account in making a planning decision.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): A Government document that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): The Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012 and the National Planning Practice Guidance in March 2014. Together, the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance set out what the Government expects of local authorities.

Neighbourhood Plan: A plan for spatial development by a Parish or Town Council - the 'qualifying body' - for a particular neighbourhood area. Once it has been accepted by the local community through a Referendum, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Planning Authority's Development Plan for the area.

Northumberland County Council: since 1st April 2009 the unitary authority for Northumberland and the Planning Authority for the Hexham area.

Previously Developed Land (PDL) or Brownfield Land: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

Registered Parks and Gardens (Historic Parks and Gardens): An area designated by English Heritage for its value as a historic planned landscape or garden.

Self-build is the practice of creating an individual home for oneself through a variety of different methods. The self-builder's input into this process varies from doing the actual building work to contracting out all the work to an architect or building package company.

Setting: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Sheltered Housing: Sheltered housing usually consists of self-contained flats with communal facilities. In most cases, they are available to people aged over 60, although some schemes may be open to those over 55 years old. The flats usually have relevant special safety features and many sites have a warden in residence.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems): A sequence of water management practices and facilities designed to drain surface water in a manner that will provide a more sustainable approach than more conventional practices, such as routing run-off through a pipe to a watercourse.

Sustainable development: Defined by the UN Commission of on Environment and Sustainable Development in 1987 as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Also defined by the NPPF in Paragraph 7, stating that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

Sustainable transport modes: Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

ANNEX D: Hexham Neighbourhood Plan – Steering Group Members

The initial membership of the HNP Steering Group was agreed by the Hexham Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan Committee in December 2014. The Group's first meeting took place in January 2015. Subsequently business meetings have been held monthly. Steering Group members have played active roles in the series of nine quarterly Public Forums (April 2015 to April 2017) which have been an important channel of communication with the town's residents.

The membership of the Steering Group has been:

Wendy Breach	January 2015 to publication
Dave Clegg (Chair, Co-ordinator, and Cllr* to 2017)	January 2015 to publication
Cllr* Tom Gillanders (Town Council Representative)	January 2015 to publication
Robert Hull (Cllr* from 2017)	January 2015 to publication
Paul Lewis	March 2015 to April 2016
Sasha Pisarevic	February 2015 to July 2016
Peter Rodger	October 2016 to publication
Mike Rowson	January 2015 to September 2016

*Cllr = Hexham Town Councillor

From March 2015, Jenny Ludman of Ludman Planning Ltd. has been the Steering Group's Town Planning Consultant.

Jane Kevan, the Clerk to the Hexham Town Council, has provided support throughout the planning period, including preparing the minutes of meetings.

Northumberland County Council has provided link Town Planning Officers. This role has been fulfilled successively by Debbie Longland, Duncan Holness, Peter Rutherford and Chris Anderson. The Steering Group has also been grateful for the advice and support of the County Council's Senior Planning Officer David English.

Throughout the Plan development process, the **Neighbourhood Plan Committee of Hexham Town Council** has provided advice and support as well as checking that sound progress was being made. Active members of this Committee, which first met in August 2014, have been:

Councillors T Cessford , D Clegg (to May 2017), T G E Gillanders, J M Graham, Mrs C R Homer, R Hull (from May 2017), J Ord (from May 2017) and T Robson (to May 2017).

Part 6: COMMUNITY PROJECT PROPOSALS (CPP)

Many of the issues identified by residents during the consultation have been issues that cannot be ‘land use’ planning policies. A series of Community Project Proposals are therefore proposed to be taken forward. Partners have been identified, and it is anticipated that these projects will be incorporated into future Town Plans for Hexham.

CPP1: Hexham Community Partnership will work closely with other stakeholders to secure funding, and bring forward the development of the Workhouse Site in Hexham, for Community Led Housing, social enterprises and community facilities. PARTNERS: HCP, NCC, CAN, HCLH

CPP2: Review Parking Management in the Town Centre PARTNERS: HTC, NCC

CPP3: Feasibility study to assess whether a ‘toilet available’ scheme could be introduced in Hexham: PARTNER: HTC

CPP4: Investigate the provision of free Wi-Fi provision in public spaces in Hexham PARTNERS: HTC, NCC.

CPP5: Tourist Information Strategy for Hexham to be brought forward by PARTNERS: NCC, HTC, HCP.

CPP6: Improve litter management in wildlife corridors/routes and work with local stakeholders to provide and improve interpretation about wildlife to increase local knowledge/interest: PARTNERS: HTC, TT.

CPP7: Define groups or individual trees that are of significant value to the street or the local environment and submit requests to NCC for TPOs (outside existing Conservation Area) PARTNERS: HTC, NCC.

CPP8: Continue to work with Northumberland County Council to remove poorly designed street lighting with improved 'dark sky compatible' luminaires. PARTNERS: HTC, NCC, HCS.

CPP9: The potential for Community Energy projects will be investigated PARTNERS: HTC, HCP, TT.

CPP10: Investigate possibility of provision of interpretation facilities at Fish Pass Partners: HTC, NCC, HCP

CPP11: Promote Hexham as a Dementia Friendly Town and incorporate Dementia Friendly Town measures into Town Centre projects and planning. HTC

HTC: Hexham Town Council

NCC: Northumberland County Council

HCP: Hexham Community Partnership

HCS: Hexham Civic Society

CAN: Community Action Northumberland

TT: Transition Tynedale

HCLH: Hexham Community-Led Housing