

EXAMINATION OF THE CRAMLINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Submission Draft - March 2019

Comments from Local Planning Authority to the Independent Examiner's questions to Cramlington Town Council raised on 5 August 2019

This note provides Northumberland County Council's (NCC) comments, as local planning authority, to questions raised by the Independent Examiner to Cramlington Town Council (CTC) during the examination of the Submission Draft Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan. The Examiner's questions and comments are available in a separate document.

Q1. We would reaffirm our opinion that only one policy is needed to deal with this matter. This would be consistent with the outcome following discussions on a similar issue between Natural England and the County Ecologist on the Wooler Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst that addressed different ecology related matters it was concluded that a single policy would better deal with the matter rather than additional paragraphs to several policies.

Q2. The Local Plan is at examination. Whilst the County Council is confident on the outcome of that examination it is unlikely to conclude until spring 2020, and its outcome cannot be guaranteed. In the meantime, having regard to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment prepared to meet Habitats Regulations requirements it is considered reasonable to create this policy through the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan to ensure support is given to the Coastal Mitigation Service through development plan policy. That policy may then be given full weight in the determination of planning applications in accordance with s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Q3. Agree that policy should be modified to reflect the different requirements in different parts of the 10km zone. The precise boundaries are shown more clearly on the Northumberland Local Plan interactive policies map available through this link: <http://northumberland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2ddf0360755b401e99a333432d132cec> The County Council prepared the policies map for the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan and will be able to modify that map to reflect the different zones should this be recommended.

Q4. Agree that the requirement to contribute to the Coastal Mitigation Service should also apply to 'tourism accommodation'. Modification to policies as appropriate would be supported.

Q5. Support CTC response. The general phraseology used in policies which refer to proposals being supported follows advice given in earlier independent examinations, including that on the Allendale Neighbourhood Plan. The independent

examiner considered that the use of the term 'planning permission will be granted...' did not best reflect the requirements of the Planning Acts which allow for decisions being made having regard to other material considerations. He suggested that:

...policies should use the term "proposals will be supported" in recognition that the basis of decision making is the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Q6. We agree that criteria a, b and c appear to be objectives for the Plan rather than development plan policies. As such they may prove difficult in assisting decision makers when planning applications are determined.

Q7. Agree 'or' would be more appropriate.

Q8. Agree.

Q9. We can confirm discussions with CTC regarding the status of land at West Hartford and agree that this must be a strategic planning policy matter and is therefore not a matter that should be addressed in the neighbourhood Plan. Land is allocated for employment purposes at West Hartford through existing development plan policy. The County Council proposes to carry forward an allocation for the site in the Northumberland Local Plan through Policy ECN3 'West Hartford Prestige Employment Area'. The land being located outside any settlement boundary is not inconsistent with the approach proposed elsewhere for large scale and strategic employment allocations in the south east of the county in the emerging Local Plan. For example, Blyth Estuary Strategic Employment Area (Policy ECN2) sits outwith any settlement boundary. Similarly, land at the former Alcan Works south of Lynemouth and north west of Woodhorn is allocated for general industrial uses through Policy ECN6 and is located outwith any settlement boundaries. We consider this to be an appropriate approach. There is no strategic housing allocation at the south west sector of Cramlington either in the emerging Local Plan or the Neighbourhood Plan. The settlement boundary effectively follows the established green belt boundary in that location.

Q10. Agree with suggestion.

Q11. Agree that Policy CNP4 could be improved as suggested.

Q12. It does seem unclear how the policy might be applied in practice on individual development management decisions. As drafted it appears as an objective or aim rather than a planning policy.

Q13. CTC response supported.

Q14. CTC response supported.

Q15. Agree that criterion b. is already addressed through Policy CNP2.

Q16. Agree with amendment suggested.

Q17. Agree with comments regarding value areas defined in the County Council's evidence justifying the emerging Local Plan policy regarding the viability of delivering affordable housing. The context set out by NPPF is now clear in relation to 10% affordable housing provision being within the category of affordable home ownership. However, Policy CNP6 would allow for local justification where evidence of greater need is available and where it can be demonstrated to be viable.

Q18. Policy CNP6 is overly restrictive in dealing with off-site financial contributions. Controls requiring contributions to be spent within a Neighbourhood Area are not normally appropriate other than in certain defined rural areas where specific local needs are being met and these are further controlled through the use of local eligibility criteria for applicants wishing to buy or occupy affordable housing. This would not be the case in Cramlington where the Council's Common Allocation Policy would apply. This requires social housing to be made available according to priority of need rather than by reference to any local family or employment connection to an area. Application of this principle is relevant in considering where funds for affordable housing should be directed, subject to the policy and legislative requirements established on the use of planning obligations which must be '*directly related to the development*' for which permission is being granted. It is expected that affordable housing will be provided on site on any housing development in Cramlington where providing affordable housing is a policy requirement. This expectation should lead to few circumstances where it would legitimately be appropriate to seek off-site financial contributions.

Q19. Agree that inclusion of the paragraph on assessing viability within a planning policy is not appropriate. Agree with CTC proposed modification to remainder of Policy CNP6.

Q20. Agree Policy CNP7 should be modified to meet the basic conditions.

Q21. Noted and agree.

Q22. Support CTC response.

Q23. It would appear that Policy CNP8 relates principally to considerations that would apply to proposals to extend or alter dwellings. The supporting text seems to offer no particular evidence demonstrating that a problem exists in relation to vacant dwellings. On the contrary, paragraph 6.34 demonstrates that vacancy rates in Cramlington are particularly low by comparison with the county and the north east region.

Q24. Agree with suggestion.

Q25. Agree with suggestion.

Q26. Support CTC response.

Q27. NCC have applied a reduced threshold of 1000sq.m. for retail which is considered to be more appropriate generally to the main towns in Northumberland given the impact development at the higher threshold set out in NPPF may have on the centres in Northumberland. This is based on advice from WYG Planning

Consultancy who were engaged by NCC to prepare retail and town centre policy evidence in support of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan. This evidence is available on the NCC website at para 68 of this document:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Studies%20and%20Evidence%20Reports/Economy%20Retail%20Studies/1.%20TC%20Retail%20Study/Town-Centres-Retail-Study-February-2011.pdf>

Q28. CTC response noted.

Q29. NCC support the intentions of Policy CNP14 as a means of recognising principal elements in the urban structure of the town and places within its hinterland that would benefit from enhanced connectivity.

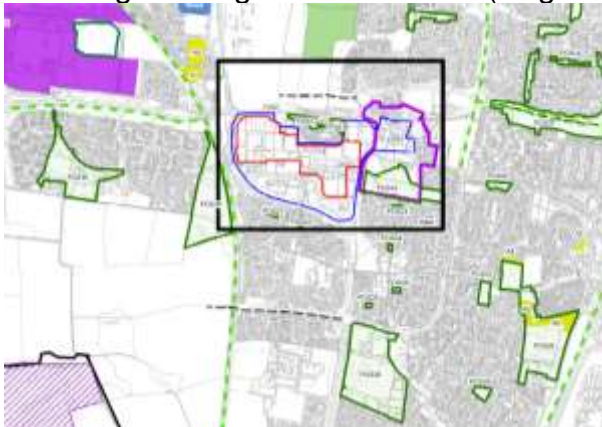
Q30. Support CTC response in regard to flexibility associated with the wording of Policy CNP15. NCC will make any necessary modification to the policies maps.

Extracts as requested as follows:

Northumberland Local Plan (as proposed):



Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan (Reg 16 version):



Q31. CTC response supported. NCC representations were to ensure flexibility in allowing improvements to transport and rail infrastructure without being specific. There are no specific projects at an advanced stage of preparation at this time.

Q32. Support CTC response. If changes were made to Policy CNP18 we would suggest that it should be sufficient that these be limited to ensuring that management of the designated Local Green Spaces should be consistent with green belt policy.

Q33. Support CTC response.

Q34. Support CTC response.

Q35. Agree with suggestion.

Q36. The emerging Northumberland Local Plan policy regarding hot food takeaways is supported by a technical paper setting out the rationale for policy intervention in this area. This is available using the following link:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Studies%20and%20Evidence%20Reports/Economy%20Retail%20Studies/Technical%20Papers%20for%20Economy%20and%20Retail/NCC-TBG-Paper-Hot-Food-Takeaways.pdf>

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