

Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan

Referendum Plan

November 2019



Foreword

The Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision, strategy and range of policies for the Cramlington Neighbourhood Area for the period to 2033. These relate to a range of topics, including, but not limited to, housing and employment, the quality of life of residents, and the protection and enhancement of the environment.

The Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan has been drawn up by a Steering Group of town councillors and representatives of the business and community groups. The plan looks forward to 2033 and lays out policies and proposals for the future growth and development of Cramlington whilst ensuring that our heritage and environment is protected and enhanced.

Following consultation on a Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan, it was updated to reflect comments received. The updated Plan and updated Environmental Report were then submitted to Northumberland County Council who arranged an Independent Examination which considered whether the Plan meets various legal requirements. The Plan passed Independent Examination subject to a number of modifications being made.

Modifications recommended by the Independent Examiner have now been incorporated into this Referendum version of the Plan which will now be put to local referendum. Everyone who lives in the town and is registered to vote in local elections will be given the opportunity to vote in the referendum. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the plan Northumberland County Council will then be required to bring the Plan into legal force. The Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan will then become part of the statutory planning framework for the area and must be used to decide whether to approve or refuse planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area.

The policies in the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan will be used by planning officers at the County Council to determine planning applications. It will also be used by planning inspectors when deciding planning appeals. It will be part of the statutory development plan for the area and policies in it will supersede some policies in the old Blyth Valley Local Plan, Core Strategy and Development Control Policies documents.

The Steering Group has put in a huge amount of work to get to this point and on behalf of the Town Council I would like to thank all those who have worked on it.

Loraine De Simone
Town Mayor

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The associated Policies Map illustrates geographically the policies in the Plan

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Neighbourhood plans are community-led, prepared by Town and Parish Councils and set out guidance on how new development will be managed. They do this by creating land use 'planning policies'. Plans can deal with a wide range of issues like housing, employment, heritage and transport. In some cases, they may only focus on one or two issues that are of particular importance in a local area. Policies within neighbourhood plans cannot block development or support less than already committed in the statutory development plan. What they can do is shape where that development will go and what it will look like.
- 1.2 Neighbourhood plans can also cover issues which are not related to the use and development of land. They can provide a useful document in which a Town or Parish Council can establish priorities for action to improve their area. These are often referred to as 'community actions'. However, the main purpose of a neighbourhood plan is to set policies for the use and development of land.
- 1.3 Once a neighbourhood plan has been: examined by an Independent Examiner; agreed at the referendum stage by the local community; and 'made' (brought into legal force) by the Local Planning Authority it becomes part of the statutory development plan. Planning law requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material planning considerations¹ indicate otherwise.

Planning context

- 1.4 As they are part of the development plan, neighbourhood plans have to be prepared in line with legal requirements. The way in which neighbourhood plans are prepared and the policies they contain are tested by an Independent Examiner who assesses whether the plan meets the 'basic conditions' to ensure they are legally compliant. Neighbourhood plans must:
- Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
 - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan;
 - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and
 - Be compatible with European obligations.

National planning policy and guidance:

- 1.5 National planning policy and guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) respectively.

Development Plan:

- 1.6 Currently, the Local Plan for Northumberland consists of the saved policies of the former local planning authorities that made-up Northumberland before Local Government Reorganisation in 2009. For the Cramlington Neighbourhood Area, these are: the Blyth Valley Core Strategy (2007), Blyth Valley Development Control Policies (2007) and the saved policies of the Blyth Valley District Local Plan (1999).

¹ Material Planning considerations are matters that should be taken into account in making a planning decision.

- 1.7 Northumberland County Council (NCC) has prepared a new Local Plan which will replace the existing saved planning policies. Consultation on a draft Northumberland Local Plan took place during ~~June~~ July and August 2018 and consultation on a publication draft Local Plan took place between 30 January 2019 and 13 March 2019. The Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 29 May 2019 and is now subject to public examination which will take place between October 2019 and spring 2020.
- 1.8 The preparation of the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan') has been informed by the adopted Blyth Valley Core Strategy and Blyth Valley Local Plan. The Blyth Valley Development Control Policies document contains a set of generic policies against which planning applications for new development are assessed. As the Neighbourhood Plan is required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the statutory development plan, the policies contained within the Development Control Policies (2007) document are not considered to be strategic policies and therefore not applicable.

Sustainable development:

- 1.9 The purpose of the planning system is to help achieve sustainable development, as defined by the NPPF. This specifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be the basis for every plan and every planning decision. In brief, 'sustainable development' is about positive growth which delivers economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. The Basic Conditions Statement, that accompanied the Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan (March 2019), explains how the implementation of the Plan is expected to contribute to sustainable development.

European obligations:

- 1.10 Neighbourhood plans must be compatible with EU obligations, specifically Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- 1.11 SEA is a way of ensuring that the environmental implications of policies are taken into account before plans are brought into force. NCC provided a screening opinion, which is available on the NCC website² to establish whether a SEA was required for the Plan. This concluded that a SEA was required. The SEA process has therefore informed the preparation of the Plan. The Environmental Report prepared as the outcome of the SEA process is also available on the County Council's website.
- 1.12 The main purpose of the HRA process is to ensure that the Plan will not result in significant damage to internationally important nature conservation sites. An appropriate assessment of the Plan has been undertaken and is available on the NCC website. The conclusion of the assessment was that the Plan will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European sites, provided that planning permissions that cause a net increase in residential units or tourist accommodation are subject to a section 106 agreement securing an appropriate contribution to the Coastal Mitigation Service. This requirement is embedded in the Plan.

² <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Neighbourhood.aspx#neighbourhoodplans>

Background to the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.13 Cramlington Town Council resolved to prepare a neighbourhood plan in November 2013. On 4 February 2014, the Civil Parish of Cramlington was designated as a neighbourhood area for the purposes of neighbourhood planning, see figure 1. The Town Council established a Steering Group to lead the plan preparation process and the Steering Group held their first meeting in February 2014. The Steering Group is made up of: local councillors; community groups; business representatives and representatives of the housebuilding industry. The process of preparing the Plan began formally during March and April 2014 with a number of community launch events.
- 1.14 Since February 2014 the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has worked on behalf of the Town Council to develop the Plan. Four rounds of early engagement helped to obtain the views of the local community and stakeholders about the scope of the Plan:
- March and April 2014 – 3 drop in events giving local communities the opportunity to provide feedback on the main issues for the Plan;
 - April 2014 - workshop on the South West Sector³;
 - June 2014 – workshop on the South West Sector;
 - September 2014 – vision and objectives workshop.



Figure 1: Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 1.15 This work informed the preparation of a Pre-Submission Draft Plan which was subject to consultation during September and October 2018. That version of the Plan was modified to take account of representations and was subsequently submitted to the County Council in March 2019.

³ Attended by representatives from the Town Council, County Council, Development Trust, local businesses, Cramlington Learning Village, residents and community groups

- 1.16 The Submitted Plan was publicised by the County Council for six weeks between Friday 7 June 2019 and Friday 19 July 2019. The Plan was subsequently subject to an Independent Examination which concluded with a report published on 16 September 2019 recommending that the Plan may now be put to a local referendum, subject to some modification. This Referendum Neighbourhood Plan incorporates the modifications recommended by the Independent Examiner.
- 1.17 A referendum will now be arranged by the County Council and all residents registered to vote within Cramlington Parish will be given the opportunity to vote on whether the Plan should be brought into force.
- 1.18 The background documents that have informed the preparation of the Plan are available online at: www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/
- 1.19 The period covered by the Plan is 2018 to 2033. During this period, the Plan will be reviewed and updated where required.

2. Sustainable Cramlington – the challenges and opportunities

Cramlington New Town

- 2.1 The development of a new town in Cramlington was first discussed in 1958. Subsequently, in June 1961, the then Northumberland County Council approved the draft plans to establish what it hoped would be 'Britain's first enterprise town'. The new town development was sponsored by the County Council and the development was to be carried out by a consortium led by William Leech. Cramlington was the first new town in Britain which was both private and local authority led.
- 2.2 The development of Cramlington New Town was predicted to take 20 years to complete, cost around £50m to develop, eventually be home to 40,000 people and include an industrial zone, all across an area of four-square miles. The masterplan was approved by the Housing Minister in January 1963, by which time the estimated population of the new town had increased to 48,000 and the projected cost increased to £60m. The first factory was established by Wilkinson Sword in 1964 and the first housing estates constructed in the late 1960s and early 1970s.
- 2.3 Today, whilst Cramlington is Northumberland's second largest town, with a population of almost 30,000, some of the development identified within the original masterplan is still to be completed, most notably the development of the South West Sector of the town.

Population profile

- 2.4 The town has a demonstrably younger population than other towns in the County; with the second lowest proportion of residents aged 65 or over. Table 1 identifies, from census figures, how the profile of the population of Cramlington changed between 2001 and 2011. Significantly, this illustrates that between 2001 and 2011 the resident population fell by 987 to 29,413 people; which is equivalent to a 3% decline; and the population aged 65 to 74 has increased from 5.9% to 9.6% and those aged 75 and over have increased from 4.8% to 6.3%. The 2016 ONS ward level data identifies that the population is continuing to fall (28,999 people).

| | Population | Age | | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | | 0-4 | 5-15 | 16-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 65-74 | 75+ |
| 2001 | 30,400 | 5.5% | 15.1% | 11.3% | 29.8% | 27.5% | 5.9% | 4.8% |
| 2011 | 29,431 | 5.4% | 12.5% | 10.4% | 25.6% | 30.1% | 9.6% | 6.3% |

Table 1: Population profile 2001 - 2011

Housing

- 2.5 Over recent years, Cramlington has not achieved housing growth in the numbers anticipated to see its completion as a new town. Between 2009/10 and 2016/17 only 308 houses were built. However, both 2015/16 and 2016/17 saw an increase in housing development with 62 and 73 completions respectively. This is an indication that the housing market is improving with renewed developer interest.

- 2.6 There is a broad range of housing across Cramlington. In 2011, 88.2% of properties in the Cramlington area were in Council Tax Bands A to C, with 55.0% of these in Band A. In 2011, 72.1% of households were living in owner occupied properties, 18.3% in social rented housing and 9.6% in the private rented sector. In comparison to Northumberland as a whole, Cramlington contains a larger proportion of low value properties and few high value properties. The housing stock size is similar to the county as a whole though there are relatively fewer large properties.

Employment, infrastructure and services

- 2.7 As a relatively new community, Cramlington does not show the stresses and strains evident in other parts of south east Northumberland which have arisen from the transition between heavy, traditional industries and the new economies. It is a sub-regional centre for industry, with the largest concentration of manufacturing businesses in Northumberland, including a cluster of pharmaceutical companies. It also has a growing town centre with modern retail, commercial and leisure activity.
- 2.8 Cramlington has a range of services and facilities including: 10 primary schools; a secondary school – Cramlington Learning Village; Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital; Concordia Leisure Centre; ambulance, police and fire stations; and cultural facilities including a library. In addition, the town offers extended opportunities for employment. However, commuting to and from the Tyneside conurbation for work remains significant.

Natural environment – Cramlington Garden Town

- 2.9 Cramlington has large areas of open space as well as an extensive green network of footpaths and cycleways which flow through the town and connect to the rural area beyond. This green infrastructure forms a key element of the character of the area and is vital to the wellbeing of the local community. There are many green areas across the Plan area, including parks, roadside verges and large spaces between housing areas.
- 2.10 Much of the Plan area forms part of the South East Northumberland Wildlife Network. Arcot Hall Grassland and Ponds Site of Special Scientific Interest lies to the south west of the Plan area. In addition, the Plan area contains two Local Nature Reserves at Bassington and Lanercost.

Summary

- 2.11 As a consequence of the above factors, quality of life is perceived locally to be good. The town has become an attractive place in which to live and successive generations return to Cramlington to live during their lifetimes. Nevertheless, the town faces some important challenges. These include the need to:
- Attract people of working age to balance the resident population and sustain its employment base;
 - Maintain a strong manufacturing sector and diversify into new employment opportunities;
 - Support the delivery of new homes to extend choice in the housing market and provide housing for an ageing population;
 - Continue to strengthen the town centre offer, including improved car parking and a reconfiguration of the town centre;
 - Reinforce and improve access to the range of services across the town;

- Improve the provision of and access to public transport, and
- Protect, refresh, reinvent and reinforce the network of valued and valuable green spaces.

2.12 Development of the South West Sector is expected to reinvigorate the housing market, attract new people to live and work in the town and create new revenues to support its infrastructure, ensuring that the town centre maintains and improves its competitive offer.

3. The key issues for the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.1 Following agreement to prepare a neighbourhood plan, the Town Council held workshops for its members to identify the main issues affecting the town. The issues were informed by the results of the early engagement with the local community that took place early in the plan preparation process.⁴
- 3.2 The intention was to identify whether a Neighbourhood Plan could help in creating local planning policies and other actions which could influence how those issues are addressed. The Town Council identified the following matters as the main issues it could look to cover in a neighbourhood plan:
- Affordable housing;
 - Social Inclusion;
 - The growing elderly population;
 - Town centre improvements, including parking and Town Square;
 - Public transport, including improved linkages to key destinations, road/rail interchange, and the need for a bus station;
 - More employment opportunities within the town, particularly for the low-skilled and young people;
 - Parking around schools;
 - Improving the fabric and infrastructure of the town; particularly the older housing and industrial estates;
 - Improved community facilities;
 - Local design guidance;
 - Anti-social behaviour;
 - Image;
 - New and improved green spaces;
 - Cemetery and allotment space; and
 - Empty homes and derelict buildings.
- 3.3 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group considered these general issues and identified four key issues that should be tackled in the Plan. Subsequent community consultation resulted in the addition of a fifth key issue, namely the protection and enhancement of the town centre. The key issues to be addressed through the Plan are therefore as follows:

⁴ Details of all of the engagement are included within the Consultation Statement that is available alongside the Plan on the County Council website.

| Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan – Key Issues |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sustainable development of the economy;2. Delivery of housing to support local communities and the economy;3. Provision and maintenance of the infrastructure and services necessary to support communities across Cramlington and the sustainable growth of the town;4. Promoting social and economic inclusion, and5. Protecting and enhancing the town centre as a place for retail, commercial and leisure activity. |

- 3.4 The Town Council considers the need to address these concerns to be of critical importance for the future of Cramlington. These key issues have informed the preparation of the vision, outcomes and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan, as well as the planning policies and community actions which will present opportunities to tackle these concerns.

4. Vision, outcomes and objectives

- 4.1 The vision, outcomes and objectives for the Plan have developed following consideration of key issues raised by residents in the community engagements event which took place early in the plan making process.

The Vision

- 4.2 The Town Council considers that the vision for the Plan must acknowledge and address the issues and critical concerns described in section 3.
- 4.3 An important context to the preparation of the vision is the Cramlington Landscape and Townscape Framework⁵ prepared for and adopted by Cramlington Town Council in September 2014; it sets out a vision for the town:

‘Cramlington is coming of age. It is a prosperous, attractive and growing town whose position adjacent to the two main roads into Northumberland (A1 and A189) and on the East Coast Main Line makes it the first town in the county and in this sense, ‘the Gateway to Northumberland’. The generous integrated green space within the town’s built form can be the point of departure for the transformation of Cramlington into Northumberland’s contemporary Garden Town, with a verdant and healthy landscape structure that is safe and accessible for all. This will be one of the drivers of Cramlington’s growth to become the county’s largest town.’

- 4.4 The vision for the Neighbourhood Plan builds from the vision within the Landscape and Townscape Framework’s. The Neighbourhood Plan vision for Cramlington is:

A Vision for Cramlington

Cramlington will continue to grow, becoming a successful sustainable community. It will strive to become the main town in the county and one of its principal gateways. Cramlington will be transformed into Northumberland’s Garden Town thereby creating a distinct identity for its residential and business communities and visitors.

⁵ <http://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/Cramlington%20Landscape%20and%20Townscape%20Framework.pdf>

The Outcomes

4.5 The following outcomes will arise, should the Plan's vision be met:

| Outcomes |
|--|
| <p>Cramlington will be a place where young people choose to stay to live and work, because of: the excellent education and health facilities, the choice and quality of work, the retail offer, the natural and historic environment, the range of leisure opportunities and access to high quality and suitable housing for all.</p> <p>Taking advantage of its rail and road links, Cramlington will be well connected to the social and economic opportunities provided in Tyneside. It will have strengthened its offer and role as a business location allowing people more opportunity to live and work locally.</p> <p>Growth in the South West Sector and the development of local businesses will have reduced the amount of commuting.</p> <p>The town centre will be competitive, well managed and accessible from all parts of the town. It will be a retail destination of choice for the surrounding area due to its range of shops, cinema, its lively cultural, social and leisure facilities, which are complemented by its programme of events, festivals and activities.</p> <p>Cramlington will be a caring and inclusive community where everyone has access to the services and facilities the town has to offer. Residents will have access to good quality, protected open spaces underpinned by a network of recreational and cultural facilities and heritage assets.</p> <p>Cramlington will have an integrated approach to travel with improved access to sustainable modes of transport, including easy access to safe and convenient active travel options, so that traffic flow will be more efficient, the town centre will be less congested and have adequate parking.</p> |

The Objectives

4.6 To deliver the vision and outcomes, eight objectives have been developed. The objectives clearly relate to the issues identified through early engagement. The planning policies and community actions included within the Plan have been identified to deliver the objectives.

Objectives

1. Completing our Town and extending choice in the housing market

To effect a step change in the delivery of new homes and extend choice in the housing market by:

- Promoting the phased completion of the South West Sector and land north of Station Road; and
- Supporting the construction of new homes at an appropriate scale elsewhere in the town. This will include the provision of:
 - affordable homes, suitable for use or adaptation at all stages in peoples' lives;
 - homes for vulnerable people; and
 - social rented housing.
- Supporting the provision of additional local services, and recreational, educational and cultural opportunities, which complement those already present across the town;
- Improving and enhancing community cohesiveness and the environment.

2. Reinforcing Cramlington's sub-regional employment role

To reinforce the town's sub-regional employment role by ensuring land is available for employment development and supporting investment in the provision of modern competitive employment space, thereby retaining jobs and diversifying the local economy into new sectors.

3. Improving our Town Centre

To add to the mix of commercial activity in the town centre, improving its accessibility for residents and visitors, thereby strengthening its role and competitive offer.

4. Investing in our infrastructure

To renew, reinforce and enhance, the town's physical infrastructure and assets, including Information and Communications Technology, through investment and robust management, thereby improving its setting and attractiveness for sustainable living and modern, competitive business.

5. Promoting and integrating sustainable transport

To promote access to sustainable modes of transport, which connect people effectively and efficiently to the social, economic, educational, recreational and cultural facilities which they require on a day to day basis. To maintain, add to and further integrate the network of sustainable transport modes and opportunities for safe and active travel by walking and cycling, and connections between places within Cramlington and destinations beyond.

6. Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment

To improve the visual and spatial relationships in and between the town's residential, business and commercial sectors, by implementing a programme of environmental improvements designed to create areas with a defined character, as well as attractive and safe routes between them.

Continued overleaf

Objectives

7. Protecting and enhancing our public open spaces

Achieving a balance between supporting development and protecting important green spaces, including where open spaces form the setting of heritage assets, whilst improving the range of good quality open spaces and streetscapes, which residents appreciate and value. To enhance the town's network of existing open spaces by seeking additional provision through the development process to meet identified deficiencies.

8. Creating and supporting thriving and inclusive communities

To build on the diverse needs of existing and future residents to seek to ensure communities are: active, inclusive, safe, have access to a home they can afford, access to employment and are well served by social, recreational, educational and cultural facilities.

- 4.7 The remainder of the Plan sets out the planning policies which have been identified to deliver the vision, outcomes and objectives of the Plan, with community actions identified in Annex 1.

5. Planning for the sustainable development of Cramlington

Background

- 5.1 The achievement of sustainable development runs through the whole of the Plan. This section of the plan identifies the overarching policy approach to sustainable development including mitigation of development in the Northumberland Coast Special Protection Area and Ramsar site and also covers design, as well as development in the open countryside. Policies within this section of the Plan will contribute to the delivery of all eight of the Plan objectives.
- 5.2 Section 2 of the Plan identifies the challenges and opportunities to deliver a sustainable Cramlington. In summary the town has:
- A broad range of housing;
 - A range of services and facilities;
 - A vibrant town centre;
 - High quality buildings and spaces;
 - Extended opportunities for employment; and
 - An extensive network of footpaths and cycleways.
- 5.3 Nevertheless, the town faces some important challenges. These include the need to:
- Attract people of working age to balance the resident population and sustain its employment base;
 - Maintain a strong manufacturing sector and diversify into new employment opportunities;
 - Effect a step change in the delivery of new homes – to enable the completion of the new town master plan and the provision of homes for an ageing population;
 - Continue to strengthen the town centre offer, including improved car parking and a reconfiguration of the town centre including a town square;
 - Reinforce and improve access to the range of services across the town;
 - Improve the provision of and access to integrated public transport, and
 - Protect, refresh, reinvent and reinforce the network of valued and valuable green spaces.

Planning for Sustainable Development

- 5.4 Neighbourhood planning has an important role in supporting sustainable development. To ensure the delivery of sustainable development, the town needs to accommodate development and manage change in an integrated way. It will be important to accommodate new housing alongside employment growth and to provide the services required by new and relocating residents. The Plan will be the principal means by which development and change can be managed in a way that delivers a sustainable future for the residents and businesses of the town.
- 5.5 Policy CNP1 requires all new development to be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

- 5.6 The emphasis and momentum for the sustainable development of Cramlington will be to promote the development of the town, whilst maintaining and enhancing the quality of its environment, as a place:
- To live;
 - To raise children;
 - To work locally, rather than at a distance; and
 - From where it is easy to reach into the nearby conurbation for their higher-level services and facilities.
- 5.7 The approach set out within Policy CNP1 will support the delivery of all of the Plan objectives.

Policy CNP1: The sustainable development of Cramlington

In accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, proposals for development will be supported where they ensure, where appropriate:

- a. Cramlington remains a strategic location for growth through development and regeneration, supported by a range of services and facilities;
- b. The provision of a range of land uses to minimise the need to travel for employment, shopping, leisure, education, health care and social care and other activities;
- c. A balance between housing and economic growth while protecting, enhancing as well as adding to the town's green spaces;
- d. Capacity exists, or can be created in physical, social and environmental infrastructure necessary to support new development;
- e. The effective use of previously developed land and proposals to bring empty buildings back into viable use;
- f. Links between key areas of the town, including the South West Sector, will be maintained and enhanced to allow safe walking and cycling and effective and efficient public transport connections;
- g. Constraints on development arising from potential flood risk, contamination or land instability have been effectively assessed and where required, that appropriate risk management, impact mitigation or adaptation will be secured by planning condition or planning obligation as appropriate;
- h. Minimise its impact on amenity for new and existing residents, business and other land uses in the vicinity of the development;
- i. The significance of historic assets and their settings within the Plan area will be conserved and enhanced; or
- j. The quality of the biodiversity and natural environment within the Plan area will be maintained and enhanced.

- 5.8 The NPPF states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where a plan or project is likely to have significant effect on a habitats site, unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site. Habitats sites are defined in the glossary to the NPPF. They include the European designated sites on the Northumberland Coast. The appropriate assessment undertaken as part of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan identified increasing levels of recreational disturbance in the Northumberland Coast Special Protection Area and Ramsar site as an issue that must be addressed through mitigation. It highlighted that adverse effects arising from additional housing and tourism accommodation supported through the Neighbourhood Plan could be mitigated where financial contributions are secured to the Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service. Contributions to fund the service will be sought from relevant development within 10km of the coast in accordance with detailed requirements set out in the Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service Strategy Document (December 2018). This requires financial contributions from all relevant development in the area up to 7km from the coast; and a lower contribution from major development (that is: sites of over 0.5 hectares or for 10 or more units) in the zone between 7km and 10km from the coast.
- 5.9 The Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service is a developer-funded warden service that will provide a presence within the designated sites to educate and advise recreational users such as dog walkers, joggers, horse riders and sea anglers as to how they can enjoy the coast without causing excessive disturbance to important bird populations. Policy CNP2 will help to deliver Objective 6.

Policy CNP2: Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service

To ensure that the impacts arising from increasing levels of recreational disturbance on coastal European sites and the coastal Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be addressed, all development within 7km of the coast that will result in a net increase in the number of residential units or tourist accommodation will be required to contribute to the Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness. Within a zone, as shown on the policies map, extending between 7km and 10km from the coast, only major development will be required to make a contribution or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness.

All financial contributions required in accordance with this policy will be secured by way of a planning obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or any subsequent amending legislation.

Promoting good quality design in new development

- 5.10 The identity of Cramlington is a key element of the vision and objectives for the Plan. The natural and built environment of the area is one of the factors that contribute to the high quality of life in Cramlington. The town is an attractive place in which to live. It is therefore essential that new developments embed high quality sustainable design. Policy CNP3 is cross cutting and will help to deliver all of the Plan objectives.

Policy CNP3: Promoting good quality design in new development

New development must embed high quality design. Development will be supported where it:

- a. Respects and adds to the qualities of the suburban townscapes, reflecting the prevailing character, scale, layout, mass and form, palette of materials, detailing and finishing;
- b. Creates attractive spaces by designing and executing good quality boundary treatment and hard and soft landscaping; and
- c. Ensures that buildings and spaces are easily accessible and safe.

Where a Design and Access Statement is required as part of a planning application, there must be a clear demonstration of how the proposal has responded to the above principles as an integral part of the design development process.

Development in the open countryside

- 5.11 Policy CNP4 defines two settlement boundaries within the Plan area: Cramlington and East Hartford. A settlement boundary is the dividing line, or boundary between areas of built development and the open countryside.
- 5.12 The Blyth Valley District Local Plan established 'settlement limits' to ensure that the separate character of settlements is maintained, keeping uninterrupted stretches of countryside between the settlements by regulating their expansion and to control sporadic development in areas of open countryside. In accordance with the NPPF, these principles remain valid, although the new settlement boundaries take into account development which has occurred since the Local Plan was adopted and the development needs of the town to 2033.
- 5.13 The settlement boundaries, shown on the Policies Map, have been drawn to establish a logical shape to the edge of Cramlington, following its planned completion. Irregular incursions into open countryside have been avoided. The boundary has also been drawn along features which are easily identified on the ground. Further details are set out within the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan Settlement Boundary Background Paper (January 2019)⁶.
- 5.14 It is recognised that there may, however be instances where development is required in a location outside the settlement boundary. Large scale development in the open countryside would affect the relationship between countryside and town and harm Cramlington's landscape setting. The Town Council is keen to guard against such inappropriate development. Policy CNP4 describes acceptable development in the open countryside, having regard to principles established in national policy and guidance. Policy CNP4 will support the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 2, 4 and 6.

⁶ <https://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/>

Policy CNP4: Development in the open countryside

New development outside the settlement boundaries of Cramlington and East Hartford, as defined on the Policies Map will be supported where it:

- a. Is directly related to the business and operational needs of agriculture, forestry or other land-based rural industries;
- b. Supports the sustainable growth of existing businesses and enterprises;
- c. Is a sustainable visitor attraction that is related to the experience or interpretation of the countryside, or a sustainable leisure development which respects the character of the countryside, only where identified needs are not met by existing facilities within the settlement boundary;
- d. Will provide local services or community facilities which support a rural community;
- e. Is a house, the design of which:
 - i. is truly outstanding or innovative and of the highest standard, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas;
 - ii. reflects the highest standards in architecture;
 - iii. significantly enhances its immediate setting; and
 - iv. is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.
- f. Comprises an appropriately designed extension to an existing building or buildings. The extension should be subservient to and respect the scale and appearance of the host building; or
- g. Involves the conversion of redundant or disused rural buildings, provided that the building is structurally sound and its conversion achievable without significant extension to the original structure. The conversion must be in keeping with the character and appearance of the building and its setting.

6. Completing our town and extending housing choice

Background

- 6.1 Following the demise of the Northumberland coalfield, between the 1950s and 1970s, the resulting legacy of the poor physical condition of many of the mining villages and the roads connecting them to one another and elsewhere, were considered to be an unsuitable basis from which to promote future growth in the south east of the County. The then County Council proposed the major regeneration of the coalfield and the promotion of a new economic base, and to address problems of congestion.
- 6.2 The plan advocated a new pattern of modern roads (now built) and the selection of growth points, the most significant of which was to be Cramlington New Town. Located at the heart of south east Northumberland and close to the Tyneside conurbation, it was intended to act as a growth point for employment and housing, offering a central location accessible to a workforce from a wide area.
- 6.3 The origins of Cramlington New Town grew from partnerships between successive local authorities, developing the town's industrial estates, as well as the house building industry. It was based around a designated Comprehensive Development Area and masterplan prepared and approved in the early 1960s. The pattern of development was broadly as follows:
- Mayfield - partially existing prior to the new town designation but with addition building in the late 1960s;
 - Whitelea - one of the earliest of the new town estates, constructed in the late 1960s and early 1970s;
 - Southfield - constructed in the early 1970s;
 - Barns Park - constructed in the 1970s;
 - Parkside - constructed in the 1970s;
 - Beacon Hill - constructed in the 1970s;
 - Eastfield - constructed primarily in the late 1970s with an estate added in the mid-1990s;
 - Beacon Lea - constructed in the 1970s;
 - Westwood - constructed in the early 1980s;
 - Northburn – substantially constructed between the late 1980s and the 1990s;
 - Southfield Gardens - constructed in the early 2000s.
- 6.4 The South-West Sector of the town represents the final phase in the development of Cramlington New Town as originally cast.
- 6.5 The town has evolved into an attractive place in which to live, with a good choice of housing and reasonable connections between housing estates, the town centre and local services. However, some residents have expressed the view that there are issues of isolation on some of the housing estates. On the other hand, anecdotal evidence gathered during consultations suggests that households and young people who have moved away from the town are often anxious to return, but there is not a ready supply of suitable homes.
- 6.6 Cramlington is attractive to the house building industry, although build rates have been poor during the recent recession. The market is showing a renewed interest in building and there are major schemes underway to the north of Station Road and in the South West Sector, as well as development at East Cramlington.

6.7 This section of the Plan proposes policies to:

- Complete the town;
- Extend choice in the housing, including the provision of housing for an ageing population;
- Provide lifetime affordable housing;
- Create high quality new places through good quality housing design and layout; and
- Make the most of the existing housing stock.

6.8 The policies within this section of the Plan will assist in the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8.

Completing our Town and extending housing choice

6.9 The Plan will play a key role in ensuring that sufficient housing land is delivered to meet housing needs. It seeks to guide new housing development to sustainable locations in the town by supporting the use of previously developed land, where available, whilst taking into account and reflecting the character and scale of the prevailing adjacent housing. A broad mix of housing types suitable for different households across their lifetimes will contribute to the aim of creating a sustainable community with an even balance between age groups.

6.10 The level of development proposed in the Plan will: support an increased working age population; enable a greater mix of housing; and support Cramlington's established role as a main town in the South East of the County, and as a sub-regional centre for industry.

6.11 As previously explained, the development of the South West Sector of the town is the final phase of Cramlington New Town as originally planned. Its development is expected to reinvigorate the housing market and attract new people to live and work in the town centre.

6.12 Through the Neighbourhood Plan the Town Council is anxious to ensure that extended choice in both market and affordable housing supports regional and county employment growth strategies, so that:

- The town safeguards and maximises its employment potential;
- Cramlington continues to develop as a sustainable settlement;
- Local services and amenities are maintained and enhanced; and
- The continuing vitality and viability of the town centre is secured.

6.13 The Steering Group examined all sites brought forward through NCC's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, with the potential to provide 5 or more houses. An appraisal was completed for 28 sites located across Cramlington and represents a comprehensive summary of the potential land available for development in the town. This appraisal identified a total of 11 sites which were considered to be acceptable for housing development providing the potential for the delivery of around 3,600 new dwellings. These figures include: sites with planning permission where development has commenced since 2011 (table 2); sites with permission where development had not commenced at 1 April 2017 (table 3); and sites allocated for housing development in the Neighbourhood Plan. Full details are available within the Housing Background Paper⁷. It should be noted that the figures within the Neighbourhood Plan use a different base date (2011) to those within the emerging Northumberland Local Plan (2016), this accounts for the difference in the figures. The Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan fully recognises and reflects what is contained within the Publication Draft Northumberland Local Plan (2019) in terms of the level of housing needed within the parish.

| Reference | Name | Size (ha) | Capacity |
|--------------|--|-----------|------------|
| CNP4a | Dam Dykes Farm Cottages, Arcot Lane | 5.15 | 19 |
| CNP4b | Former Parkside County Middle School, Village Square | 1.01 | 6 |
| CNP4c | The Officers Club, Bassington Avenue | 50.6 | 118 |
| CNP4d | South of B1326 at East Cramlington | 7.8 | 192 |
| Total | | | 335 |

Table 2: Sites with planning permission - under construction

| Reference | Name | Size (ha) | Capacity |
|--------------|---|-----------|--------------|
| CNP4e | South West Sector 1 | 34.14 | 715 |
| CNP4f | South West Sector 2 | 104.054 | 2000 |
| CNP4g | Land north of Station Road | 14.36 | 480 |
| CNP4h | Land north of Barry House, Old Crow Hall Lane | 0.68 | 9 |
| CNP4i | Land north of Rose Avenue, Nelson Village | 0.87 | 28 |
| Total | | | 3,232 |

Table 3: Sites with planning permission - not started

6.14 In order to ensure the Plan provides a framework to support the provision of a level and mix of new homes that will ensure it contributes to the achievement of sustainable development, AECOM Consultancy prepared a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA - 2018)⁸. The HNA 2018 estimated the quantity of housing needed across the Plan area to 2031 by considering a number of different growth options:

- The Northumberland Five Year Supply of Deliverable Sites (2017-2031) – this produces a target on 1,388 dwellings;
- National household projections (2014 based) – this produces a target of 1,807 dwellings; and
- Past dwelling completion rates (2001 to 2017) – this produces a target of 441 dwellings.

⁷ <https://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/>

⁸ <https://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/>

- 6.15 The Plan supports a level of house building that will complete the town and ensure that it remains competitive in attracting investment in employment opportunities. A significant level of housing development either has planning permission or is under construction. The proposed allocations identified on the Policies Map proposes two additional small sites, this approach will help to deliver objectives 1, 2, 5 and 8 of the Plan.

Policy CNP5: Housing

The following two sites, as shown on the policies map, are allocated for housing development:

- **Site CNP 4j Nelson Recreation Ground:**
This site covers an area of 1.66 hectares and should accommodate around 25 dwellings. The site will only be released for housing development if an assessment has been undertaken which demonstrates that the recreational open space is surplus to requirements or that it will be replaced by equivalent or better provision of recreational open space in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.
- **Site CNP 4k East Cramlington Farmhouse:**
This site covers an area of 0.76 hectares and should accommodate around 8 dwellings.

- 6.16 A key role for the Plan is to include a policy framework which support the provision of a mix of new homes that will contribute towards meeting identified needs. In order to assist in the understanding of housing needs across the Plan area, in 2016 the Town Council commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA - 2016)⁹. The HNA 2016 identified:

- 78% of occupied dwellings are houses (38.2% semi-detached, 19.9% detached and 19.9% terraced), 12.1% are flats/maisonettes, 9.6% are bungalows and 0.3% are other property types;
- 49.5% of dwellings have three bedrooms, 25.8% have two bedrooms, 17.6% have four or more bedrooms and 7.1% have one bedroom/bedsit;
- Only 17.6% of the accommodation in Cramlington was built before 1965, while 61.8% was built between 1968 and 1984; a further 20.6% has been built from 1985 onwards. This reflects the designation of Cramlington as a New Town in the mid-1960s, and the rapid development that followed;
- 72% of dwellings are owner-occupied, 9.6% are privately rented (including tied accommodation), 18.3% are social rented and 0.1% are intermediate tenure;
- 72% (8,875) of households across Cramlington are owner-occupiers. 39.1% of all households (4,965) own outright and 32.9% of all households (4,180) have a mortgage;
- Between 2010 to 2015, Land Registry data reveals that lower quartile, median and average (mean) house prices across Cramlington have all increased, although there has been some fluctuation in the case of lower quartile and median prices. Average house prices experienced a steadier trajectory, with year-on-year price increases from

⁹ <https://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/>

£130,781 in 2010 to £146,236 in 2015. By 2015, the median house price was £135,500 and the lower quartile price was £94,000;

- In 2010, a household income of £21,857 was required for a lower quartile price to be affordable; by 2015 this had increased to £24,171. Similarly, an income of £30,343 was required for a median priced property to be affordable in 2010 compared with £34,843 in 2015. This indicates that house prices in Cramlington have become less affordable during the period;
- There are around 2,330 households who live in an affordable (social rented or shared ownership) property across Cramlington, accounting for 18.3% of all occupied dwellings. Of these, 2,326 households live in accommodation rented from a Housing Association or Registered Provider and 4 live in shared ownership properties (intermediate tenure);
- Around 30.6% of households had moved to a new house in the past five years. Of these, 57.0% originated within the study area, and 43.0% from outside the study area. Most moved into the private housing sector, with around 47.1% moving into owner occupation and 28.9% into private renting.

6.17 Historically new build housing in Cramlington has largely comprised family housing for sale on larger estates, with few smaller units in apartment or townhouse formats. Through early engagement, the view has been expressed that the town is a good place to live and raise children and that when children move away for education or work, that they will look for the opportunity to return and raise children of their own. In this context, the continued provision of family homes will be an imperative, but the reality is that the Plan needs to deliver extended choice and selection in the size, type and tenure of housing.

6.18 Given the ageing population, the need to provide opportunities for older people to downsize from family houses to bungalows or apartments is also considered to be important, therefore the mix and tenure of future provision needs to acknowledge this requirement, especially as the resident population grows older.

6.19 The Cramlington HNA 2016 concluded that:

- Strongest market demand is for detached houses with four bedrooms and bungalows, with household aspirations and expectations for both property types exceeding current supply;
- High-income households planning to move indicated a strong preference for detached houses with four bedrooms and half of these households wanted to stay in Cramlington. There is therefore a need to continue to provide executive-style housing as part of the housing profile, to ensure that the full range of market demand is met and to support the local economy;
- With an ageing population, the accommodation needs and aspirations of older people is a key priority for the future. The 2016 Household Survey identified that over three-quarters of older households would like to stay in their own homes with support when needed. However, other housing options were also considered attractive. Analysis indicates that 78.3% of older households who are planning to move are looking to downsize. Ensuring that these future housing requirements can be met will also have the advantage of freeing-up larger, family sized housing.

- 6.20 The HNA 2018 reviewed the findings of the HNA 2016 and provided additional evidence on future housing needs for older people. It concluded that there is a need to provide approximately 10 additional specialist housing spaces per year, until the end of the Plan period. The HNA 2018 describes options for provision across the Plan area.
- 6.21 The Neighbourhood Plan therefore plans for extended choice in the range of new housing provided in the town, through Policy CNP6 which encourages a range of house type, size and tenure, particularly on major sites. However, the policy avoids being too prescriptive to ensure the plan is able to respond to changing needs over its lifetime. Policy CNP6 will help to deliver Plan objectives 1 and 8.

Policy CNP6: Extending choice in housing

Other than in development designed to meet an identified specialist housing need, the mix of housing sizes, types and tenures in proposed development should, in so far as is reasonably practicable and subject to viability considerations, assist in meeting needs identified in the most recently available Strategic Housing Market Assessment and/or the Cramlington Local Housing Needs Assessment.

Providing lifetime affordable housing

- 6.22 The provision of affordable housing is important in the retention of young people and families and therefore maintaining the viability of schools, sustaining the local labour force and supporting other local services and facilities. The full definition of affordable housing is contained within the NPPF; in summary it covers housing for sale or rent. Affordable housing provides for those whose needs are not met by the market and includes:
- Housing for rent where: the rent meets agreed calculations and will remain at an affordable price and it is provided by a registered provider or through a build to rent scheme;
 - Starter homes, where they meet defined requirements;
 - Discounted market sales housing, where it is sold at least 20% below local market value;
 - Other affordable routes to home ownership such as shared ownership, equity loans, and rent to buy.
- 6.23 The Plan seeks to increase the provision of affordable homes and a mix of housing units which appeal to the young people and families who wish to live and work in the town. The aim is to provide a framework whereby at all stages in the lifetime of an individual or family there will be a stock of affordable housing that meets their current needs, including: starter homes, family accommodation to cater for changes in circumstances, retirement and that which enables the provision of increasing levels of assistance and care.
- 6.24 Affordable housing is provided by reducing the price or rent of a house to a level lower than the prevailing market prices or rents in the local area. Management of affordable rented property is usually undertaken by Registered Providers (Housing Associations).

- 6.25 The Cramlington HNA 2016 identified a total of 870 households in housing need, representing 6.9% of all households across Cramlington. It highlighted a gross annual imbalance of 126 dwellings but because there is a good supply of affordable lettings, the net annual imbalance is 22 affordable dwellings across Cramlington. The HNA 2016 suggested a tenure split of 40.7% social/affordable rented, 28.8% intermediate tenure and 31.4% starter homes based on household preferences. The HNA also tested the actual ability for communities to afford intermediate tenure, this suggested that 54.8% of households in need could afford intermediate tenure products priced at £80,000.
- 6.26 The HNA 2016 undertook an analysis of the affordability of different tenure options, including eligibility criteria. This suggested a total potential market for starter homes over the next five years from 517 households. In terms of the size of affordable housing required, the HNA 2016 identified that the gross need is split by smaller general needs one/two bedrooms (57.1%), general needs three or more bedroom (31.7%) and older person two bedrooms (10.3%).
- 6.27 Policy CNP7 therefore seeks to provide a positive planning policy framework to meet the objectively assessed need for lifetime affordable homes and to provide protection for the affordable housing stock so that it is available for future residents. This will assist in the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 2 and 8.

Policy CNP7: Providing lifetime affordable housing

All new development that contains ten or more open market residential dwellings, or on sites of 0.5 hectares or more, will be required to contribute to the provision of affordable housing.

The level and type of affordable housing to be delivered on each site will have regard to up to date evidence of affordable housing needs, including the current Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2018) and the Cramlington Local Housing Need Assessment (2018) and any subsequent updates.

There will be a presumption that the affordable housing contribution will be through the provision of affordable homes on the application site. In exceptional circumstances, off-site provision or a financial contribution may be sought, where this can be robustly justified and the following criteria can be met:

- a. Off-site provision must be on a site that is agreed as being in a suitable location relative to the housing need to be met. Such provision will be secured and controlled by a planning obligation to ensure that the affordable housing is delivered alongside the housing on the principal site; or
- b. Where a financial contribution to off-site provision of affordable housing is agreed as an alternative to direct provision on site, the sum will be calculated at a rate to be determined at the time of the application by the local planning authority. The contribution will be paid to the local planning authority on commencement of development.

Any development proposal which involves the provision of affordable housing at a level below that required under the terms of this policy will need to be justified by an independent viability assessment of the scheme costs and end values.

The affordable housing provided in pursuit of this policy for rent, discount market sales, or where public grant funding is provided towards other affordable routes to home ownership, will be made available to people in housing need at an affordable sale or rental cost for the life of the property. Any planning permission granted will be subject to appropriate conditions and/or planning obligations to secure:

- c. The amount and type of affordable housing;
- d. That the housing will be discounted at an appropriate level to ensure it is affordable by people identified as being in housing need; and
- e. A mechanism for the management of the new homes to ensure that the first and subsequent occupancies are restricted to people in housing need.

Creating high quality new places through good quality housing design and layout

- 6.28 The NPPF emphasises the importance of achieving high quality in the design of all development, including the need to: function well and add to the overall quality of the area for the lifetime of the development; be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; respond to local character and history; establish or maintain a strong sense of place; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and create a safe, inclusive and accessible environment.
- 6.29 The Cramlington Landscape and Townscape Framework¹⁰ notes that:
‘There are now a total of eleven residential districts with more to be created in the southwest sector development. Each is representative of the time when it was constructed and they are generally entered off major junctions with extensive landscaped surroundings, often at roundabouts.’
- 6.30 The Landscape Framework¹¹ goes on to recommend that:
‘Each residential district should have its own distinctive entrances and accessible open space that is attractive and safe. Unsightly rear garden treatments should be screened in such a way as to present a high quality face to the wider public while avoiding over shading. The key routes through should be planted with street trees where practicable.’
- 6.31 The Town Council discussed options for the identification of design principles to help shape new development, at stakeholder workshops in 2014. The workshops considered examples of good buildings, spaces, building materials, and walls, fences and landscape from new towns in the UK, Europe and the USA and concluded that the following design principles were important for Cramlington:

| Cramlington Design Principles |
|---|
| <p>Buildings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two and two and a half storey buildings should predominate with only limited numbers of three storeys, which should be located in close proximity to local service centres. No residential property should be more than three storeys;• Houses should be simple, traditional built form; rectangular and foursquare plan with pitched roofs;• Building should be at sufficiently low density to prevent narrow spaces, overshadowing and small gardens;• A good mixture of building styles will be sought, with generous gardens and space between buildings – particularly in proportion to height;• Houses should incorporate pitched roofs at between 35 and 45 degrees, but no steeper; roof and building lines should be well ordered but also provide interest. Small, well-placed dormer windows and balconies will be supported; |
| Continued overleaf |

¹⁰ Paragraph 3.15

¹¹ Paragraph 3.16

Cramlington Design Principles

- Local vernacular or familiar building styles are preferred; buildings that resemble Victorian and/or older rural buildings would be welcome, provided they have a clear function and are well related to the overall development, for example providing a focal point, as Cramlington Village does;
- Buildings should be legible, for example as a single property, two houses, or flats and their function should be clear;
- There is general support for buildings incorporating sustainable construction methods and renewable energy generation provided that any visual impact is not too intrusive.

Spaces:

- Broad spaces between buildings are preferred;
- Hard surfaces are acceptable provided that they are broken up with soft landscape and/ or, trees: trees should have plenty of room to grow and mature in wider spaces;
- Trees with high canopies will be most appropriate in built up areas; they should be sensibly grouped with clear and identifiable routes through them;
- Support will be given to good public spaces and broad verges alongside buildings, roads and paths;
- Spaces which are secluded should take into account relative openness and a degree of overlooking;
- Informality should be encouraged but without creating confusing spaces;
- Water can be attractive to overlook and for the setting of buildings;
- Large scale landscape features are better located at the edge of places rather than within them;
- Overall, the quality and cost of maintenance will be important.

Materials:

- A restricted palette of materials is preferred, comprising brick and render, red and grey tiles, and slate.

Walls, fences and landscape:

- Large scale landscape features which close off views, towards the edge of the development are valuable and should be retained and managed;
- Trees too close to houses can create problems of noise and dirt and should be avoided;
- The use of well-maintained low hedges and shrubs will produce attractive avenues and enclose private space to the front of houses;
- Low hedges should be used to soften the impact of rows of parked cars;
- Simple masonry walls should be attractive as well as functional.

The design of development with the Cramlington Village Conservation Area, or that which affects its setting, will be required to pay special attention to preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area, including significance derived from its setting.

- 6.32 Notwithstanding these guiding principles, the development of buildings and spaces which clearly display high quality design in their scale and mass, use of materials, layout and landscaping, and which are innovative or original in their concept will be supported. Policy CNP8 provides a positive policy framework to guide and influence the design, layout and landscaping of new housing development across the town, both to meet NPPF objectives and describe what good quality design means in Cramlington. Policy CNP8 will support the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 6, 7 and 8.

Policy CNP8: Creating high quality new places through good quality housing design and layout

All new housing developments in the Cramlington Neighbourhood Area must demonstrate good quality design. New housing development should seek to reflect the character of its immediate surroundings, including buildings and landscapes, where these provide attractive and safe places to live, or create better buildings and spaces in which people will enjoy living.

New residential buildings and spaces which clearly display high quality design in their scale and mass, use of materials, layout and landscaping, and which are innovative or original in their concept will be supported. New residential development should:

- a. Incorporate designs that reflect the scale, massing and form of existing and surrounding buildings;
- b. Respect the pattern of the surrounding suburban development;
- c. Enhance the quality of the surrounding suburban development through the use of materials, boundary treatments and the creation of open spaces and landscapes;
- d. Safeguard, respect and enhance the natural environment, the biodiversity, landscape and wildlife corridors and the countryside;
- e. Conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and their setting;
- f. Incorporate, where appropriate, biodiversity, landscaping and public and private open spaces which adds to and supports the creation of wildlife corridors;
- g. Maximise the use of renewable energy sources;
- h. Embed the required infrastructure as part of the development to allow access to superfast broadband, unless it can be demonstrated through consultation that this would not be possible, practical or economically viable;
- i. Create safe and accessible places where the potential for crime and disorder is minimised;
- j. Adopt the principles of sustainable urban drainage;
- k. Provide sufficient external garden space, refuse and recycling storage as well as car and bicycle parking to ensure a high quality and well managed streetscape; and
- l. Support health and well-being.

Where a Design and Access Statement is required as part of a planning application, there must be a clear demonstration of how the proposal has responses to the above as an integral part of the design development process. Development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving local character, the quality of an area and the way it functions will not be supported.

Making the most of the existing housing stock

- 6.33 It is important that the Plan helps to influence the efficient and effective use of the existing housing stock of the town to meet housing need, rather than just relying on the building of new homes. Households can often meet their need for a new or larger house by extending the house in which they live. Permitted development rights allow householders to extend their homes, within prescribed limits, without requiring planning permission. The Plan supports extensions beyond these limits provided that the alteration, improvement or extension is in keeping with the scale and design of the original house, respects the street scene as well as the privacy and well-being of neighbours. The opportunity to improve the energy efficiency of the whole property will also be supported.
- 6.34 In Cramlington, like all towns and cities, there will be instances where the existing housing stock is under-occupied as a result of changing household circumstances; for example, one or two older person households occupying large family houses. Some properties will be vacant and it is acknowledged that a certain amount of vacant property is required so that the housing market can operate. In 2011, 2% of the town's household spaces had no residents, in comparison with 6% across Northumberland and 4% in the north east of England and England. Whilst the town appears to have a relatively low rate of vacant household spaces, stock that is held vacant may be in poorer condition and in need of refurbishment, particularly in respect of energy efficiency.
- 6.35 Ensuring a good supply and choice of housing will encourage households currently under-occupying family housing to downsize, freeing up the accommodation for those in need of such a home. Encouraging property owners to make underused or vacant property available to a housing trust or association for refurbishment and subsequent rental, will also help to meet housing need.
- 6.36 Policy CNP9 seeks to reduce the number of vacant residential properties which are suitable for use as homes and to encourage the most effective use of the existing housing stock to meet housing needs. It will support the delivery of Plan objectives 1 and 8.

Policy CNP9: Making the most of the existing housing stock

Proposals for the adaptation, extension or alteration of occupied or empty dwellings will be supported where it has been demonstrated that:

- a. The scale and design of any extension or alteration complements and respects the scale, mass, form and design of the original property;
- b. The extension or alteration is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the street scene; and
- c. A high standard of amenity can be provided for existing and future residents.

7. Reinforcing Cramlington's sub regional employment role

Background

- 7.1 The north west sector of Cramlington was originally planned as the town's principal general industrial area, a role that has continued since the 1960s. To the south of both the town and the A19, the Northumberland Business Park was conceived as part of the Blyth Valley District Local Plan 1999 and commenced development in the early 2000s. Its primary purpose was for uses involving storage and distribution, but it has since diversified into office-based employment uses.
- 7.2 Cramlington has a sub-regional role as a centre for industry and houses the largest concentration of manufacturing businesses in Northumberland, including a cluster of pharmaceuticals companies. It is a prime location for inward investment because of the quality of its environment and road network. In commercial terms, it has become one of the most successful of Northumberland's settlements for industrial activity over the past 10 years.
- 7.3 This section of the Plan proposes policies to support growth in employment and the economy and protect the main industrial sites. The policies will assist with the delivery of Plan objectives 2 and 8.

Growth in employment and the economy

- 7.4 As a result of Cramlington's sub regional employment role, it is essential that the policy approach of the Plan is flexible to accommodate new employment opportunities either from new businesses or where existing companies require land for expansion. However, it is vital proposals do not have an unacceptable adverse impact on communities, other land uses, the highway network, other infrastructure or the environment.
- 7.5 Policy CNP10 therefore supports new economic development across the Plan area. The approach will support the delivery of Plan objectives 2 and 8. The Plan does not allocate West Hartford as this is a strategic matter to be addressed through the new Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy CNP10: Growth in employment and the economy

New development which will provide job opportunities and economic growth will be supported where:

- a. The amenity and functioning of adjacent communities and other land uses is not significantly adversely affected;
- b. Any significant impacts from the development on the transport network, or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree; and
- c. There is no unacceptable adverse impact on the environment, including designated ecological and heritage assets and their settings.

Protecting the main industrial areas

- 7.6 The Northumberland Employment Land and Premises Demand Study (2015)¹², which was commissioned by NCC as part of the evidence base for the Northumberland Local Plan, identified:
- The importance of Cramlington's location due to its good road and rail access, as well as proximity to Tyneside. Some operators are unwilling to go beyond the town to Ashington/ Blyth due to a perception of a disconnect from Tyneside;
 - Cramlington's estates compete with North Tyneside;
 - There is good demand for industrial premises and not a huge oversupply as space lets quickly;
 - Housing growth could increase demand;
 - Whilst vacancy rates are quite high, these are skewed by certain large, problematic buildings;
 - There is demand for industrial space across all size ranges, but there is a lack of larger, good quality units;
 - Sector demand is across all types of manufacturing and smaller warehousing operations;
 - Cramlington is the County's best location to attract larger manufacturers, which can bring supply chain benefits.
- 7.7 Despite being the County's best location, agents and developers identified that speculative industrial development is currently not viable; but that over the plan period this could change. Some agents thought that public sector financial support would be better aimed at providing new factories in Cramlington where indigenous local businesses have requirements, rather than investing in the remediation of sites at Blyth for sectors where demand may not materialise. Rather than chasing one big inward investor, agents prioritised the support of smaller indigenous businesses with growth prospects, of which there are many located in Cramlington. They considered that NCC could help to de-risk investments through lease agreements. Also, that there are opportunities to redevelop or refurbish older industrial stock.
- 7.8 Agents identified that the office market is reasonable and the town has attracted businesses out of Tyneside, but that the current stock and what is left to build at Northumberland Business Park is likely to meet demand for the foreseeable future.
- 7.9 As a result of Cramlington's sub regional employment role, it is essential that the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect the main industrial sites of: Bassington, Northumberland Business Park; Windmill; North Nelson; Nelson Park West; Nelson Park; Crosland Park; Nelson Park East; and South Nelson. Policy CNP11 therefore seeks to protect the main industrial sites as defined on the policies map for B class uses¹³. It also provides a positive policy framework against which to assess non B class proposals on these sites. Further details are set out within the Employment Background Paper¹⁴. Policy CNP11 will support the delivery of Plan objectives 2 and 8.

¹² <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Reports.aspx#employmentstudies>

¹³ B-class uses comprise: B1 – Business – offices, research and development, light industry; B2 – General industrial; B8 – Storage or distribution.

¹⁴ <https://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/>

Policy CNP11: Protecting main industrial sites

The main industrial sites as set out below and defined on the Policies Map are allocated for B1, B2 and B8 development:

- a. Bassington;
- b. Northumberland Business Park;
- c. Windmill;
- d. North Nelson;
- e. Nelson Park West;
- f. Nelson Park;
- g. Crosland Park;
- h. Nelson Park East; and
- i. South Nelson.

Development of non B-class employment generating activity on these sites will only be permitted if the proposal:

- i Directly supports and is ancillary to the primary functioning of the site as a location for B1, B2 and B8 development;
- ii Will not have a detrimental impact on the functioning of existing or future B-class operators on the site; and
- iii Ensures that B-class uses remain the majority activity on the site.

8. Improving our town centre

Background

- 8.1 The Manor Walks shopping centre was constructed in the centre of the town in the 1970s and was subsequently expanded: in the mid-1990s, the early 2000s and then again in 2013. The most recent expansion saw the development: of a new nine screen VUE multiplex cinema; restaurants; increased car parking; and an additional 8,300sqm of retail space. The size of the shopping centre and retail park is around 48,000sqm.
- 8.2 This section of the Plan proposes policies to ensure the town centre is both vital and vibrant and that the town centre environment is enhanced. The policies within this section of the Plan will assist in the delivery of Plan objectives 2, 6, 7 and 8.

Ensuring a vital and vibrant town centre

- 8.3 As a new town, Cramlington town centre is different to other main towns across Northumberland particularly as a result of a nature of the businesses within the shopping centre, they close early. The town centre has a low proportion of non-retail uses. However, the recent cinema and restaurant developments supported the development of a night time economy. Opportunities exist to develop this role further and to make it a more attractive destination for families e.g. improving linkages with Concordia.
- 8.4 The Northumberland Town Centres and Retail Study (2016)¹⁵, commissioned by NCC as part of the evidence base for the emerging Northumberland Local Plan, identified a number of important issues to be considered through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Retail growth

- 8.5 The proportion of A1¹⁶ units in Cramlington town centre increased from 57% in 2013 to 59% in 2015. The proportion of A1 units is six percentage points higher than both the north east small towns and national small towns averages. As a large proportion of Cramlington's town centre comprises the Manor Walks Shopping Centre, it is unsurprising that the town centre has a low proportion of B1 uses (1%) but the town centre also has a lower than average proportion of A3¹⁷ uses (6%).
- 8.6 In 2015, Cramlington recorded a high proportion of comparison units (80%) when compared to the proportion of convenience units (20%). Again, this is not surprising given that a large proportion of the town centre largely comprises a shopping centre that mostly sells comparison goods. Notwithstanding this, the town centre does contain Asda, Iceland and Sainsbury's supermarkets and the proportion of convenience units in 2015 was only one percentage point lower than the national small towns average.
- 8.7 The vacancy rate in 2015 was 9%; the same as the average vacancy rate for north east small towns. However, Cramlington's vacancy rate has increased by one percentage point between 2013 and 2015.

¹⁵ <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Reports.aspx#employmentstudies>

¹⁶ The A1 use class includes - shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes

¹⁷ The A3 use class includes – restaurants and cafes for the sale of food and drink for consumption on the premises.

Market share

- 8.8 Cramlington town centre is the biggest comparison centre in Northumberland and performs the widest role of all the defined centres within Northumberland in terms of attracting spending from adjoining Study areas. It is the only town centre in Northumberland that exerts a significant influence beyond its local catchment. This role has evidently been enlarged by the recent expansion of Westmorland Retail Park.
- 8.9 Cramlington has experienced the greatest increase in its market share of shopping trips for small household goods, with an increase of 5.1 percentage points. This is likely to be attributable, at least in part, to the opening of a new 3,530 sq.m gross homeware store operated by Dunelm at Westmorland Retail Park. The convenience goods market share of 9.8% in 2015 has increased from 8.5% in 2009.

Household survey

- 8.10 The household survey results found Cramlington town centre to have the highest number of regular visitors. In total, 21% of respondents who made visits to the main town centres within the local authority area, indicated that they most regularly visit Cramlington. Significantly, 38.7% of respondents pointed to the choice and range of shops in Cramlington as their main reason for visiting. A very high proportion of respondents who visit Cramlington (61.6%) stated that there were no measures which would encourage them to visit the centre more often, although 18% identified more parking would encourage them to visit the town centre more.

Future need/ demand

- 8.11 As a consequence of the commitment for new retail floorspace in Cramlington, the Town Centre and Retail Study concluded that expenditure levels were considered to be sufficient to support between 700 sq.m and 1,900 sq.m net of convenience retail floorspace in the town by 2031, depending on the type and format of operators. However, the study identified that given the uncertainty over the end use of the former Cramlington library, it recommended that the need for additional convenience goods floorspace in Cramlington is treated with caution and is reviewed on a regular basis.
- 8.12 With regard to Cramlington's comparison goods facilities, the study identified that they have seen a market share improvement from 6.5% to 7.1% since 2009. As a consequence, current facilities turn over circa £87.9m at 2015. The study concluded that given the forecast increases in comparison goods expenditure and population and allowing for year on year increases in the productivity of existing floorspace, it estimated that by 2021 there will be an expenditure surplus of £5.2m to support additional comparison goods floorspace within Cramlington. This is estimated to increase to £15.3m at 2026 and to £28.9m at 2031. Again, the study identified that it is expected that the surplus comparison expenditure in Cramlington will be slightly lower due to the opening of a Home Bargains store at the Brockwell Centre in Cramlington subsequent to the completion of the household survey. Additional and remodelled floorspace commitments in Cramlington could provide around 1,142 sq.m of additional comparison sales floorspace. Clearly, the scale of floorspace in the pipeline is significant and, even though its implementation would likely realise some improvement in

market share, it acts to extinguish any real need for additional provision in the short term up to 2021. The identified residual need of £10.1m at 2026 and £23.1m at 2031 translates into a convenience floorspace requirement of between 1,600 and 2,700 sq.m net at 2026, increasing to between 3,300 sq.m and 5,500 sq.m net at 2031. As with convenience goods, the study recommended that the need for new comparison goods floorspace in Cramlington is monitored on a regular basis, given the uncertainty over the end use of the former Cramlington library commitment.

- 8.13 Policy CNP12 therefore seeks to support proposals which help to maintain and contribute to the role, vitality and viability of the town centre. In addition, Policy CNP12 defines the town centre and primary shopping area boundaries, which have been drawn to reflect new development which has taken place since the boundaries were defined in the Blyth Valley Local Plan. The proposed town centre boundary also includes land for future development to the south of the primary shopping area. Further details are contained within the Town Centre Background Paper¹⁸. The Policy will support the delivery of Plan objectives 3 and 8.

Policy CNP12: Ensuring a vital and vibrant town centre

New development located within Cramlington Town Centre, as defined on the Policies Map, will be supported where it helps to maintain and contribute to the role, vitality and viability of the Town Centre, including:

- a. Locating main town centre uses within the Town Centre Boundary or Primary Shopping Area, as appropriate, as defined on the Policies Map;
- b. Supporting the re-use or redevelopment of vacant buildings and sites within the Town Centre for retail (A1), Financial and professional services (A2) or Food and drink (A3); and
- c. Supporting residential development in the Town Centre as part of mixed-use schemes, at first floor level or above where it can be demonstrated that the reuse or redevelopment of the building or site in its entirety for a retail or leisure use would not be viable.

The following developments will be subject to impact testing:

- d. Proposals for more than 1000m² gross retail floorspace outside the Town Centre Boundary; and
- e. Proposals for leisure-related buildings of 2500m² gross floorspace, not linked with wider open space activities or hotel use, that are outside the Town Centre boundary.

All retail development beyond the Town Centre Boundary, and proposals for other town centre uses beyond the Town Centre Boundary, will be subject to a proportionate and appropriate sequential test in relation to: the scale of the proposal; and its nature in terms of the type of service or goods offered. Where it is demonstrated that a town centre use can only be accommodated at an edge or out of centre location, priority should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre and where possible, well related to residential areas, existing services and public transport.

¹⁸ <https://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/>

Improving the quality of the town centre environment

- 8.14 One of the key objectives of the Cramlington Landscape and Townscape Framework is to improve the design of the town centre. The Framework identifies that the town centre has some of the qualities of a retail park due to its inward-looking layout and that new development provides the opportunity to link the new with the old: creating streets with activity on the ground level and by recognising key pedestrian routes. The Framework also highlights that opportunities to improve the town centre through better urban and landscape design could begin to transform the currently suburban character into one that is truly urban.
- 8.15 The Landscape and Townscape Framework provides examples of town centre improvements:
- The creation of a new town square for use as a market and civic space;
 - The enhancement of existing pedestrian routes throughout the centre;
 - The transformation of existing town centre peripheral roads, such as Station Road and Dudley Lane, into streets;
 - Improvements to the car parking layout to enhance efficiency and control sprawl;
 - The introduction of street trees to key routes and streets;
 - The enhancement of street level connections with the village centre;
 - The introduction of high quality, public art;
 - The introduction of lighting effects to differentiate the town centre from the peripheral residential areas.
- 8.16 Four principles for the town centre are identified within the Framework:
- The inner identity – creating a sense of place in the town centre;
 - Urbanising the edge – passing through a town centre, not around;
 - Connecting the dots – efficient pedestrian linkages to the rest of the town; and
 - Articulating arrival – designing the drama of coming into the heart of Cramlington.
- 8.17 The Framework has informed the preparation of Policy CNP13 which seeks to ensure that proposals within the town centre will improve its quality and attractiveness. The Policy will assist with the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8.

Policy CNP13: Improving the quality of the town centre environment

New development located within the Town Centre, as defined on the Policies Map, which improves the quality and attractiveness of the town centre will be supported. Development should:

- a. Be well designed, the scale, form, mass and external materials of which reflect and are appropriate to the prevailing character of the Town Centre;
- b. Improve the public realm in the Town Centre through the use of appropriate materials in hard landscaping schemes, good quality soft landscaping and better signage, where relevant;
- c. Support the provision of additional car parking where required;
- d. Improve access to and circulation within the Town Centre, for pedestrians and cyclists;
- e. Be designed to support the provision of accessible and efficient public transport routes; and
- f. Create good quality, accessible public open spaces which are suitable for a range of civic, cultural, recreational and leisure activities.

9. Promoting and integrating sustainable transport

Background

- 9.1 The planned growth in the population of Cramlington over the plan period through housing and economic development, as well as increased visits to the continually improving town centre, will inevitably lead to increased vehicle use within the town. The Plan has an important role to identify and facilitate proactive interventions which will allow the town to absorb and benefit from the anticipated levels of growth. It should be noted that matters regarding the strategic road network, which fall within the Plan area are addressed within the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.
- 9.2 This section of the Plan includes policies to ensure effective integration of sustainable transport measures into new development. The policies within this section of the Plan will assist in the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8.

Sustainable and active travel

- 9.3 Transportation links which maximise opportunities for sustainable and active travel from the development to the town centre and the wider Cramlington area via the existing main bus, cycle and walking routes, will be important in ensuring that traffic movement is free flowing.
- 9.4 Fundamental to identifying and facilitating proactive interventions which will allow the town to absorb the benefit from the anticipated growth in population and economic activity, is seeking to increase levels of walking and cycling across Cramlington. This includes providing sustainable, active and permeable links to transport modes, such as bus routes.
- 9.5 The Draft Northumberland Walking and Cycling Strategy (2016), aims to:
'... deliver a high quality, safe walking and cycling experience to be enjoyed by increasing numbers of residents, businesses and visitors, which will contribute to the improvement of health, wellbeing and the local economy of the county. There will be a particular focus on increasing walking and cycling participation by children and young people.'
- 9.6 To promote more sustainable modes of transport in particular active travel, which in the main relates to walking and cycling, a Travel Audit was prepared by Sustrans, on behalf of NCC. This analysed travel patterns and identified specific network improvement projects. The report highlights that Cramlington has a higher percentage of commuters who travel to work distances between 2km and 40km when compared to the rest of Northumberland and England. Further information is set out within the Transport Background Paper¹⁹. In regard to the modes of transport used, the percentage of people who commute by car, car sharing and bus is higher than the rest of Northumberland and England. Whereas, commuting by train, cycle and walking fall below the comparative figure for Northumberland and England.
- 9.7 The audit also identified that cycling infrastructure i.e. dedicated cycle lanes in Cramlington is more extensive compared to other towns in Northumberland. However, the quality of some of the surfaces and signing of the routes have deteriorated over recent years and maintenance regimes have not replaced like for like infrastructure. A number of missing links have been identified in the walking and cycling network, particularly at key junctions with major roads, where hazardous crossing points force people on foot and bike to compete for space.

¹⁹ <https://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/>

- 9.8 The audit established a 'primary' and 'secondary' network of walking and cycling routes. The aim of the network is to facilitate and enhance the opportunities for walking and cycling in Cramlington as a means of increasing the percentage of active travel compared to other modes. Routes on the primary network are: high quality, traffic free infrastructure and/ or strategically significant routes that link points of interest; and suitable for both walking and cycling in their current condition. Routes on the secondary network are: traffic free infrastructure that are additional to footways that adjoin adopted highways; paths or track segments over 5m in length; can include public rights of way and footpaths and therefore may carry exclusions to cycles or other non-motorised users; sealed, bound and/ or paved surfaces; and separated from the road network in some way e.g. by a grass verge.
- 9.9 Policies CNP14 and CNP 15 seek to support proposals to improve or extend Cramlington's walking and cycling network, as well as protecting existing routes as well as seeking to ensure integration of housing proposals with important services and facilities. The policy will support the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8.

Policy CNP14: Sustainable and active travel

Proposals to improve or extend Cramlington's walking and cycling network, particularly those which create better connections between residential areas and schools, open spaces, industrial estates, business parks and the Town Centre will be supported.

The primary and secondary walking and cycling network will be protected from development unless the development provides replacement walking and cycling infrastructure.

Policy CNP15: Connectivity of development sites

New housing development should be accessible by modes other than the private car. Development should be designed to include walking and cycling routes which connect with the existing walking and cycling networks across the Neighbourhood Plan area. In particular, improvements of routes to the following areas/ sites should be improved where appropriate:

- The Town Centre;
- Local schools;
- Industrial estates;
- Cramlington railway station;
- Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital;
- Local parks and playgrounds;
- Strategic bus routes;
- Northumberlandia, from the north and south;
- North Tyneside area, along the Fisher Lane to Seaton Burn junction; and
- South West Sector.

Where viable and relevant to the development, financial contributions will be sought towards the improvement of the cycling and walking network.

Improvements to east-west road links

- 9.10 The need for improvements to east-west link roads has long been identified. The Blyth Valley Local Plan highlighted that should development come forward on land to the north of Station Road, the traffic generated would lead to the need for sections of the road to be constructed in parallel. Policy CNP16 therefore safeguards the routes of the proposed east-west link roads. This will support the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 4 and 5.

Policy CNP16: Improvements to east-west road links

Land is shown on the policies map as safeguarded for the construction of the east-west link roads. Development will not be permitted which would prejudice the construction of those roads.

Cramlington railway station

- 9.11 Cramlington railway station is located on the East Coast Main Line. It is currently only used by Northern Rail services and offers a limited number of journeys. Only 1% of Cramlington commuters travel by train which is lower than the county average and well below the average for England (7.4%). In 2014/15 there were only 89,070 rail passengers. This is very low when compared with Morpeth, which covers a smaller urban area but had 316,068 users, largely because it benefits from access to additional train operating companies' services.
- 9.12 It is an aspiration of Cramlington Town Council that additional train services stop at Cramlington and that facilities and infrastructure at the railway station are improved to support and encourage additional passenger rail journeys over future years. The Town Council will support Northumberland County Council in any efforts to seek improvements in services, facilities and infrastructure.

10. Enhancing the environment

Background

- 10.1 The Cramlington Landscape and Townscape Framework summaries the importance of the environment of the Plan area. It highlights the extensive green infrastructure network through the town, its proximity and connection to the surrounding rural area, as well as the important historical context of the town. However, it acknowledges that across the Plan area, there are enormous areas of undifferentiated municipal grassland, which are underused, characterless or otherwise qualitatively undefined. Much of this landscape takes the form of generous roadside verges and interstitial green spaces between housing districts. The Plan therefore seeks to protect and improve the range of good quality open spaces and historic assets which residents appreciate and value.
- 10.2 This section of the Plan proposes policies to ensure: green infrastructure networks are protected and enhanced; important open space and new green space is provided as an integrated part of proposals; Local Green Space is protected from inappropriate development; trees and woodland are protected from damage or loss; allotments are protected from development; and new development within the Cramlington Village Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character or appearance. The policies within this section of the Plan will assist in the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 6, 7 and 8.

Green infrastructure networks

- 10.3 The NPPF defines green infrastructure as: ‘*A network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities*’. It is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. As a network it includes: parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include: streams, canals and other water bodies and features such as green roofs and walls. Green Infrastructure plays an important role in creating ecological networks, providing open space, allowing for sustainable drainage, contributing to climate change adaptation, and providing attractive and safe environments for sustainable modes of transport.
- 10.4 The green infrastructure network across the Plan area is varied and multifunctional. It includes a number of different elements, including: wildlife networks and corridors; open spaces; and linkages to the wider countryside. The identification of the green infrastructure network was informed by allocations within the Blyth Valley Local Plan and Blyth Valley Core Strategy, as well as the South East Northumberland Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)²⁰ and Northumberland Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision Assessment (2011)²¹.
- 10.5 Policy CNP17 seeks to protect and where practical and viable improve and extend the green infrastructure network. It provides a framework for the assessment of planning applications. This policy approach will assist with the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 6, 7 and 8.

²⁰ <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Studies%20and%20Evidence%20Reports/Landscape%20Green%20Spaces%20Studies/4.%20SE%20Green%20Infrastructure/SE-Green-Infrastructure-Strategy-October-2011.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Studies%20and%20Evidence%20Reports/Landscape%20Green%20Spaces%20Studies/5.%20Open%20Space%20Recreation/Openspace-Sport-Recreation-Assessment-May-2011.pdf>

Policy CNP17: Green infrastructure networks

New development should seek to protect and where practical and viable, improve and extend green infrastructure networks using native species. When determining planning applications, consideration will be given to how development proposals:

- a. Protect and enhance green infrastructure assets, provide high quality links between existing assets and/ or provide additional uses for multi-functionality;
- b. Secure improved access to green infrastructure;
- c. Create a sense of place by protecting and/or fully integrating high quality, green infrastructure into the proposed development to reflect the character of the Neighbourhood Plan area;
- d. Integrate green infrastructure with sustainable drainage systems and the management of flood risk; and
- e. Address the management and maintenance of new and existing green infrastructure throughout and beyond the plan period.

Proposals that would include the loss of part of the green infrastructure network, as defined on the Policies Map, will not be supported unless alternative provision, equivalent to or better than the green infrastructure proposed to be lost in terms of its quantity and quality, can be provided in equally accessible locations that maintain or create new green infrastructure connections.

Local Green Space

- 10.6 The NPPF²² enables the Plan to designate areas of Local Green Space (LGS) for special protection, thereby preventing new development on these sites, other than in very special circumstances. LGS does not need to be publicly accessible, although the designation must not be applied to an extensive tract of land and the site must be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves. The land must be demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance.
- 10.7 The sites identified in Policy CNP18, and shown on the Policies Map, are proposed to be designated as LGS as they meet the respective criteria. A background paper has been prepared²³ to outline the reasons why the sites are of particular importance to the character of the Neighbourhood Plan area and explain the process that led to their proposed designation. The designation of LGS will assist with the delivery of Plan Objectives 6, 7 and 8.

²² Paragraphs 99 to 101

²³ <https://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/>

Policy CNP18: Local Green Space

The following sites, as defined on the Policies Map are designated as Local Green Space:

1. Land at Northburn;
2. Land south of Northumbrian Road; and
3. Cramlington Village.

Inappropriate development of the land will not be permitted other than where very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Local Green Space by reason of inappropriateness and other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Open space

10.8 Across the Plan area there are many areas of open space which are valued for their local amenity value and for informal and informal recreational purposes, but which do not meet the detailed LGS allocation criteria. Many of these sites are also part of the green infrastructure network of the Plan area. The NPPF²⁴ identifies the importance of access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation to the health and well-being of local communities²⁵.

10.9 Policy CNP19 therefore designates sites as protected open space, with the intention that they should be safeguarded and development only permitted where specific criteria are met. Further details are contained within the Local Green Space and Protected Open Space Background Paper. The policy also seeks to ensure that new developments provide an appropriate level of public open space. This policy approach will assist with the delivery of Plan objectives 1, 6, 7 and 8.

Policy CNP19: Open space

The following areas of open space, as defined on the Policies Map, shall be protected:

| | |
|-------|----------------------------|
| POS1 | East Hartford |
| POS2 | Horton Park (north |
| POS3 | Horton Park |
| POS4 | Langton Drive |
| POS5 | Hauxley Drive |
| POS6 | Northburn |
| POS7 | Horton Drive |
| POS8 | Eastfield |
| POS9 | Alderley Way |
| POS10 | Westwood Park |
| POS11 | Shanklea |
| POS12 | Hazelmere Crescent (north) |

Continued overleaf

²⁴ Paragraph 96

²⁵ Further information is contained within the Open Space background paper

<https://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/>

| | |
|-------|---------------------|
| POS13 | Hazelmere Crescent |
| POS14 | Ormskirk Grove |
| POS15 | Huntingdon Drive |
| POS16 | Porchester Drive |
| POS17 | Station Road |
| POS18 | Station Road (east) |
| POS19 | Seven Oaks Park |
| POS20 | Cambo Drive |
| POS21 | Mainstone Close |
| POS22 | Herdlaw |
| POS23 | Debdon Place |
| POS24 | Doxford Place |
| POS25 | Alexandra Way |
| POS26 | Alexandra Park |
| POS27 | Carlcroft Place |
| POS28 | Ann Welfare |
| POS29 | Cragside |
| POS30 | Windemere Close |
| POS31 | Valley Park |
| POS32 | Wreay Walk |
| POS33 | Richmond Way |
| POS34 | Dukesfield |
| POS35 | Beaconhill Park |
| POS36 | Westfield Park |
| POS37 | Mayfield Dale |

Each of the areas identified above contributes to local amenity, character and the green infrastructure network. Development that will result in the loss of protected open space will only be supported where the applicant has robustly demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority, that the:

- a. Open space is surplus to requirements; or
- b. Loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by at least equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality, including amenity value, in a suitable location in the near vicinity; or
- c. Development is for alternative open space provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

New development should provide, as a minimum, the standards of open and recreation space defined within the most up to date and relevant guidance.

Protecting trees and woodland

10.10 Legislation²⁶ requires that when granting planning permission for any development, adequate provision is made, by the imposition of conditions, for the preservation or planting of trees. It is particularly relevant as a result of the scale of development proposed across the South West Sector and the need to integrate it into the existing landscape setting. Policy CNP20 identifies how the legislation should apply across the Plan area. It will assist with the delivery of Plan objective 6.

²⁶ Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Policy CNP20: Protecting trees and woodland

New development should protect trees from damage or loss. Development which may impact on trees should be accompanied by a tree survey that establishes the health and longevity of the trees. Trees of good arboricultural and amenity value will be protected from development unless they are replaced with trees which will achieve equal value.

Allotments

10.11 Across the Neighbourhood Plan area there are nine allotments. These allotments are valued by the local community as a valuable component of cultural identity; they are also an important part of the green infrastructure of the Neighbourhood Plan area. Policy CNP21 seeks to ensure that existing allotment provision is retained and protected. This policy will assist with the delivery of Plan objectives 6, 7 and 8.

Policy CNP21: Allotments

The following allotment sites, as defined on the Policies Map, will be protected from development:

- A1 Arcot Allotment Association / Post Office Allotment Association
- A2 Barrasford Road
- A3 Blagdon Crescent Association
- A4 Clifton Road
- A5 Crowhall Lane
- A6 East Hartford
- A7 Lanercost Park Association
- A8 Storey Street
- A9 West View

Development resulting in the loss of any of the allotment sites identified would only be supported where:

- a. The development provides significant social and, or economic benefits which outweigh the importance of retaining the allotment; and
- b. A replacement allotment of at least equivalent quality and quantity, in a convenient location for the users, is provided fit for use, prior to the loss of the allotment land or any part of it.

The provision of new allotments will be supported to meet locally identified demand.

Cramlington Village Conservation Area

10.12 The Cramlington Village Conservation Area was designated in November 1975; however, no character appraisal has been prepared to identify those things that comprise the special character of the area.

10.13 In accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) and the NPPF, Policy CNP22 requires new development to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting and provides guidance on the design of proposals. This policy approach will assist in the delivery of Plan objectives 6 and 7.

Policy CNP22: Cramlington Village Conservation Area

Development in or affecting the setting of the Cramlington Village Conservation Area, will be supported where the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Cramlington Village Conservation Area and its setting.

Development will be supported where proposals:

- a. Preserve or enhance the area's prevailing character and distinctiveness;
- b. Pay special attention to the quality of the area's historic architecture and townscape in its design, use of materials, detailing and finishes, boundary treatment and use of hard and soft landscaping; and
- c. Ensure that buildings and spaces are easily accessible and safe.

Development that would lead to substantial harm to, or total loss of, significance of any aspect of the Cramlington Village Conservation Area that contributes to its significance will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss. Where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the Cramlington Village Conservation Area this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

11. Thriving and inclusive communities

Background

- 11.1 Plan objective 8 seeks to ensure that the Plan will build on the diverse needs of existing and future residents to seek to ensure communities are: active; inclusive; safe; have access to a home they can afford; have access to employment; and are well served by social, recreational, educational and cultural facilities.
- 11.2 This section of the Plan proposes policies to seek to deliver this objective.

Community facilities

- 11.3 Community facilities support the health and wellbeing, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community and are provided through a wide range of venues. Community facilities could include local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.
- 11.4 Across the Neighbourhood Area there are a wide variety of formal activities taking place for all ages. There are a number of important venues where recreational activities take place, including a network of community centres. These facilities make a significant contribution to the vitality and viability of the Neighbourhood Area and have a positive impact on the sustainability of Cramlington, enhancing the quality of life and often providing an important focal point for social interaction.
- 11.5 Policy CNP23 therefore supports the provision of new community facilities and seeks to resist the loss of existing facilities. It will support the delivery of Plan objectives 7 and 8.

Policy CNP23: Community facilities

Proposals for the provision of new community facilities will be supported where the development would not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the environment or residential amenity.

Existing community facilities, including outdoor playing pitches and children's play areas, will be protected from loss through development, unless:

- a. The facility would be replaced by equivalent or better facilities in a location accessible to users; or
- b. It has been satisfactorily demonstrated that it would not be economically viable or feasible to retain the existing facility and there is no reasonable prospect of securing an alternative community use of the land or building.

Infrastructure

- 11.6 New development can bring significant benefits to the local community, including new homes and jobs. However, it can also have negative impacts, most notably where additional demand is placed on facilities and services which are already at or near capacity. Planning obligations, known as section 106 agreements, may be used to secure infrastructure or funding from a developer. For example, a planning obligation may be used to secure a financial contribution towards improving existing education facilities.
- 11.7 Whilst the infrastructure requirements created by new development will vary depending on the characteristics of each development, potential infrastructure that could be required or added to could include: open space; public transport; education and leisure provision; and medical facilities.
- 11.8 Policy CNP24 therefore seeks to ensure that no significant adverse infrastructure impacts arise from new developments. It will assist with the delivery of Plan objectives 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Policy CNP24: Infrastructure

Development that requires the provision of additional infrastructure will be supported where:

- a. Adequate infrastructure, services and community facilities are, or will be within an agreed timescale, made available to serve the development;
- b. The necessary improvements are made to existing infrastructure, services and community facilities within an agreed timescale; or
- c. A combination of both 'a' and 'b'.

Healthy communities

- 11.9 At a national level the link between planning and health has long been established. The built and natural environments are major determinants of health and wellbeing. The wider determinants of health are closely linked to the quality of life enjoyed by communities. This includes having the opportunity to earn a reasonable wage, live an active lifestyle and have access to local employment opportunities, healthy housing, open space, community facilities, healthy food, care and health facilities. New development has the ability to positively influence wellbeing and health.
- 11.10 General health across all wards in Cramlington are at, or close to the average for Northumberland. However, East Cramlington Ward displays the poorest, with Cramlington Village and West Wards also poor. There are higher recorded percentage levels of obesity, depression, type 2 diabetes and asthma in Cramlington than in the rest of Northumberland²⁷.
- 11.11 Policy CNP25 requires all new development to be considered in the context of the need to improve the health and wellbeing of communities. It will assist in the delivery of Plan objective 8.

²⁷ Quality and Outcomes Framework 2014

Policy CNP25: Healthy communities

All new development will be considered in the context of the need to improve the health and wellbeing of communities by requiring development to contribute to creating an age friendly, healthy and equitable living environment by:

- a. Creating an inclusive built and natural environment;
- b. Facilitating active and healthy lifestyles;
- c. Preventing negative impacts on residential amenity and wider public safety from: noise, ground instability, ground and water contamination, vibration and air quality;
- d. Providing good access for all to health and social care facilities; or
- e. Promoting access for all to green spaces, sports facilities, play and recreation opportunities.

Annex 1: Delivering the vision and objectives – Community Actions

A1.1 As part of the process of developing the Neighbourhood Plan, some areas of community concerns were identified that cannot be addressed through the planning system. However, as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process they can become 'Community Actions', which are supported by Cramlington Town Council. These proposals can be delivered in conjunction with other local organisations. Eleven Community Actions have been identified as part of the preparation of the Plan, these are described below.

Community Actions

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| Community Action 1: Cramlington Village Conservation Area |
| To work with Northumberland County Council to prepare and adopt a Conservation Character Appraisal and Management Plan for Cramlington Conservation Area. As part of this work, a review of the Conservation Area boundary will be undertaken. |

A1.2 Although the Cramlington Village Conservation Area was designated in November 1975, it does not have a Character Appraisal. To ensure the Conservation Area is properly managed it is important that there is a full understanding of the significance of the character of the area; this will be set out within the Character Appraisal document. The Management Plan will set out proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the area.

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| Community Action 2: Cramlington Village Square Enhancements |
| Informed by the outcome of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan, develop a project to enhance Cramlington Village Square. |

A1.3 The village square provides an important reminder of the history of Cramlington. Given its historical significance and prominent position within the Conservation Area, it has been identified by the Town Council as an area that is in need of enhancement. Potential enhancement projects will be considered through the development of the Cramlington Village Conservation Area Management Plan.

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| Community Action 3: Introduction of 20mph limits and zones |
| To work with Northumberland County Council to implement 20mph speed limits and zones across all residential estates. |

A1.4 Cramlington has an extensive network for pedestrian and cycle infrastructure that is largely separate from its road network. A large number of studies have demonstrated a link between the introduction of 20mph zones and a subsequent reduction in casualties. Northumberland County Council is responsible for determining where 20mph zones and limits should be introduced. The Town Council will therefore work with the County Council to implement 20mph limits and zones across all residential estates in Cramlington.

Community Action 4: Car parking

To work with Northumberland County Council to introduce parking restrictions, including residents only parking schemes, as well as working to improve car parking layouts to enhance efficiency and the control of sprawl in the vicinity of the town centre.

- A1.5 The local community have raised significant concerns with regard to parking in residential streets. The Town Council will therefore work with the County Council to introduce appropriate parking restrictions, including residents only parking areas in the vicinity of the town centre.

Community Action 5: Public Art

To investigate opportunities to introduce public art at key locations, including the potential to create an art trail which complements existing active travel routes.

- A1.6 The Cramlington Landscape and Townscape Framework identifies the relative absence of public art across the town and the importance of public art to present the town's history. There are opportunities to include public art at key locations, such as at key entrances to the town, on the towns roundabouts and also along the extensive network of active travel routes.

Community Action 6: Development of creative and adventure play facilities

To use the results of the 'Informal, Creative and Active Play' Study to inform the development of facilities in the town.

- A1.7 As part of the Town Council's Planting, Environment and Works Programme 2017/18 it was agreed to undertake a creative and informal play feasibility study. The initial findings of the study²⁸ recommends:
- That a Cramlington Play Working Group is established in order to:
 - Encourage community engagement, ownership and improvement of the existing play areas/ zones;
 - Build a dynamic partnership between the Town Council, NCC and the local community;
 - Obtain funding for a storytelling festival project;
 - Develop an imaginary play area web and other initiatives to promote creative and imaginative play;
 - That the Town Council provide a letter of support to London Play for their bid to Sport England to run a Cramlington play based pilot;
 - Organise a world café style event to listen to the views of children and young people – as the first steps in creating a child friendly town.

²⁸ Report available at http://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/SKM_C224e17031014331.pdf

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| Community Action 7: Fostering wild spaces |
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| To develop projects which foster the creation of wild spaces across the town. |
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A1.8 The Cramlington Landscape and Townscape Framework identifies that there are enormous areas of undifferentiated municipal grassland in Cramlington, which are underused, characterless or otherwise qualitatively undefined. Much of this landscape takes the form of generous roadside verges and interstitial green spaces between housing districts, the latter often associated with the pedestrian and cycle network. Whilst contributing little to the town, these green spaces are expensive to maintain, their homogenous character disorienting and they often act as a hindrance to a healthy, urban interaction between cars and pedestrians.

A1.9 This action seeks to ensure that these grassland areas are used to introduce linear woodland with glades of wild flowers and native shrubs. This will completely change the appearance, biodiversity and landscape in the town. Examples of implementation include:

- Creating native woodland along the principal road corridors;
- Creating native woodland in some of the larger unused amenity grassland areas that stand adjacent to residential areas;
- Introducing Sustainable Drainage Systems or wetlands into the larger green areas;
- Creating edge of woodland bio tapes that include native shrubs, wildflowers and flowing grasses to act as attractants to bees and birds;
- Using different species mixes to bring some landscape differentiation to the green space pattern of the town;
- The introduction of orchards as part of a community food for free programme;
- The development of a farmable forestry asset for the town;
- The development of information boards and nature trails linking green spaces of the town with the wider countryside.

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| Community Action 8: Education provision |
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| To work with the Regional Schools Commission, the Local Education Authority and the Department for Education to ensure appropriate funding is in place which will enable the timely provision of the education infrastructure required to support the planned growing population. |
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A1.10 The Northumberland Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies that as a result of the planned increase in population there will be pressures on education provision. It is therefore essential that the required increase in provision is effectively planned for and its delivery is phased alongside the new housing development over the plan period.

Community Action 9: Route enhancements

To work with Northumberland County Council and other stakeholders to enhance existing pedestrian routes through the town centre and town centre peripheral roads into residential areas.

- A1.11 One of the key objectives of the Cramlington Landscape and Townscape Framework is to improve the design of the town centre. The Framework identifies the need to create an environment to allow people to pass through the town centre, not around it and to establish effective pedestrian linkages to the rest of the town.

Community Action 10: Cramlington Railway Station

To work with Northumberland County Council and other stakeholders to support improved passenger services and rail infrastructure, including the creation of a transport hub.

- A1.12 Cramlington railway station is located on the East Coast Main Line it is currently only used by Northern Rail services and offers a limited number of journeys. It is an aspiration of Cramlington Town Council that additional train services stop at Cramlington and that facilities and infrastructure at the railway station are improved to support and encourage additional passenger rail journeys over future years. The Town Council will support Northumberland County Council and other stakeholders in any efforts to seek improvements in services, facilities and infrastructure.

Community Action 11: Dementia friendly community

To investigate opportunities to work towards creating a dementia friendly Cramlington.

- A1.13 Dementia is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century. People with dementia want to remain independent and take an active role in their local community, but often this is not an option. The Alzheimer's Society identifies that the following activities are important to people with dementia and that they need to be achievable either independently or with a carer: being able to travel; going to shops; running errands; visiting places of worship; and managing day to day tasks. Business and organisations related to these activities can play a part in enabling people with dementia to live well for example by: making the bus into town or the library more accessible or thinking about the support needed to go shopping. The Alzheimer's Society identify that a little understanding about dementia and its effects is the only way to create dementia friendly communities.