

HE2 Comments – Referring to HE2 Specifically

HE2 – General		
Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Respondents suggested changes
BL008; BL035; BL049; BL071; BL073; BL104; BL149; BL149	Character of the site will not be maintained by building blocks of flats on it, no matter how much money they will be sold for; In the winter the flats will be very visible from Blackwell Lane (2)	(2) Look at lower level high density schemes that would imaginatively sit well within the setting not above it.
BL008	Do not believe that by the Council saying they will be exclusively for the elderly, that they will actually be used for this purpose. Developers who build for the retirement market would not be interested in the location due to lack of services and it would be easy for the Council to say that they could not get buyers for the retirement market so the apartments will have to be sold to regular developers.	
BL009	Disgusted at the Council's plans for housing on the historic Blackwell Grange Parkland	
BL009	Could you tell me the total number of houses / apartments proposed	
BL009	Totally opposed to flats as they are normally built to rent out	
BL009	Three storey flats too high	
BL015	Too many existing apartments in the town that are vacant so no need for more	BL015 - Should be returned to being a Hotel and Golf Course
BL027	How high will flats be built	
BL044	Concerns relating to density of dwellings, particularly with respect to increasing the density of housing above the original 6 per hectare	The area should be left clear
BL012	Previous experience of living in a flat at Scholars Park and had persistent problems with Anti-Social behaviour (noise, littering etc.) particularly from one flat used for 'holiday let'.	
BL031	Flats should not be visible above the trees on Blackwell Lane	
BL034	Concern regarding sudden addition of apartments to the plan. Should be located off Grange Road to minimise impact.	Apartments should be removed.
BL054	Perceived back tracking by the council on the 'top-end executive' offer. Flats and apartments for the elderly are seen as a sop. Would occupancy be conditioned?	
BL064	Hotel operator - Support for the principle of development in this location has previously been received through the site allocation process and pre-application advice. Note the Council's existing policies on housing suitable for older people and commissioned their own Care Needs Assessment in January 2015 which identified further need for extra care/sheltered housing within the local area. Includes indicative site plan for development of the site.	

BL064	Hotel operator - an extra care/sheltered housing facility at HE2 would help meet housing need (including Use Class C2), stimulate the housing market, provide facilities for the wider community and facilitate the long term retention of the hotel.	
BL071	There are no blocks of flats or three storey homes on the lane to set a precedent.	
BL071	If the intention is to improve the area for the elderly, independent living should be the way forward rather than the money making for profit ideas of assisted living. Where the only motive is for private companies to make profit for themselves rather than help the character and health of the surrounding area.	
BL073	Object to development of houses and three storey flats	
BL071	The hotel has applied to lease the land in a historical walled garden which used for overflow parking on extended terms (possibly 99 years) with the intention of demolishing the only fitness centre in the area and used by many elderly and young residents. Making the hotel less attractive for reservations or future possible leasing as it will have no facilities or sufficient parking for customers and people attending functions.	
BL0073	Reduce the value of my property	
BL073	Reason for purchasing family home was to live in a quiet, semi-rural location, with an extremely attractive outlook in an area of natural beauty adjacent to golf club and countryside. This was reflected in the purchase price of our house.	
BL160	Dismayed to see the plans increase the dwelling numbers. Has there been any market analysis undertaken to justify the increase? While there is a growing and ageing population it is not feasible to assume that there is a realistic demand for older people wanting to move from their homes. Typically older people only move in response to a crisis (health decline, etc.) there are no pre-emptive decision makers in terms of housing future and there is no mention that these dwellings would be assisted living / warden controlled.	
BL160	It is reasonable to conclude that the more you build, the less 'executive' or desirable the location becomes and thus the price of the new housing and those around it.	
BL160	Despite consultation and objections raised, it appears a done deal in balancing the Council's books. Can the Council Clarify the expected build rate of dwellings? It is unfair to expect residents to endure building site noise, dirt and disruption over a number of years as was intimated in the first round of council's responses.	Removal of all HE2 dwellings proposed.

BL162	Proposed sites inappropriate as the majority of them in areas of historic significance where no development should be pursued, and have been hugely enlarged in the second consultation to include apartment blocks and roads through the parkland as well as possible large breaches in the listed perimeter wall.	
BL162	Important that careful thought should be given to the future of the entire site including the Grange, which although currently leased to Forestdale Hotels, belongs together with the parkland to the town of Darlington.	

Officer comments

The site is part of the setting of the Grade II* Listed Building, however this does not mean that no change or even no harmful change can take place. Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework allows for less than substantial harm, providing there are public benefits.

The proposed development is sufficiently far away from existing houses (twice the adopted separation distance) and separated by a public highway and a substantial belt of mature trees such that there will be no overlooking, overshadowing, overbearing or loss of privacy.

The current proposals are for luxury apartments aimed at the retirement market. We cannot make decisions on what may or may not happen in the future. If circumstances change and an application is submitted to vary the planning conditions, then the variation will have to be considered at that time taking into account all relevant planning matters.

Measures are in place through environmental health regulations to control statutory nuisance for things like noise and litter. However, these problems are not generally associated with apartments occupied by older people.

At two and a half storeys, roughly the height of the existing houses on Blackwell Lane, the proposed apartments would be below the height of the tree belt along Blackwell Lane.

Building on the Grange Road of the site is more sensitive from a Listed Building perspective because it includes both the original and the later access to the building and allows for views of the primary, front, elevation. In terms of impact on the former parkland, the Blackwell Lane side of the site has already seen housing development in the form of Grangeside and The Spinney. Historic England have advised there is only so far east new development could extend on the site before substantial harm (as identified in paragraph 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework) would occur. Housing on this part of the site was ruled out early on for this reason.

While the existing built environment helps to set the context, just because there are no apartments along Blackwell Lane that is not a planning reason for refusal.

There are different models of assisted living from independent living with care services brought in as required (similar to visits from the District Nurse) to residential homes for the elderly. In this case, the proposals are for the former.

Until a planning application is submitted, the intentions of the Hotel operators are pure speculation. However, the Council is keen for investment to go into Hotel improvements.

Loss in value of homes is not a planning matter. However, research undertaken by London School of Economics found that prices of existing houses sometimes fell while construction was going on but once the developments were completed, the local areas generally moved with the market. Researchers could find no evidence of longer-term negative impacts.

In terms of the need for accommodation for older people, Darlington has an aging population and the Council's Supported Housing Strategy Appendix 2 calculates that by 2025 there will be a requirement for an additional 163 Extra Care for sale units and an additional 981 Sheltered for sale units for people aged over 75. These figures do not include the needs of people below the age of 75. The clear message is there is a shortage of choice for people who want to purchase specialist elderly accommodation.

There is a balance between the amount of development and the continued attractiveness of the parkland setting. However, the proposed development will be high quality, high specification, in a very attractive parkland setting, in a desirable residential suburb.

The build rate will be determined by the market.

There are no roads proposed through the parkland, only footpaths, and no large breaches proposed in the listed perimeter wall.

HE2 – Master plan		
Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Respondents suggested changes
BL012	Inclusion of apartments would be detrimental to the vision for 'high end executive housing' and will put off some 'high end' purchasers.	
BL012; BL071	Majority of flats would be buy-to-let investments which would be a marked departure from the largely owner occupied properties in the area. Leading to a greater turnover of residents and loss of community feel. We will have letting signs all the way along the lane.	
BL109	Extra care accommodation has some merit, although expected yield may not be achieved. Support proposal to demolish existing gym and replace with sympathetically designed apartments, but concerned about building in other areas due to car parking requirements near the hotel.	Proposals should pay full regard to the sensitive historic setting.

HE2 – Master plan		
Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Respondents suggested changes
BL151	Not clear whether development will extend beyond the walled garden or not from description/plans. Concern regarding hotel parking being built on and replacement provision.	
BL155	Previous plans were reasonable but new plans involve selling land off to developers and putting in apartment blocks and care/assisted living blocks are unreasonable, all with access via the hotel drive.	Go back to original plan.
BL156	Apartment blocks proposed at rear of the hotel are acceptable as they are in a well landscaped area and accessed by an existing private road.	
BL174	Support the idea of apartments around the hotel compared to many large detached houses - Big is not always better.	

Officer comments

Provided the apartments are high quality, luxury apartments there is no reason to suppose they will put off high end purchasers. The planning permission could be conditioned to include an age restriction to the over 55s which should reduce turnover rates. The impact on the setting of the Listed Building is an important consideration and any scheme will be agreed with Historic England. The design and massing of the apartments would be agreed with Historic England.

The proposals extend into two parcels of land beyond the walled garden.

HE2 - Heritage		
Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Change Proposed (if any)
BL043	Concern over loss of wall	Blackwell Lane wall should be retained
BL044	Concerns over additional loss of parkland. The parkland is an asset of the town. High density housing and apartments will destroy this heritage	The parkland should be conserved
BL064	Hotel operator - consider the area to the West of the hotel to be the least sensitive and note that the statement of significance highlights the scope for the walled garden and former orchard to be brought back into use, including for residential use. Consider that allocating HE2 would bring heritage benefits by facilitating improvements to the listed buildings and removing unsympathetic developments in the walled garden.	

HE2 - Heritage		
Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Change Proposed (if any)
BL009	Most concerned that any permitted development on HE2 the former Orchards of Blackwell Grange is carried out with the greatest sensitivity and retains the key historical features.	
BL083; BL084	Statement of Significance stated He2 and He3 is of historic and environmental interest, this has been disregarded.	
BL162	Any permitted development in the site, the former orchards of Blackwell Grange is carried out with the greatest sensitivity and retains the key historical features and the beautiful trees which border here.	
BL162	Suggest that rather than pursuing housing development in this area, the Council should follow the recommendations set out in the 2012 Statement of Significance and pursue a positive and protective course of action which seeks designation of the park as a historic landscape, requests funding from the HLF to perform the necessary conservation and restoration work and extends the centre of Darlington Conservation area to include this valuable historic resource.	

Officer comments

The former parkland, has since 1971 until relatively recently been in use as golf course. The parkland does not meet Historic England's criteria to be registered as an Historic Park and Garden as a result of the changes that have taken place on the site over the years. There are plans to enhance the former parkland and create a local nature reserve, funded by development on the site.

The site is part of the setting of the Grade II* Listed Building, however this does not mean that no change or even no harmful change can take place. Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework allows for less than substantial harm, providing there are public benefits. We have received advice from Historic England that the allocation of the site for relatively low density, top-end executive housing would constitute less than substantial harm. Impact upon the listed building has been assessed and has been guided by advice from Historic England. Their advice gave us a steer that the site has some more development potential than the Archaeo-Environment Report of 2012 advises. The Statement of Significance (produced by Archaeo- Environment for the Council) has not been disregarded, but Historic England has provided us with different advice about the development potential of the site. It is not uncommon for professionals to have different opinions on subjective matters, based on interpretation of legislation and policy. Historic England will also advise on any future planning applications for development on the site. Historic England has been consulted and their response can be viewed online (Ref No. BL79).

The boundary wall is curtilage Listed so alterations or any loss require prior Listed Building Consent. The proposed development has no impact on the boundary walls. The preferred access uses the existing rear access to the Hotel.

A satisfactory solution to the displaced Hotel parking will be an important consideration for any proposal to develop within the walled garden.

HE2 - Trees		
Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Change Proposed (if any)
BL043; BL009	Concern over loss of trees	Blackwell Lane trees should be retained
BL109	Tree perimeter of HE2 should be retained to screen new buildings from Blackwell Lane and the Hotel.	As comments
BL163	A substantial number of trees will need to be removed, including those with TPOs, affecting the strong tree canopy, character of the area and wildlife habitats.	

Officer comments

It is recognised that the existing trees are a very important element of the area. The vast majority will be retained. The number felled will be kept to an absolute minimum and they will be protected from damage during construction. Any planning application for residential development will be assessed on this basis, together with all other planning considerations.

HE2 - Wildlife		
Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Change Proposed (if any)
BL044	Concerns over additional loss of habitat	The area should be left clear
BL064	Hotel operator - note that the site compares favourably to others in terms of impact on ecology, specifically great crested newts	

Officer comments

Natural England has set out specific requirements within its response and will maintain a watchful eye over the proposals for residential development. It can also exercise

control at the planning application stage, not only as a consultee but also through the issuing or non-issuing of licences. With appropriately designed development and protection of wildlife during the construction phase, the impact on wildlife can be minimised. The proposals to create new wildlife habitats and increase public access will provide opportunities to enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the surrounding natural environment and bring benefits for the local community through access to and contact with nature.

HE2- Access		
Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Change Proposed (if any)
BL015; BL031; BL042	Object to number of flats that might be accessed from Blackwell Lane. Concerned there will be too much traffic using the entrance at Blackwell Lane	BL031 - Access should be via existing hotel access only. BL042- Flats should not be concentrated in one area where high volume of vehicles will turn into one entrance (Blackwell Lane). The number of flats should be spread out with access from Carmel Road also
BL014	Blackwell Lane Access very poor. Narrow and poor visibility with parked cars.	
BL052	Concerns with access 4 which is opposite their property regarding existing levels of Traffic on Blackwell Lane.	Move access 4 or at least provide no access through to Grange Road.
BL064	Hotel operator - Consider that access point 4 identified by the Council would adequately serve the development of HE2.	
BL109	Access to the parkland along woodland path to the rear of the hotel should be maintained for tree/wildlife value and public access.	As comments
BL156	Access road would need to be modified - potential that cars will use route to go from Blackwell to Grange Road	

Officer comments

The existing access point to the rear of the hotel is the preferred option.

Any proposed access point into the site would comply with current design guidance including adequate visibility splays for the speed of the road and have been positioned accordingly.

It is likely that there will be some bollards, or similar, to prevent vehicular access between Blackwell Lane and Grange Road.

HE2 – Highways		
Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Change Proposed (if any)
BL008	As a resident of over 15 years I use the local area roads in car and on bicycle, and pavements on foot and am very aware of the traffic flows at all times of day and night. Am well placed to provide DBC an insight into how the proposed development will affect the residents in the immediate vicinity. The updated proposal will place pressure on the existing highways infrastructure.	
BL008; BL049; BL71	Bridge Road is a totally inadequate conduit between the A1 and A66 and any increase in traffic levels on this road is sheer stupidity. There are regular traffic incidents at the junction with Blackwell and as a cyclist; I will not use it for fear of my life. (2) Busy road that is a narrow entry point to the town. May mean that alteration to the nearby large roundabout would have to occur plus possible detrimental widening of Carmel Road South.	(2) Entry via Blackwell Lane onto Blackwell Grange site, Entry via the old Golf Club entrance on Blackwell Village site.
BL008; BL027; BL073	Traffic build up around the Blands Corner roundabout is a common occurrence at all times of the day. Have seen a number of scary incidents in car and on bike here, often involving larger trucks. Development of any kind around this point and more traffic moving out from Blackwell Lane onto Carmel Road will add to traffic build up.	
BL008	Darlington's long suffering football team are about to make a return to the area which will put extra pressure on the roads round about. Whenever an event occurs at the rugby club that its car park cannot cope with its user's park all along Grange Road down to Blands Corner roundabout. There are often near hits with people getting in and out of car and cars pulling into and out of parking spaces. If you add extra development you are asking for trouble along Blackwell Meadows if traffic handling measures are not introduced.	
BL008	As a cyclist, the quality of the road surface on Grange Road, especially on the way into town, is atrocious and extra traffic will only make it worse.	
BL008	Dangerous pinch point at junction of Blackwell Lane and Grange Road, traffic builds up and turning left or right at this point is always a risk - regular incidents here. Police figures are not accurate as some incidents go unreported. Increase in road users will increase risk and it is only a matter of time before something serious happens. A lot of road users on Grange Road do not adhere to speed limits	
BL012; BL027	What is the parking solution to serve hotel and new development?; Some concern about relocated car parking from the wall garden to allow development in HE2, how can this be achieved in the parkland	
BL015; BL034; BL044	Concerns relating to traffic congestion	The area should be left clear
BL015	Speed bumps needed on Blackwell Lane	

HE2 – Highways		
Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Change Proposed (if any)
BL052	If connected through it could be used as a cut through to Grange Road.	Move access 4 or at least provide no access through to Grange Road.
BL071	Flats are aimed at couples who will have a car each, meaning cars into three figures just for them.	
BL071	We will need extensive traffic lights, pelican crossings and traffic calming measures to secure residents and child safety.	
BL071	The flats should be moved closer to the entrance on Grange Road where you have good safe access to high density living such as flats.	
BL149	Blackwell Lane already a rat-run known to the police. Additional development will make this worse.	
BL160	Major concerns remain (safety and noise) in terms of revised 'preferred access points' in development. Proposed access points four and five are located on or just before / after bends on Blackwell Lane which, when taking into account the current speed and level of traffic on the road (as a cut through from Grange Road especially in the peak times / school run) is of great concern (and seemingly poor planning). I missed any mention of any proposed traffic calming measures though a greater number of dwellings on all sites will mean greater traffic onto Blackwell Lane. If this goes ahead, an access point with a roundabout at the junction of Hartford Road and Blackwell Lane seems more appropriate.	Removal of proposed access points four and five as they are located on or just before / after bends on Blackwell Lane which, when taking into account the current speed and level of traffic on the road (as a cut through from Grange Road especially in peak times / school run) is of great concern. Addition of access point onto Grange Road - the largest access point to the hotel. Inclusion of traffic calming measures.
BL160	There is poor public transport and social infrastructure on all proposed sites. Blackwell Lane is not a bus route, there are no doctor surgeries, pharmacies, and cafes - the types of services older and typically less mobile people will want to use. I also fail to see how the targeted demographic for these apartments will walk across the parkland, past the hotel, etc. to get to a bus stop. It is not feasible to assume that this demographic will either own or be able to drive a car. The site is just as unfeasible as the Council believed Stressholme to be for development.	
BL064	Hotel operator - site is close to local services and local public transport	

Officer comments

A Transport Assessment is currently being produced in consultation with Highways England that will demonstrate the impact of the proposals on the local and strategic highway and this will help to inform the density of building on site. As part of the assessment accident statistics are reviewed and taken into consideration. This will also include a Travel plan that will assess the needs of non-motorised users. Bridge Road and the A66 is owned and maintained by Highways England. There are proposals to improve Bland Corner roundabout which Highways England are reviewing. Off site highway improvements to mitigate the development traffic would be highlighted as required within the Transport Assessment. This Transport Assessment will include consideration of the impact on the local highway network based on assumptions of movements associated with the proposed move of Darlington Football Club to Blackwell Meadows.

HE2 – Amenity and Open Space

Consultee Ref	Summary of Comments	Change Proposed (if any)
BL042; BL071	Our bungalow on Draycote Crescent has benefit of being very quiet - concerned volume of traffic associated with the new flats will change this.	
BL043	Concern over height of flats.	Height of proposed flats behind Blackwell Lane should be 2 storey maximum
BL013; BL149	Flats will look directly into our property and we would lose our view.	Withdraw the application or come up with more sympathetic proposals.
BL034	Concern regarding loss of green outlook and loss of natural space	
BL052	Green space in and around residential areas should be retained for the wellbeing of the people living in the area.	Lowest density housing possible should be provided.
BL064	Hotel operator - development of HE2 on amenity would be limited due to screening, use of existing accesses and the 'extra care' proposal being a low traffic generator.	
BL071	Flats between HE1 and HE2 should be moved further away from the lane and ideally be replaced with bungalows as there is a shortage of them in the area.	

Officer comments

Although the proposal would involve loss of some open space, the majority is retained, and would result in improvements to the remainder of the open space.

Impact on a person's view is not a planning matter, though impact on an individual's amenity and the amenity of an area is. The residential amenity of existing and future residents will be considered as part of any detailed design and layout, at the planning application stage. This will include details of heights and precise locations of dwellings.

Any impact of the proposed development in relation to potential additional noise will be considered at planning application stage. It is unlikely that there would be a significant change in traffic noise than that already experienced on surrounding roads.

HE2 – Flooding and Drainage		
Summary of Comments	Change Proposed (if any)	Change Proposed (if any)
BL064	Hotel operator - note that the site is at low risk of flooding	
BL149	My house and that of my neighbour (on Upsall Drive) suffer from flooding whenever the ex-golf course land is saturated. Reducing land to absorb water will only increase risk and frequency of flooding.	Remove development from He1 and He2

Officer comments

Environment Agency information shows that there is no flood risk affecting any of the development sites. However, there is some land that experiences surface water drainage problems. This is not a constraint to development, as maintaining green field rates of surface water runoff would be conditioned through the planning process. There is also a strong probability that the residential development would actually resolve the drainage problems as this would affect the saleability of the new house.

The Drainage Study demonstrates that there are several drainage solutions, including the opportunity to incorporate a sustainable drainage scheme (SuDS) within the remaining parkland; the latter would have the added benefit of providing additional habitat for the great crested newts and other species. Therefore, drainage is not an insurmountable problem and could actually be improved for existing residents through the new development.