

## 6. QUALITY HOUSING FOR ALL

*This section includes policies that cover meeting general housing requirements, providing land for top-end executive housing, supporting housing regeneration, controlling housing intensification and accommodating travelling groups. After consideration<sup>6</sup>, a rural exceptions site policy for affordable housing has not been included.*

<sup>6</sup>as required by para 6.2.9 of the adopted Darlington Core Strategy, DBC 2011

### 6.1 NEW HOUSING SITES

#### Context

<sup>6.1</sup>Darlington Core Strategy, DBC, 2011

- 6.1.1 The Darlington Core Strategy<sup>6.1</sup>, indicates that to meet the identified housing requirements of the Borough, about 350 new homes should be provided every year until 2021, and about 400 per year until 2026. The National Planning Policy Framework (2012)<sup>6.2</sup> requires this approach to be amended slightly, so that there is an additional buffer of 5% above the annual requirement for the first five years, this provision being moved forward from later in the plan period.

<sup>6.2</sup> NPPF, paragraph 47

- 6.1.2 Whilst the Core Strategy was adopted in 2011, this document is unlikely to be adopted until the end of 2014. By that time, almost four of the fifteen years of the whole plan period will have elapsed. Because there has not been a persistent underdelivery of new housing in Darlington over the longer term<sup>6.3</sup> and because the Council is keen that deliverable housing land is available when the market is able to make use of it, the approach taken to meeting the housing requirement in this document is to ensure that there is a 'five years + 5% supply' of deliverable sites for the five years from 2015/16, the first full year after plan adoption. The 5% uplift will be brought forward from the period 2021-26.

<sup>6.3</sup> see Housing Topic Paper for more detail on this.

- 6.1.3 Since the Core Strategy was adopted, the housing market has remained sluggish across the Borough, reflecting wider regional and sub-regional subdued economic conditions. Housing delivery since the credit crunch in 2007/8 has fallen from over 500 new dwellings per annum to less than 200 in the year 2012/13. This document assumes the housing market will not recover to the mid 2000's level within this plan period, but expects delivery on individual sites to increase from 2014/15, to progressively reach previous levels by 2019/20<sup>6.4</sup>. The shortfall of housing delivery against the planned requirement in the Core Strategy that has already occurred will be made up in the period from 2019 onwards, when the housing market is expected to have substantially recovered.

<sup>6.4</sup> Delivery rates agreed with representatives of housebuilders, affordable housing providers and other local housing development professionals, who form the SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) Steering Group.

- 6.1.4 An updated study<sup>6.5</sup> of housing needs and demand has also informed development of this policy. The generally self contained Darlington housing market continues to have relatively high house prices compared to the rest of the Tees Valley and neighbouring areas of County Durham. Market demand is mostly for 3+ bed houses, 2 and 3 bed flats and 2 and 3 bed bungalows, suggesting that both higher and lower density sites in a variety of locations will be required to meet this demand. There are also fewer larger 4+ bed properties compared with demand. Top-end executive housing is dealt with in Section 6.2.

<sup>6.5</sup> Darlington Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Arc4 for DBC, 2012.

- 6.1.5 Throughout the plan period, strategic sites, smaller sites that already have planning permissions and new sites identified through this document will all need to contribute to meeting the overall housing requirement. The Core Strategy indicates that most new homes should be provided in the main urban area, particularly at Central Park, West Park, Lingfield Point and in the Town Centre Fringe<sup>6.6</sup>; these larger sites are expected to account for 40% of overall new housing provision, whilst a range of new smaller greenfield and previously developed sites have been identified within the existing urban area, to provide a further 12% of the overall provision. Strategic new housing provision at the North West and Eastern Urban fringes, will provide a further 15% of the overall housing provision, and three sites in the Harrowgate Hill/Beaumont

<sup>6.6</sup> See draft Policies MGP3 & 4 in this document.

Hill area on the urban fringe will provide 2.5% of the overall housing provision. Taken together, these will provide a range and choice of sites and a continuous supply of housing land throughout the plan period, so that the identified housing needs and demand in the Borough can be met.

### Issues

- 6.1.6 The main issues considered in identifying a preferred housing land portfolio were:
- meeting the requirements of new national planning policy;
  - setting out criteria and a sequence for searching and selecting sites that accords with the overall locational strategy of the Local Plan, concentrating as much new development as possible within the main urban area;
  - confirming the realistic deliverability of potential sites, particularly those identified to come forward in the first five years after adoption;
  - including a range and choice of sites, capable of delivering the mix of housing required;
  - considering whether sites currently in or allocated for other uses, such as open space and employment land, would be better used for housing
  - identifying what is needed to mitigate the potential impact of new housing on local amenity and infrastructure immediately around sites, on the wider neighbourhood and the town/Borough as a whole, taking into account the cumulative effect of these and developments that already have planning permission.

### Options Considered

- 6.1.7 The options considered were:

#### (a) Number of New Homes Planned

- 6.1.8 The first option considered was to meet the requirements of the Core Strategy in full, taking into account the 5% buffer required by national policy (see paragraph 6.1.1 above). This would require a sustained proactive approach to ensuring the delivery of all the sites identified, and for site viability and deliverability to improve in line with the market recovery expectations outlined earlier (see 6.1.3 above). This approach most closely reflects the conclusions of the latest Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update 4 (Dec 2012).

- 6.1.9 The alternative option was as above, but with an additional 5% throughout the plan period to provide more flexibility to deliver enough new housing if some sites do not come forward as anticipated. This option would be based on a more pessimistic scenario of development viability and deliverability, and would assume that identifying more housing land would result in more homes being delivered.

- 6.1.10 The first option is the Council's preferred option, as it is considered most likely to achieve other Core Strategy objectives and help deliver the locational strategy as well. The Council has a good track record of being pro-active in bringing forward new housing delivery, as part of wider regeneration schemes<sup>6.7</sup> and intends to continue to do so<sup>6.8</sup>, so this approach is considered deliverable. In addition, the second option was rejected because local evidence indicates that there is no clear link between the amount of suitable, available and deliverable land in the Borough and new homes actually being built in the Borough; the Council has been able to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land every year since March 2009, but housebuilding has languished at less than two thirds of the required level through that period<sup>6.9</sup>.

<sup>6.7</sup>e.g. Firth Moor Regeneration, West Park, and currently Central Park.

<sup>6.8</sup>see draft Policies MGP3, 5, 6 and 18 in this document.

<sup>6.9</sup>see Housing Topic Paper.

- 6.1.11 The effect on the timing of housing delivery throughout the plan period, compared to that set out in the Core Strategy, is indicated in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1.1: Housing Requirement 2011-2026: Net additional dwellings**

Year	2011-16	2016-21	2021-26	2011-26
Core Strategy requirement (about)	1750	1750	2000	5500
Making and Growing Places requirement (about)	1400	2200	2250	5850
Change	-350	+450	+250	+350

Note: an estimate of 5 demolitions per year was included in calculating the Core Strategy requirement, so is not counted again here.

- (b) *Estimating density*: the Core Strategy plans for 30-50 dwellings per hectare across the Borough overall. To estimate each site's capacity, a design based assessment has been undertaken, alongside consideration of the type of housing that is likely to sell in the area and the viability of delivering the site for the type of housing assumed. The alternative would have been to rely on the standard formulae applied to sites in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment<sup>6.10</sup>.
- (c) *Speed of delivery*: no options were considered. The approach taken was to rely on information about site build out rates provided by developers/landowners where it was provided and to make assumptions for other sites based on build out rates for future years agreed with the SHLAA Steering Group<sup>6.10</sup>.
- d) *Windfall allowance*<sup>6.11</sup>: windfalls are taken into account in calculating how much new land is needed for housing development, because there is several years of evidence indicating that this is a consistent source of new housing supply. From 2017-18, an allowance of 50 dwellings per year is made, for the remainder of the plan period. This is about the average contribution that small (less than 6 dwelling) windfalls have made to overall new housing provision over the last 10 years or so, excluding development in residential gardens<sup>6.12</sup>. Small windfalls add to the range and choice of housing sites and locations in the Borough and can meet a variety of needs. As well as these small windfalls, larger windfalls could also come forward, e.g. about 40 dwellings at the former Arts Centre, Vane Terrace if a future arts/tourism use cannot be secured for the site.
- e) *Approach to the Town Centre Fringe*: The first option considered was to identify specific sites where housing or a mix of development including housing was proposed. The second was to identify the whole of the Town Centre Fringe as a single mixed use allocation, giving little detail about where within the area new housing was likely to go. The third, and the preferred option selected, was to identify six sub-areas within the Town Centre Fringe and to indicate the approximate number of new homes expected in each five year segment of the plan period (see Table 3.2.1). The preferred option provides more certainty as to what will happen and when, but without being overly prescriptive about bringing forward specific sites where the challenges of multiple ownerships, site remediation, flood mitigation and a range of other constraints prevail; the delivery programme will be sufficiently fluid to respond to rapid changes in the availability of public sector funding streams to support infrastructure delivery and site preparation, and to embrace willing landowners as they seek to become involved<sup>6.13</sup>.

<sup>6.10</sup> Darlington Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, March 2009.

<sup>6.11</sup> Windfalls are new housing from unanticipated sites or small sites of 5 dwellings or less.

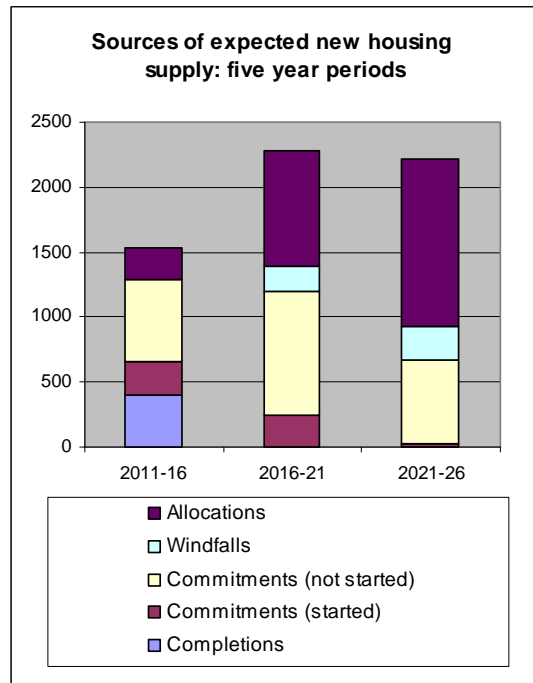
<sup>6.12</sup> See Housing Topic Paper for more information.

<sup>6.13</sup> More detail will be given in a Town Centre Fringe Development Procurement Strategy.

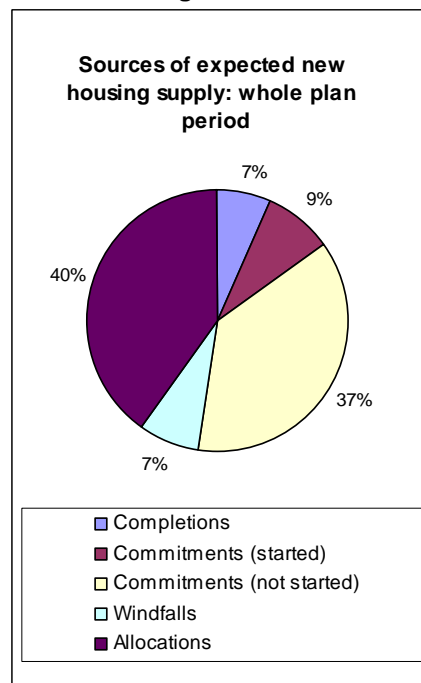
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6.1.12 The starting point for options development was to take account of about 600 or dwellings still to come forward on schemes that already have planning permission and that are underway, or that have already been completed since April 2011. This leaves about 5250 to be identified from sites with planning permission that have not yet started, or on proposed new allocations. The contributions of commitments and completions are indicated in **Figures 6.1.1** and **6.1.2**.

**Figure 6.1.1**



**Figure 6.1.2**



<sup>6.14</sup> Available at [www.darlington.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/planningpolicy)

<sup>6.15</sup> Housing Sites Assessment Draft Criteria Consultation June 2011: summary of responses received, August 2011

6.1.13 Then consideration was given to the initial portfolio of sites and the options for mixed use and strategic sites set out in the Accommodating Growth Issues and Options Report, (Nov 2010), and the consultation responses received on it<sup>6.14</sup>. More potential sites have been identified and assessed since then, according to methodology and criteria for site assessment which were finalised in August 2011, after a consultation with key stakeholders<sup>6.15</sup>. Consideration of further potential sites was necessary because housing is being built at a slower rate than anticipated, and many sites with planning

permission for housing have not even been started, which will result in a shortfall against requirements unless new sites are identified.

- 6.1.14 Additional potential housing sites assessed came from several sources:
- (a) former and existing playing fields, where these are no longer needed, or where alternative equivalent provision is being provided or is proposed elsewhere in this document.
  - (b) employment land which is no longer suitable for employment use, or is not needed for employment use within the plan period<sup>6.16</sup>;
  - (c) within the Town Centre Fringe, in accordance with the draft masterplan;
  - (d) underused land within existing Council housing estates;
  - (e) other Council owned land and buildings which are already unused or underused or are likely to become so in the future;
  - (f) sites within or adjacent to the main urban area where the owner has indicated a willingness to sell for housing development.

<sup>6.16</sup>Darlington Business Sites and Premises Review, NLP for DBC, 2013.

- 6.1.15 Supply may also be boosted by the Government's plans to allow from Spring 2013, a change of use of B1 Office uses to residential dwellings without the need to apply for planning permission. It is too soon to estimate how many new dwellings could come forward in this way.

- 6.1.16 The preferred portfolio of sites proposed in draft Policy MGP16, together with new housing to be achieved as part of the regeneration of Red Hall (see draft Policy MGP 18), represents the most sustainable option<sup>6.17</sup> for meeting the housing needs of the Borough, provided that requirements for each site (to comply with other policies of the plan), which are to be set out in a separate document, are achieved. Urban previously developed sites generally scored well against environmental and most social objectives, and the larger sites scored well against economic objectives. Sites currently occupied by businesses or allocated for business use performed less well, as it could result in employers choosing to locate elsewhere. The sustainability of urban greenfield sites varied according to their existing value and function as open space, e.g. in terms of public access, landscape and biodiversity, but larger sites have greater potential to include features to mitigate against any potential harm. Sites at the urban fringe generally rated lower than sites with the urban area, being greenfield and relatively remote from local centres and services. The most sustainable urban fringe site assessed was land north of the White Horse (Ha2), it being close to sustainable transport routes, with some local services nearby, and being of sufficient size to provide opportunities for any environmental impacts to be mitigated through careful design of new development there.

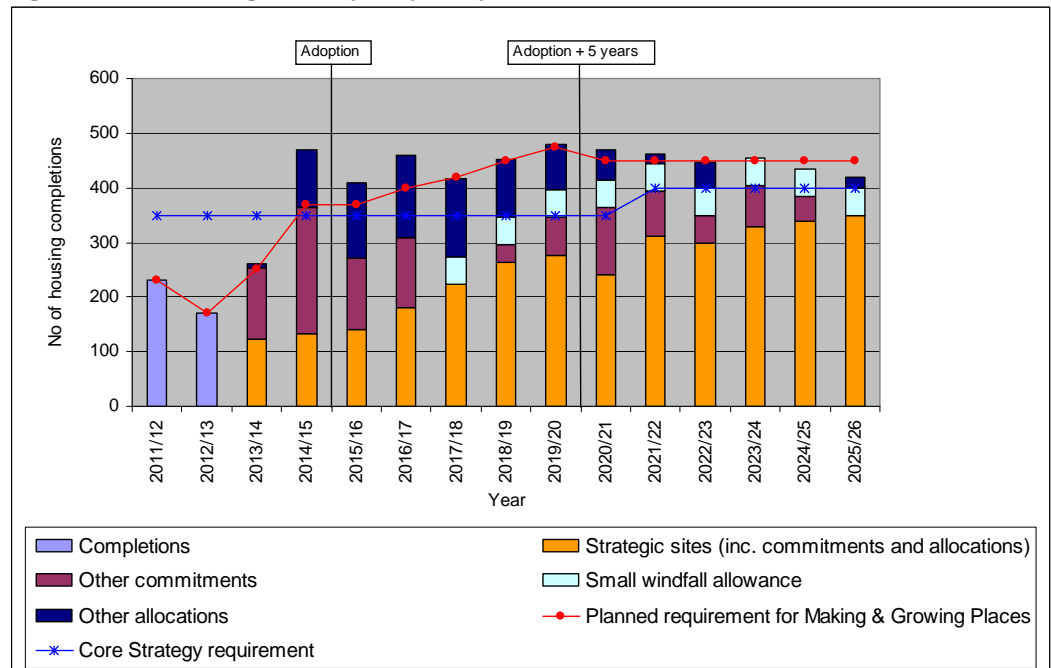
<sup>6.17</sup>Sustainability Appraisal of Making and Growing Places, Preferred Options, DBC 2013

- 6.1.17 In addition, whilst planning permission has been granted (subject to Section 106 agreement) for 160 dwellings on land at Neasham Road, this is not being reaffirmed in this plan, because its development is linked to proposals to relocate the Cattle Mart, and would not normally be considered a suitable site for new housing development.

- 6.1.18 The housing trajectory shown in Figure 6.1.3 illustrates the expected rate of housing delivery for the plan period.

- 6.1.19 This preferred portfolio also takes account of the viability of delivering sites at different times within the plan period, and excludes potential sites that are better retained for other uses. The portfolio could deliver an estimated 3063 new homes on previously developed land, and 2968 on greenfield sites. Only about 20% of new housing is proposed on land that extends the existing main urban area, and no new sites for general housing are proposed as allocations within or on the edge of the Borough's rural settlements, though some existing commitments are reaffirmed.

**Figure 6.1.3: Housing Delivery Trajectory 2011-2026**



**Draft Policy MGP16: New Housing Sites**

The following existing commitments and proposed allocations will provide significant new housing, critical to the delivery of the plan’s housing strategy:

**Table 6.1.2 Existing commitments and proposed allocations**

Site Name	Status	Area (ha)	Approx. no. new homes	Delivery timescale
Hs1: Lingfield Point*	Commitment	32.13	770	2011-26
Hs2: Central Park*	Commitment	31.62	500	2011-21
Hs3: West Park	Commitment	46.23	410	2011-26
Hs4: Town Centre Fringe	Allocation	58.43	650	2016-26
Hs5: North West Urban Fringe*	Allocation	85.53	650	2016-26
Hs6: Eastern Urban Fringe*	Allocation	88.39	250	2021-26
<b>STRATEGIC SITES TOTAL</b>			<b>3230</b>	

\*not exclusively housing – part of a mix of uses

In addition, the following sites are reaffirmed and new general housing allocations proposed. A small windfalls allowance of 50 dwellings per year is made from 2017/18.

**Table 6.1.3 Existing general commitments not started**

Site Name	Greenfield or previously developed land(PDL)?	Site area (ha)	Approx no. new homes	Delivery timescale
<b>Existing General Commitments Not Started</b>				
Hc1: Former Corus Site, Whessoe Road	PDL	7.69	250	2016-26
Hc2: Former DFC Ground, Feethams*	PDL	2.18	94	2011-21
Hc3: Yiewsley Drive*	PDL	4.01	67	2011-21
Hc4 Hopetown Park	PDL	1.41	61	2011-21
Hc5: Rear of Heron Drive	PDL	1.34	48	2021-26
Hc6: Ruck/rear Cockerton Club	PDL	0.39	20	2016-21
Hc7: Croft House, Hurworth Place	PDL	0.85	19	2011-16
Hc8: Fmr Harrowgate Hill Infants School	PDL	0.32	16	2011-16
Hc9: North Farm, Summerhouse	PDL	0.69	14	2011-16

Site Name	Greenfield or previously developed land(PDL)?	Site area (ha)	Approx no. new homes	Delivery timescale
Hc10 1 Blackwell Lane	PDL	0.12	9	2016-21
Hc11: West Newbiggin Farm*	PDL	0.50	9	2011-16
Hc12: Forge Tavern, Albert Hill	PDL	0.03	8	2011-16
Hc13: Minors Crescent	PDL/GF	0.56	8	2011-16
Hc14: 136 Lawson Street	PDL	0.05	7	2016-21
Hc15: Rise Carr Club	PDL	0.06	6	2016-21
Hc16: 36-40 Clifton Road	PDL	0.04	6	2011-16
Commitments on sites of less than 6 dwellings.	PDL/GF		174	2011-21
<b>TOTAL GENERAL COMMITMENTS</b>			<b>816</b>	
<b>Allocations</b>				
Ha1: Former Eastbourne School combined	PDL/GF	4.17	112	2011-21
Ha2: North of White Horse Pub/Hotel	GF	5.20	80	2016-21
Ha3: Memorial Hospital (south)	PDL	1.05	60	2011-21
Ha4: Former Springfield School and area	PDL/GF	2.93	58	2011-21
Ha5: South of 22-24 Burtree Lane	GF	2.34	50	2016-26
Ha6: South of Bowes Court/Haughton Rd	PDL	2.02	40	2021-26
Ha7: Former Alderman Leach School Field	GF	0.94	38	2016-21
Ha8: Woodburn Nursery	PDL	1.83	36	2011-16
Ha9: Mowden Hall	PDL	3.42	35	2011-21
Ha10: Hartington Way/Bellburn Lane	GF	1.42	32	2016-21
Ha11: Darlington Timber Supplies	PDL	0.63	30	2021-26
Ha12: Glebe Road South	GF	0.71	28	2016-21
Ha13: Land at Carmel School	GF	1.21	24	2016-21
Ha14: Glebe Road North	GF	0.75	23	2016-21
Ha15: Hammond Drive	GF	1.17	22	2011-16
Ha16: East of A167, opposite White Horse	GF	0.50	20	2016-21
Ha17: Emley Moor/Buxton Moor	GF	0.85	20	2011-16
Ha18: Former Eastbourne Nursery	PDL	0.27	14	2011-16
Ha19: Alverton Drive	GF	0.37	12	2016-21
Ha20: Rear of Scargill Shops	PDL	0.19	12	2016-21
Ha21: Eggleston View	GF	0.45	8	2021-26
Ha22: Edgemoor Road	GF	0.26	6	2011-16
<b>TOTAL GENERAL ALLOCATIONS</b>			<b>760</b>	

\*technical starts only

## Making it Happen

6.20

The Council's Housing Strategy 2012-17 and associated action plan<sup>6.18</sup>, sets out how the Council and its partners will be supporting the delivery of new housing on these sites, and the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan and Procurement Strategy provide more information on new housing delivery in that area. Core Strategy Policy CS10 provides the mechanism for identifying additional land should a continuous five year supply of housing land not be available from the commitments and allocations identified above.

<sup>6.18</sup>Darlington Housing Strategy 2012-17, DBC,

## 6.2 TOP END EXECUTIVE HOUSING

### Context

6.2.1.

The Darlington Core Strategy recognises that the Borough will continue to help meet a sub-regional need for small numbers of top-end executive housing. It defines such housing as being 'set in its own grounds at a density of no more than 6 dwellings per hectare. It has 4 or more bedrooms, above average levels of garaging, security and privacy and individual, high quality designs and finishings. It comprises both new and older period homes'<sup>6.19</sup>.

<sup>6.19</sup> Darlington Core Strategy, May 2011, page 49

6.20 Tees Valley Economic Regeneration Statement of Ambition, 2010; Tees Valley Sub-Regional Housing Strategy, 2006, and Darlington Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2012

Darlington Local Plan: Making and Growing Places Preferred Options, June 2013

- 6.2.2 The importance of having local aspirational housing that is attractive to the creative, skilled, entrepreneurial and managerial people who drive the local economy is widely acknowledged in work done for the Tees Valley and Darlington<sup>6.20</sup>. A connection has been made between purchasers of executive homes and the creation of jobs<sup>6.21</sup> and its role in helping to achieve regeneration targets<sup>6.20</sup>.
- 6.2.3 The Wynyard development is the largest and most well known expression of the demand for this type of housing, but there is also scope for complementary provision across the Tees Valley, for those who want to live in a mature residential environment and as part of an established community.

6.21 Tees Valley Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Local Housing Assessment Update, 2009

### Issues and Options Considered

- 6.2.4 The issues are determining how much top end executive housing to plan for and whether to allocate land for it, or not.
- 6.2.5 Three options were considered to determine an appropriate figure for the likely demand for top-end executive houses over the plan period. These were:
- a) applying a percentage of the total housing requirement. However, it is difficult to come up with a justified percentage;
  - b) using past annual completions of top-end executive houses and projecting numbers forward. However, monitoring suggests that no houses meeting the top-end executive housing definition have been developed in Darlington in the last five years, and past demand may not reflect future demand because the mortgage products available now are much more restrictive than in the past and are unlikely to return to those generous offers; and
  - c) letting the market decide on the appropriate number, by considering all proposals against Local Plan policies and not allocating any sites specifically for top-end executive housing. There may be latent demand in Darlington, because no sites have ever been allocated solely for top-end executive housing. Also, the Council's call for sites in Spring 2012<sup>6.22</sup> resulted in 20 sites being proposed, suggesting that landowners, at least, are willing to sell land for top-end executive housing;
- 6.2.6 Options a) and b) would require some allocations, and some 20 potential sites were assessed for this purpose<sup>6.22</sup>.

6.22 see Executive Housing Topic Paper

### Preparing a Draft Policy: The Preferred Option

- 6.2.7 None of the options was totally satisfactory, and a further option, testing the demand for this type of development by allocating several small sites from those which performed best in the assessment, was selected. Three sites at Blackwell Grange Golf Course, land south of Staindrop Road and Harewood House performed best, but Harewood House is more likely to be converted to apartments, and the land south of Staindrop Road can be isolated by flooding and may be suitable for general housing beyond the plan period.

#### **Draft Policy MGP 17: Top-End Executive Housing**

*About 9 hectares of land is allocated in four sites at Blackwell Grange Golf Course to accommodate a maximum of 52 dwellings for top-end executive housing, to meet demand for the whole plan period. The sites and their capacities are:*

<i>He1: rear of Upsall Drive, Blackwell Lane</i>	<i>(6 dwellings)</i>
<i>He2: rear of Blackwell Grange Hotel, Blackwell Lane</i>	<i>(4 dwellings)</i>
<i>He3: east of Grangeside/The Spinney</i>	<i>(12 dwellings)</i>
<i>He4: east of Carmel Road South</i>	<i>(30 dwellings)</i>

*New housing must contribute to conserving and enhancing the key features of the parkland and the heritage assets.*

*If completions on the above sites exceed three per annum in three consecutive years, the Council will consider introducing new sites to meet demand.*



- 6.2.8 The preferred option, therefore, is to identify land at Blackwell Grange Golf Course and test the market for top-end executive houses in Darlington. A demand for about three houses per year is anticipated but if plots are developed more quickly, the policy can be reviewed and further land allocated for top-end executive housing later in the Plan period. Given the important landscape and the setting for the listed building (Blackwell Grange Hall), a Design and Planning Brief will be prepared by the Council to ensure the proposed development and the future management of the parkland conserves and enhances the key features and the heritage assets. The undeveloped parkland to the west of Carmel Road South will become public accessible open space, and the undeveloped parkland surrounding Blackwell Grange Hotel will be managed to retain its parkland character (see draft Policy MGP 24).

#### **Making it Happen**

- 6.2.9 The Council will prepare a Design and Planning Brief before the Local Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State. The Council will pass a resolution to sell sites He1, He3 and He4 following the commercial deal with Blackwell Grange Golf Club to relocate to Stressholme Golf Course.

### **6.3 HOUSING REGENERATION – RED HALL**

#### **Context**

- 6.3.1 The Darlington Core Strategy<sup>6.23</sup> indicates the Council's commitment to supporting the regeneration and improvement of existing housing areas, including within the Haughton East ward, to ensure that the housing stock can meet modern day expectations and changing needs. The Council has identified Red Hall as a focus for housing regeneration activity to follow the current programme underway at Cockerton<sup>6.24</sup>.

- 6.3.2 Within the main urban area, Red Hall is a relatively isolated predominantly Council –owned housing estate, mostly built in the 1960s with part at the eastern end, known as the Courts, built in the 1970s. The neighbourhood also accommodates a primary school, a convenience store, a community centre, a multi use games area, areas of open space and other childrens' play facilities. There is open land alongside a watercourse to the north, including the hardstandings of a former cluster of vacant farm buildings. There are main transport routes to the west and south, and a proposed new nature reserve immediately to the south-east. Future development of significant new housing is planned at Lingfield Point to the south and at the Eastern Urban Fringe (draft Policy MGP6) to the east.

#### **Issues and Opportunities**

- 6.3.3 The main issues and opportunities identified are:
- a lack of tenure choice, most housing being social rented with limited uptake of right to buy
  - increasing difficulties and costs associated with upkeep of standards of repair and maintenance, particularly of poorly designed housing at the Courts;
  - low demand for housing in The Courts area;
  - relative isolation and poor links with rest of the main urban area – there is only one road in/out, and greater connectivity access is needed to employment opportunities at nearby Lingfield Point;
  - poor local service provision;
  - poor quality environment across the estate;
  - fuel poverty, high levels of deprivation and pockets of anti-social behaviour contribute to a poor image of the estate amongst townspeople;
  - underused previously developed and greenfield land in part of the green

<sup>6.23</sup>Darlington LDF Core Strategy, DBC,

<sup>6.24</sup>Darlington Housing Strategy 2012-17, DBC 2012

wedge to the north – how much of this is integral to the functioning of the green wedge to achieving any other environmental, open space, green infrastructure, flood mitigation objectives?;

- land at the south-eastern extremity of the site is of sufficient quality, both in terms of biodiversity interest and public access, to be designated a Local Nature Reserve in the short term. The wetland is part of the flood mitigation required when the eastern Transport Corridor was built.

#### **Options Considered**

- 6.3.4 Options will be developed through the work indicated in paragraph (6.3.8) below. For housing, these will include repair, adaptation and remodelling, and could also include selective demolition, redevelopment and newbuild. Options will also need to be considered regarding making linkages to planned developments nearby, and into and between open spaces and community facilities. All options will also consider how much housing could be accommodated on the land of the former Red hall Riding Stables and its environs.

#### **Preparing a Draft Policy: the Preferred Option**

- 6.3.5 This draft policy is to enable and provide the land use context for the delivery of a specific action set out in the Housing Strategy<sup>6.24</sup>.
- 6.3.6 By utilising existing housing and identifying appropriate opportunities for new housing development within and adjacent to existing housing, the regeneration at Red Hall will contribute to meeting Borough-wide general and affordable housing needs and increase tenure choice, and improve the condition of the housing stock overall. It is estimated that up to about 120 new dwellings could be provided on land in the area, although this will need to respond to any new information that comes forward through the masterplanning process and public consultations.
- 6.3.7 Masterplanning regeneration activity is also an opportunity to help improve the liveability of the area, by addressing social, economic and environmental issues in an integrated way. The scope of regeneration works within the area could also therefore include measures to:
- (a) improve access to and within estate for public transport, walking and cycling;
  - (b) improve environmental quality;
  - (c) create links to the new neighbourhoods planned nearby at Lingfield Point (draft Policy MGP3) and the Eastern Fringe (from 2021, draft Policy MGP6);
  - (d) enhance open space/playing facilities;
  - (e) enhance existing community facilities;
  - (f) provide high speed broad band across the area.
- 6.3.8 Options for regenerating the Red Hall area have not yet been identified (these will be developed through the masterplanning process), so sustainability appraisal cannot be undertaken at this stage. Key environmental and social sustainability considerations for the land to the north of the estate are likely to be retaining access to good quality open space and impact on Haughton Conservation Area.

#### **Draft Policy MGP 18: Red Hall Housing Regeneration Area**

*A Red Hall Housing Regeneration Area is identified as a focus for housing regeneration activity from 2014/15. Proposals for the area, which will be agreed through the preparation of a masterplan for the area, will be to improve and increase the housing stock, diversify tenure, improve access to and integration with surrounding areas and the rest of the town, and create a more liveable residential environment.*

### **Making it Happen**

- 6.3.9 The policy will be implemented through the following actions, alongside other initiatives to address problems in the area, e.g. using Green Deal Programme and Warm Up North to address fuel poverty:
- Prepare and appraise options for remodelling the existing housing estate. In conjunction with local residents:
  - Establish the local needs for different types, sizes, and tenures of housing;
  - Prepare a master plan for consultation during 2013/14, to include development proposals, reconfiguration of the estate, possibly selective demolition and replacement and,
  - Identify suitable development partners.

## **6.4 HOUSING INTENSIFICATION**

### **Context**

- 6.4.1 High concentrations of sub-divided housing stock or other forms of Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO's)<sup>6.25</sup> can cause problems within a local community if not properly managed. Changes to permitted development regulations have made it easier for such properties to be created, and they can form a vital part of the overall housing mix, However when concentrations get too high, problems can arise, to the detriment of the amenity of existing residents.

<sup>6.25</sup>As defined by Section 254 of the Housing Act 2004

- 6.4.2 The creation of HMO's and self-contained flats has increased in recent years, in response to the increasing number of smaller households<sup>6.26</sup> and the need for more affordable, low cost housing. Needs are expected to increase further in response to recent changes to housing benefit payments. HMO's of 3 to 6 unrelated individuals who share basic amenities in a single property (Use Class C4) do not require consent under changes made in October 2010 to the General Permitted Development Order so local authorities have less control the previously over the establishment of such properties.

<sup>6.26</sup>Darlington Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2012

- 6.4.3 New HMO's and self contained flats have generally been achieved by building new properties and converting large houses or commercial properties. In some instances, their provision can be detrimental to the amenity of existing residential areas. A concentration of these properties can lead to problems such as a shortage of on street parking, increased noise and disturbance and inadequate bin storage areas, whilst short term lets and low levels of owner occupation can be associated with lower standards of maintenance and environmental decline. The conversion of existing larger homes can also reduce the proportion of family homes in an area, and result in an unbalanced community. As such, this could prejudice the plan's environmental improvement and regeneration objectives.
- 6.4.4 Paragraph 53 of the NPPF states that local authorities should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area.
- 6.4.5 The recent changes to national policy exclude private residential gardens from the definition of previously developed land emphasise that there is no presumption that garden land is suitable for housing. In general the Council will not accept proposals for developments on back garden land but proposals for development of backland sites in other uses will be considered subject to the criteria below and other relevant policies. As stated in Policies CS10 and CS11, the use of previously developed land and vacant or underused buildings is the council's first preference for residential development.

## Issues

<sup>6.27</sup>Garden Development : the construction of a dwelling(s) within the domestic curtilage of an existing residential property.

6.4.6 The main issues considered in developing a policy for housing intensification were:

- controlling future development where high concentrations of HMO's and self contained flats created from existing housing stock are already in existence; and
- setting out an approach to dealing with applications for additional dwellings within gardens of existing properties ('garden development')<sup>6.27</sup>.

## Options Considered

<sup>6.28</sup>National Planning Policy Framework, paragraphs 47,& 53

6.4.7 National planning policy<sup>6.28</sup> allows Councils to set out policies to resist inappropriate development, to set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances, and requires consideration to be given to a policy controlling inappropriate development of residential gardens. Because these issues are often locally contentious, a policy is considered appropriate, to provide more clarity for applicants and decision makers alike.

6.4.8 Garden development is a Borough wide issue, so a policy approach is proposed that would be applied to all such developments. As national policy allows Councils to consider the need for a policy rather than offering specific guidance on how new development on garden land should be viewed, the only viable option was to provide a policy clarifying a local approach to such applications.

6.4.9 In relation to the creation of HMO's and self contained flats within existing dwellings, the following three options were considered:

Option a) Borough wide policy approach that would be applied to all proposals requiring planning permission.

Option b) a policy approach limited to existing areas where saturation of HMOs and self contained flats is being reached, to deter further development from being permitted in unsuitable areas.

Option c) a policy approach limited to existing areas of 'saturation' and also for areas approaching saturation.

## Preparing a Draft Policy: the Preferred Option

<sup>6.29</sup>Special Place Scrutiny Committee Background Paper 12th November 2012

6.4.10 Taking into account the feedback of Northgate Residents Group and the Place Scrutiny Committee<sup>1</sup>, the preferred option is Option b). Options a) was regarded as unnecessarily restrictive, and Option c) also too restrictive, since recent work<sup>6.29</sup> indicates that the problem is concentrated in parts of the Northgate Ward, around the Northgate Conservation Area and central parts of the ward (around Corporation Road and Greenbank Road).

6.4.11 Some guidance on acceptable densities for new build housing development is provided in the Council's adopted Design of New Development SPD, but is too general to address the issues identified above.

## ***Sub-division of existing housing stock including HMO's and self-contained flats***

6.4.12 Whether a residential property is considered acceptable for conversion will depend on size, unsuitability for continued family occupation or long established use. Acceptable areas for conversion are likely to be close to town centres or

<sup>1</sup> Special Place Scrutiny Committee 12th November 2012