

Consett Neighbourhood Plan

Pre-submission draft

July 2026

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Foreword

Xxxx

How to get involved

This draft plan has been informed by community engagement and evidence work. Consett Neighbourhood Forum needs your input to ensure the plan and policies as drafted fully reflect the views of local people. There will be a drop in event on xxx where you can come along to find out more.

You can let the CNF know your views on this draft plan in the following ways:

- Using the online form available at: xxxxx
- By picking up a response form from xxx and dropping it off xxx;
- By email to: xxxx; or
- By letter to: xxxx.

If you have any questions about the plan, you can get in touch using the contact details above.

Comments must be received by noon on xxxx.

1. Introduction

Background to neighbourhood planning

- 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 in areas without parish councils they are prepared by neighbourhood forums. Neighbourhood plans 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 help 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 to establish priorities for action to improve an area. These are often referred to as 'community actions'. The main purpose of a neighbourhood plan, however, 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 considerations indicate otherwise.

Planning context

- 1.4 As they are part of the development plan, neighbourhood plans must be prepared in accordance 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 legal 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 The development plan for the Consett Neighbourhood Area comprises the policies contained within the County Durham Plan (CDP) which was adopted by Durham County Council (DCC) in 2020. The Consett Neighbourhood Plan ('the plan') has been informed by the planning policies contained within the CDP and its associated evidence base.

Sustainable development

- 1.7 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. The most recognised definition of 'sustainable development' is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The basic conditions statement, that

will accompany the submission plan, will explain how the implementation of the plan is expected to contribute to sustainable development.

Legal obligations

- 1.8 Neighbourhood plans must be compatible with legal obligations, specifically strategic environmental assessment regulations and conservation of habitats and species regulations. A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is a way of ensuring that the environmental implications of policies are taken into account before plans are brought into force. The habitats regulations assessment (HRA) process aims to ensure that the plan will not result in significant damage to internationally important nature conservation sites. Where the potential for likely significant effects cannot be excluded an appropriate assessment (AA) must be undertaken.
- 1.9 DCC has prepared a screening opinion on whether a SEA and/or AA was required for the plan. The conclusion of the screening opinion was that **xxxxx** – consultation will be required with Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency on this conclusion. This will be completed before the plan is submitted to DCC for examination. **DCC needs to confirm this initial view (that SEA and AA is not required) before you can consult**

Background to the Consett Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.10 Consett Neighbourhood Area (figure 1) was designated as a neighbourhood area, for the purposes of neighbourhood planning, by DCC on 7 November 2023, the Consett Neighbourhood Forum (CNF) was designated on the same date. All members of the local community were invited to be part of the forum, to be eligible members need to either live or work in the designated Consett Area. The aim of the forum is to work together to create a Consett Area Neighbourhood Plan, to support the improvement of the area for the Consett community. The purpose is to empower the Consett Community and ensure they have a greater input in the development of the town. The role of the committee is to be more directly involved with the development of the Consett Area Neighbourhood Plan. All members of the Forum were invited to join the committee. Members that initially volunteered to be on the committee were formally voted in at the full forum meeting on the 14 January 2024, some members volunteered at a later date and hence were voted in at a subsequent full forum meeting. The CNF have endeavoured to include members from across all areas of the town, and each member has been involved in a key area of development. Further detail about the committee can be found on the CANF website here:

<https://www.canf.org.uk/meet-the-team/>



Figure 1 - Consett Neighbourhood Area

- 1.11 To inform the preparation of the neighbourhood plan the following engagement activities have taken place:
- Frequent open meetings with Forum members to gather input on key issues, including green spaces, heritage and design.
 - Meetings with local residents and business forums.
 - Public displays of information e.g. at Consett library.
- 1.12 This draft plan is the result of the early engagement and evidence work. It identifies:
- The context in which the plan has been prepared – an overview of the area and the **opportunities and challenges** for the plan to address;
 - A **positive vision** for the future of the area;
 - How the vision of the plan will be **delivered through planning policies** i.e. the policies that **will be used to determine planning applications** within the plan area – providing a framework for sustainable development; and
 - How the vision of the plan will be **delivered through community actions** i.e. measures which are **intended to encourage action and influence decisions** taken by relevant bodies.
- 1.13 The plan covers the period to 2040 during this time the neighbourhood plan will be reviewed and updated where required. All the background information and feedback from the local community that has informed this pre-submission draft plan is available online at <https://www.canf.org.uk/>

Next steps

- 1.14 Following the end of the consultation period the responses will be reviewed to identify whether any modifications need to be made to the plan and its evidence base.
- 1.15 The current timetable¹ for the next stages of the plan making process are:
- Submission of the plan to DCC for examination: **autumn 2026**;
 - Consultation on the submission plan: **autumn 2026**;
 - Examination of the plan by an independent examiner: **winter 2026**;
 - Referendum: **winter 2026/spring 2027**; and
 - Neighbourhood plan 'made' by DCC: **spring 2027**.

¹ The timetable is subject to change, for example feedback from the consultation on the draft plan could result in additional work being undertaken or further engagement and therefore submission delayed.

2. Background to Consett Neighbourhood Area

A brief history of the area

- 2.1 Consett's history stretches back to a small medieval settlement high on the edge of the Pennines. Its name, first recorded in the 13th century as *Cunecesheafod* ('Cunec's headland'), hints at its early landscape roots. For centuries, the area remained mostly rural, tied to lead mining along the River Derwent, until the industrial revolution dramatically reshaped its destiny.
- 2.2 The transformation of the Consett area began in the 1840s with the discovery of key resources—coal, blackband iron ore, and limestone—ideal for blast-furnace steel. The Derwent Iron Company, founded in 1840 and later reformed as the Consett Iron Company in 1864, helped turn the town into one of Britain's core steelmaking centres. Immigrant craftsmen from Germany also contributed, expanding the ironworks beginnings in nearby Shotley Bridge that became a centre for manufacture of high quality swords.
- 2.3 By the mid-20th century, Consett's ironworks towered above the town—employing around 6,000 people and producing steel for national icons like Blackpool Tower and the UK's nuclear submarines. However, changes in the steel industry, including centralisation at coastal sites and declining raw-material competitiveness, led to the plant's closure in 1980—a blow that left unemployment soared, dubbed locally as 'the murder of a town'.
- 2.4 Surrounding areas and villages, such as Blackhill, Iveston, Leadgate, Medomsley, Shotley Bridge, Hamsterley, and Ebchester, also have rich histories with a mix of Roman, Anglo Saxon and 19th century coal mining that largely supported Consett's iron and steel making.
 - **Blackhill** owes its existence to the ironworks at Consett and prior to the building of the works was farmland. The current settlement of Blackhill was developed as a place for the workers to live, with the earliest properties being developed in the mid 19th century, affording its designated conservation area status.
 - **Iveston**, where Roman coins have been unearthed, is mentioned in records as early as the 12th century but clearly has a history dating back much earlier than that.
 - **Leadgate's** history is rooted in its location on the Roman Road of Dere Street but prior to the 19th Century was a small settlement with farms and some mining activity. Development of the railways and the opening of the Eden Colliery in 1844 started the post-Industrial Revolution of Leadgate. The colliery closed in 1980, ending coal mining (along with iron and steel making) in the Consett Area.
 - **Medomsley** is the home of the 13th century church of St Mary Magdalene (restored in the late 19th Century). This village was also a mining village, as most of Consett's other surrounding villages were, and had two collieries, Medomsley (1839 – 1972) to the South West and Derwent Colliery (1856 – 1964) to the North.
 - **Shotley Bridge** was a hub for Roman mills and a booming sword-making industry, later gaining popularity as a Victorian spa town.
 - **Hamsterley**, home to a colliery (1864–1968) and Hamsterley Hall, tied to families like the Swinburnes and the Viscounts Gort.
 - **Ebchester** is built on the Roman site of Vindomora, itself built in the late 1st century AD and was later thought to be the site of an Anglo Saxon monastery and St Ebba's Church was founded in the 12th Century. The village later grew as coal mining expanded in the 19th century to serve Consett's burgeoning ironworks.
- 2.5 Despite the steelworks' and mine closures, the area has since regenerated. The old works site hosts retail parks like Tesco and Morrisons, and housing developments have reshaped the skyline. Industrial diversification, cultural heritage trails, and the natural beauty of places like

the Derwent Reservoir and nearby North Pennines have revitalized this area of the region. Today, Consett and its neighbouring villages masterfully balance their industrial roots with rural charm and a forward-looking spirit.

Population, households and housing

2.6 At the 2011 census, the plan area had 37,035 residents, formed into 16,413 households in 17,190 dwellings. The 2021 illustrated that the population increased by around 4% (1,490 people to 38,525) and an increase in households of 1,019 (total 18,209). Completions data provided by Durham County Council indicated that between 2011 and 2024, 1,137 dwellings were completed in the plan area. Table 1 illustrates that there has been a large increase in the population aged between 65-84 (+21%) and a decline in the younger population – those aged 15-24 has declined by 9% and those aged 24-44 has declined by 5%. Despite the gradual ageing of the population of the plan area, figure 2 illustrates that the population of the plan area is slightly younger than the population of Durham County as a whole.

Table 1 - Change in age structure of the population 2011 to 2021

Age group	2011 (Census)		2021 (Census)		Change
0-14	6,246	16.9%	6,568	17.0%	5.2%
15-24	4,173	11.3%	3,800	9.9%	-8.9%
25-44	9,958	26.9%	9,502	24.7%	-4.6%
45-64	10,114	27.3%	10,870	28.2%	7.5%
65-84	5,652	15.3%	6,834	17.7%	20.9%
85 and over	892	2.4%	951	2.5%	6.6%
Total	37,035	100.0%	38,525	100.0%	4.0%

Source: ONS 2011, ONS 2021, AECOM Calculations

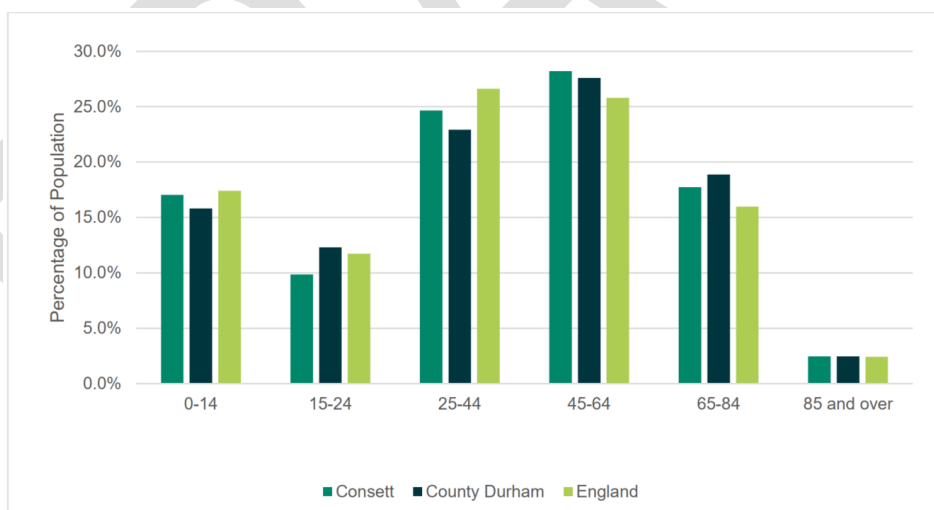


Figure 2 - Age structure 2021

2.7 Table 2 illustrates that the most common type of housing in the plan area is terraced, followed by a similar level of semi-detached. It can be seen that between 2011 and 2021 there has been a fairly significant decrease in the number of terraced dwellings (-511) which has had an impact on the proportional share of other housing types. Furthermore, there has been a significant increase in the number of detached (+410) and semi-detached (+403) dwellings. The housing profile in the plan area generally follows that of County Durham – with the majority of homes being terraced (35.4%), semi-detached (38.2%), detached (20.8%) and then flats (5.4%).

Table 2 - Accommodation type (2011-2021)

Type	2011	%	2021	%
Detached	3,094	18.0%	3,504	20.1%
Semi-detached	5,917	34.4%	6,320	36.2%
Terrace	7,250	42.2%	6,739	38.6%
Flat	890	5.2%	902	5.2%
Total	17,190		17,476	

Source: ONS 2021 and 2011, AECOM Calculations

- 2.8 Since 2011 there has also been an increase in the 3 bed (+535) and 4 bed (+316) homes – illustrating that the new homes that have been built have tended to be larger – however table 3 illustrated that the proportional share across all dwelling sizes has not changed significantly. When looking at Durham County as a whole, the majority of homes have 3 beds (44.9%), then 2 beds (32.5%), 4+ beds (16.7%) and finally 1 bed (5.9%).

Table 3 - Household size (bedrooms) Consett 2011-2021

Number of bedrooms	2011	%	2021	%
1	617	3.8%	652	3.7%
2	5,545	33.8%	5,727	32.8%
3	7,685	46.8%	8,220	47.0%
4+	2,566	15.6%	2,882	16.5%
Total	16,413		17,481	

Source: ONS 2021 and 2011, AECOM Calculations

- 2.9 The general health of the population is also comparable with the county as a whole, with 43.6% of the population stating that they were in very good health (43% at the county level). Analysis of ward level population information, does not highlight any significant differences at smaller local levels.

Access to employment, services and facilities

- 2.10 In comparison to the county as a whole, a higher proportion of the population of the neighbourhood area aged 16 and over, are in employment 56.3% (51.2% in County Durham). Figure 3 illustrates that the level of hours worked are similar to those within the wider county. The population of the neighbourhood area are more highly qualified than those within the wider county with 44.2% having level 1,2 or 3 qualifications and 28.5% having level 4 qualifications and above (compared with 43.7% and 26.7% in the county). There are also slightly more managers, directors and senior officials in the neighbourhood area (10.5% compared to 10.1%) and slightly more employed in professional and associate professional/ technical occupations (29.6% compared to 28.8%).

Hours per week worked

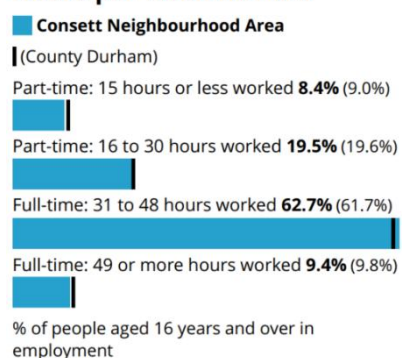


Figure 3 - number of hours per week worked

- 2.11 The area is well served by road and cycle networks. The A691 towards Durham linking with the A692 towards A68 and towards Newcastle and Gateshead (East). A692 also has a junction with A693 on the border of the area. The A694 runs from to Gateshead and the west of Newcastle to link with A691. This accessibility brings the increasing challenge of road congestion as people have moved into the town to commute to larger towns and cities in the area. The C2C (Sea to

Sea) branch of the national cycle network runs through the plan area, linking up with other more local cycling routes, Lanchester Valley and Derwent Walk but is mainly used for leisure rather than local transport.

- 2.12 The retail businesses in Consett town centre are mainly independent retailers with the addition of a few smaller branches of national chains or franchises. There are many empty properties in this area highlighting both the need and opportunity for development and investment. Immediately outside the centre are three areas where larger retail businesses are situated, namely Hermiston Retail Park, Delves Lane (closest to town centre) and the Genesis Way Development. Within these three areas are four large supermarkets, surrounded in the main by other national chains. In the surrounding villages there are retail areas two of which are designated in the CDP as smaller retail centres.
- 2.13 Across the plan area there are 18 areas dedicated to employment including manufacturers and smaller business providing a range of services and employment opportunities to the local population and beyond.
- 2.14 The area has one Academy secondary school with a sixth form situated close to Consett Town Centre and each of the larger villages has at least one primary school. In addition, there is one further education college which provides post-16 and adult education.
- 2.15 There is a community hospital situated in Shotley Bridge which is due to be rebuilt on another site closer to the centre of Consett. This currently provides a small number of rehab beds, out-patient services, chemotherapy, imaging, minor injuries and out of hours Urgent Care. At the time of writing this plan the services listed are planned to be re-provided at the new facility.

Natural, historic and built environment

- 2.16 The environmental impact of steelmaking left scars on the landscape, but reforestation and green initiatives have restored much of the natural beauty. The plan area has a rich natural environment. The southern boundary of the area lies adjacent to the North Pennines National Landscape which is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Figure 4 illustrates that the area includes areas of higher landscape value and figure 5 identifies important biodiversity and geological assets including: areas of ancient woodland; the Allensford Woods Local Nature Reserve; Derwent River Gorge Local Geological Site; and seven local wildlife sites (Knitsley and High House Wood (part), West Wood, Sodfine and Howden Wood, Grove Ponds, Westlaw Wood and Spa Well Paddock, Broomhill Dene, and Pontburn Wood (part)).

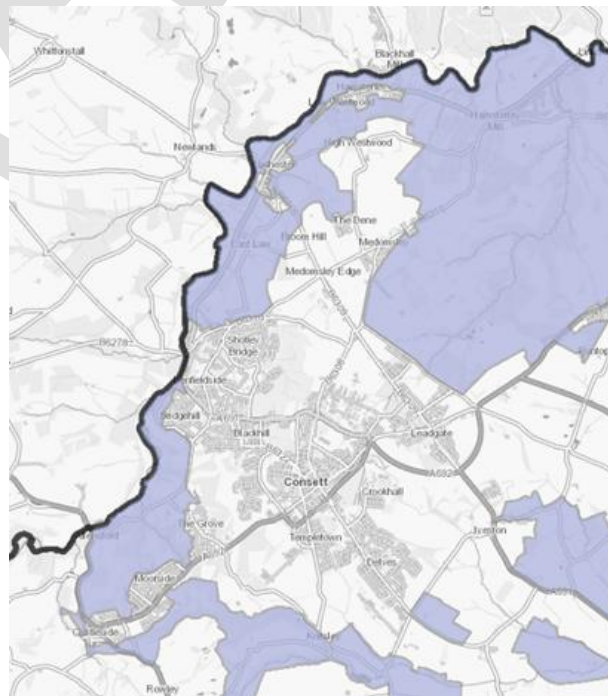


Figure 4 - Areas of Higher Landscape Value

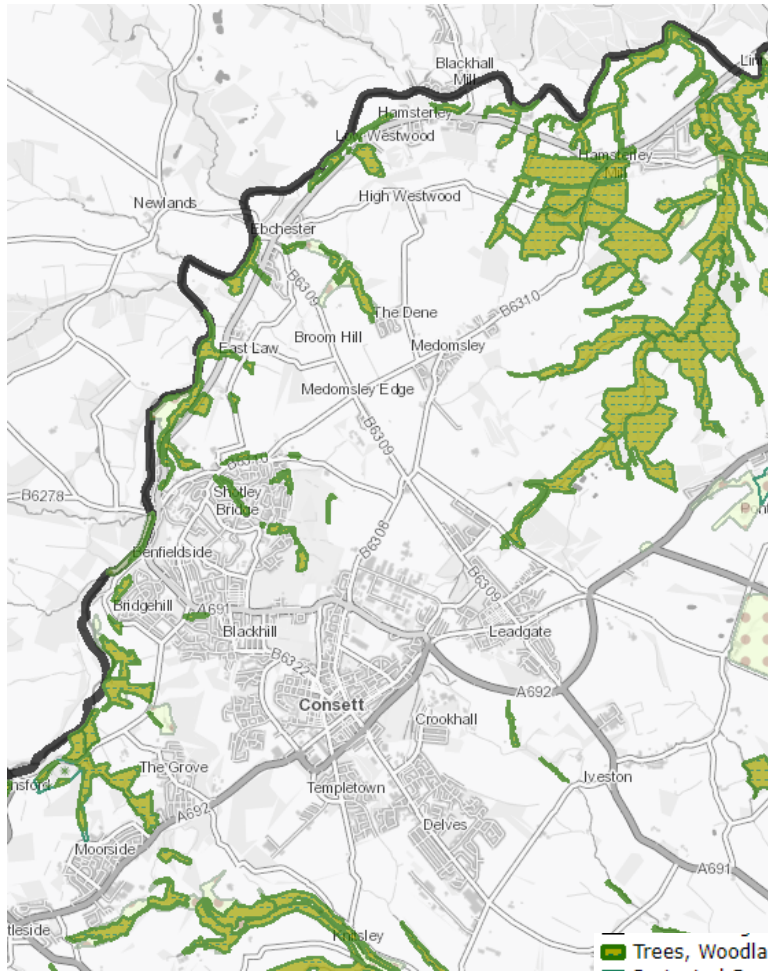


Figure 5 - Natural environment designations

- Trees, Woodlands and Hedges - Ancient Woodland
- Protected Species and Sites - Local Nature Reserves
- Protected Species and Sites - Local Geological Sites
- Protected Species and Sites - Local Wildlife Sites

2.17 Figure 6 shows the location of the seven conservation areas that lie in the neighbourhood area: Blackhill, Shotley Bridge, Ebchester, Low Westwood, Medomsley, Iveston and Lintzford (part).

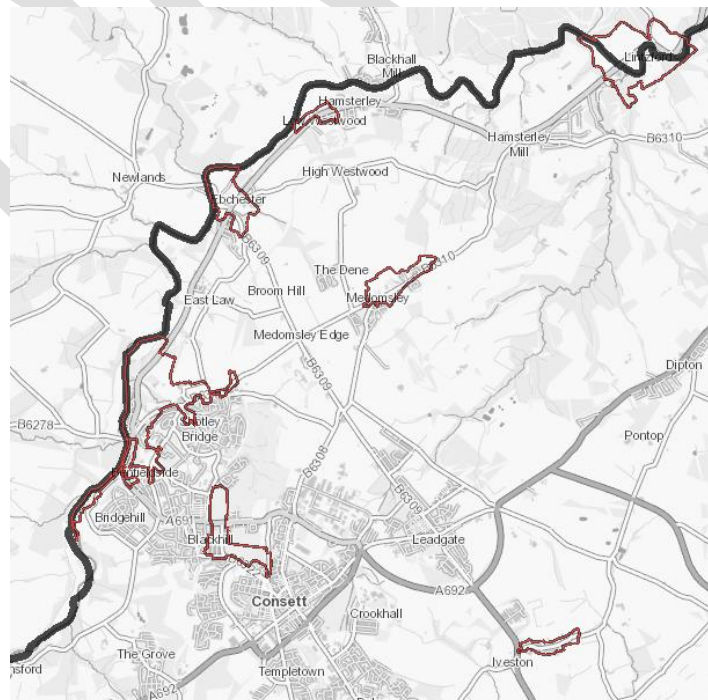


Figure 6 - conservation areas

2.18 There are also:

- 82 listed buildings of which one is grade II*
- Three scheduled monuments - Allensford Blast Furnace (part), Ebchester (Vindomora) Roman Station, Derwentcote Steel Cementation Furnace; and
- 503 entries on the historic environment record comprising a mix of extant and former archaeological sites, historic buildings and industrial remains.

Key issues for our Plan

2.19 The early engagement, described in section 1 and evidence work, including the summary presented above have identified the following key issues for the plan, which are not in priority order:

- Concern that new housing development does not meet the needs of the local community, particularly young people seeking first homes and older people looking to downsize and those with additional needs.
- Importance of good design.
- The need to protect green spaces which are important to the local community.
- Importance of the heritage of the area.

2.20 These issues have informed the vision and objectives for the Plan.

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3. Vision and objectives

Vision

- 3.1 The vision sets out what the Consett Neighbourhood Plan intends to achieve over the plan period to 2040. It informs all the objectives, draft planning policies and community actions.

A vision for the Consett Neighbourhood Area in 2040
<p><i>By 2040, the Consett Neighbourhood Area will have benefited from appropriate and sustainable development, which recognises the needs of the locality and where vibrant economic growth, supported by investment and infrastructure, and the preservation of our distinctive environment go hand in hand.</i></p> <p><i>It will be a place where the whole community thrives, where our young people are able to access education, employment, leisure activities, services, and homes they can afford, to encourage them to remain in the area and support the future sustainability of our town.</i></p> <p><i>Visitors to the area are welcomed, with the potential of the visitor economy realised as a result of our rich heritage and natural beauty, which will be protected and enhanced for future generations.</i></p>

Objectives

- 3.2 The vision is supported by five objectives. These clearly relate to the issues identified through early engagement with the local community and other stakeholders, as well as the evidence base supporting the plan. The draft planning policies and community actions contained within the plan, should deliver the objectives.

Objectives
<p>Objective 1 – Sustainable development and climate change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To place sustainability at the heart of planning decisions to ensure that new development makes a positive and sustainable contribution to social, environmental and/or economic needs.• To work towards the creation of a sustainable economy. <p>Objective 2 – Growing and vibrant town:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To grow and diversify our economy by capitalising on our unique strengths, including tourism, linked to our rich heritage and natural environment.• To increase vibrancy and activity in Consett Town Centre and the smaller retail centres across the area. <p>Objective 3 – Thriving and healthy communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure new development meets the needs of all residents, including supporting the right type of housing in the right locations, creating a thriving community where everyone feels welcome and safe.• To contribute to community wellbeing by ensuring that all members of the community have access to the services and facilities they need.

Objective 4 – Distinctive environment:

- To protect and enhance the distinctive natural, built, and historic character of the Consett Neighbourhood Area, including our landscape, important spaces, biodiversity, heritage assets and water environment.

Objective 5 – Connected and accessible:

- To promote access to sustainable modes of transport which connect people to a wide range of services, facilities and employment opportunities, as well as enhancing opportunities for safe and active travel and ensuring access for all.

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4. Sustainable development and climate change

Introduction

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development². It highlights three overarching objectives, economic, social and environmental, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways³. The NPPF therefore includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development⁴. This presumption is repeated within the County Durham Plan (CDP), which contains a sustainable development statement, describing how the presumption will be applied across County Durham (3.3).

Sustainable location of new development

- 4.2 Managing the location of new development is an important way in which the planning system can support the delivery of sustainable development, particularly by focusing the majority of new development in larger settlements which contain a range of services and facilities. The NPPF requires planning policies to promote a sustainable pattern of development.
- 4.3 The strategic approach of the CDP is to allocate sites for housing and economic development to support sustainable growth. The approach to the allocation of sites for development was informed by a settlement study, which assessed the availability/ access to jobs, shops, schools and public transport in each settlement. The settlement study considered clusters of settlements and individual settlements – 229 were assessed. Within north west Durham, the Consett Cluster comprised: Benfieldside, Blackhill, Bridgehill, Castleside, Conset, Crookhall, Delves Lane, Leadgate, Moorside, Shotley Bridge, Templetown and the Grove. All settlements/ clusters of settlements then received a 'score' based on the provision of services and facilities. The Consett Cluster had the third highest score of 646.7 - Durham City Cluster scored 1217.6, the Bishop Auckland Cluster scored 732.5 and the Peterlee Cluster scored 469.
- 4.4 The settlement study provided an understanding of the roles and relationships of the different settlements and informed the strategic approach to development. In order to maximise access to jobs, minimise the increase in commuting and to deliver sustainable patterns of development, the County Durham Plan focuses new housing and economic development in the county's larger settlements: Durham City, Consett, Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland.
- 4.5 The CDP does not however identify settlement boundaries, to seek to manage the location of new development. Where sites are not allocated for development, CDP policy 6 applies. This seeks to focus development within built up areas, or areas that are well-related to a settlement, provided specific criteria are met. Neighbourhood plans do not need to repeat existing planning policies contained within the CDP and it is considered that the policies within the CDP are appropriate to manage the sustainable location of new development.

Climate change

- 4.6 The requirement for the planning system to meet the challenges of climate change is also clearly explained within the NPPF⁵. It stresses the need to shape places in ways which contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience;

² Paragraph 7

³ Paragraph 8

⁴ Paragraph 11

⁵ Section 14

encourage the reuse of existing resources; and support renewable and low carbon energy. Planning policies are therefore required to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, including considering the long-term implications of flood risk.

- 4.7 Several CDP policies refer to the need for new development mitigate climate change and to minimise vulnerability and provide resilience to impacts arising from it, such as flooding (policies 6, 10, 26, and 35). It is not necessary for the neighbourhood plan to repeat policies contained within the CDP and it is considered that the CDP provides an appropriate framework against which planning applications can be assessed.

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5. Growing and vibrant town

Introduction

- 5.1 One of the elements of sustainable development, as defined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is that the planning system should help to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity. The social element relates to supporting strong, vibrant and health communities.

Economy

- 5.2 The County Durham Plan (CDP) recognises the need to deliver economic growth whilst safeguarding the environment and community wellbeing. It highlights the important role of Consett as one of the key locations within the county for local and regional businesses which contributes to the employment base and local economy. Policy 2 allocates employment land (see figure 7). In the plan area there are 18 sites allocated as protected employment sites:

- Number One Industrial Estate - 30.4ha;
- Delves Lane (South) - 23ha;
- Crookhall Industrial Estate - 7.9ha;
- Leadgate Industrial Estate - 6.8ha;
- Hownsgill Industrial Estate - 6.7ha;
- Derwentside Business Park - 6.3ha;
- Bradley Shops/ Watling Street - 5.8ha
- Castleside Industrial Estate - 5.5ha;
- Delves Lane (North) - 5.2ha;
- Park Road Industrial Estate - 2.3ha;
- The Grove - 1.9ha;
- Hamsterley Industrial Estate - 1.6ha;
- Ponds Court - 1.1ha;
- Park Road Industrial Estate (North) - 1ha;
- Park Road Industrial Estate - 1ha;
- Derwentdale Industrial Estate - 0.6ha;
- Blackhill - 0.6ha;
- Hownsgill Industrial Estate - 0.5ha

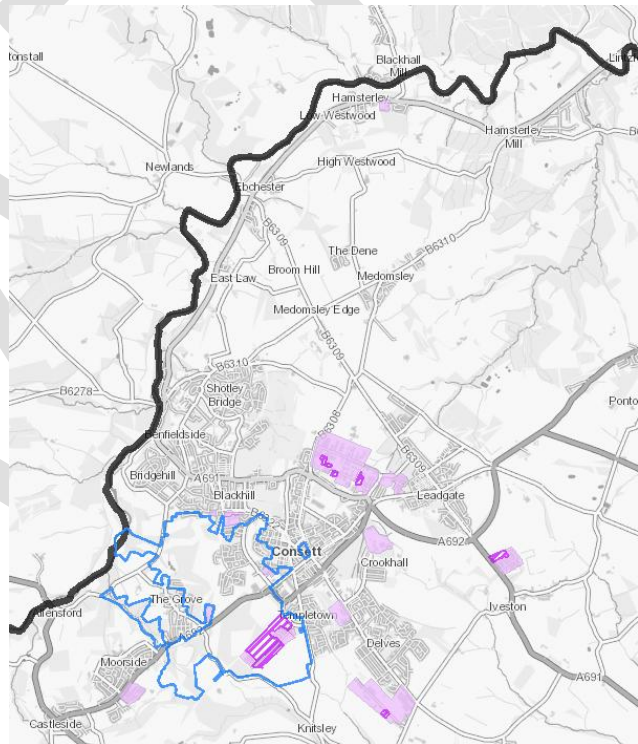


Figure 7 - CDP employment land allocations

- Project Genesis
- Employment Land - Protected Site
- Employment Land - Allocation

- 5.3 The plan area also includes 8 new employment land allocations:

- Hownsgill Industrial Estate - 10.6ha;
- Hownsgill Industrial Estate - 3.9ha;
- Delves Lane (South) - 0.6ha;
- Leadgate Industrial Estate - 1.6 ha;

- Villa Real (Consett Business Park) - 0.8ha;
- Number One Industrial Estate - 0.6ha, 0.5ha and 0.3ha.

5.4 Furthermore, the County Durham Plan identifies over 300ha of land for Project Genesis, supporting a mixed use development. There is the opportunity through the neighbourhood plan to develop more detailed and locally specific policies for the employment allocations. In acknowledgement of the importance of the economy of the plan area, significant engagement took place with local business networks. The results of discussions alongside the detailed policies within the CDP it was concluded that there is no need to add further detail within the neighbourhood plan.

Town centre, retail and facilities

- 5.5 National planning policy requires planning policies and decision to support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. This is reflected within the CDP which acknowledges the importance of town centres to the economy of the county. It identifies a retail hierarchy (policy 9), informed by an assessment of the roles of each of the centres across the county. Consett is classified as a large town centre. A town centre boundary and primary shopping area boundary are identified. Leadgate and Shotley Bridge are identified in the CDP as a local centres which support a number of local shops and services that meet local residents' daily shopping needs.
- 5.6 Through the neighbourhood plan, the town centre and primary shopping area and local centre boundaries can be reviewed. Plans can also include additional detail on the important services that are provided within the areas and could also identify other important local centres which provide shops and services
- 5.7 Whilst CDP policy 9 is detailed, feedback from early engagement suggested that there was a need to consider whether the boundaries were appropriate and whether there was a need to identify other smaller centres. An initial review concluded that the Consett Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area boundaries were appropriate, as were the boundaries for Leadgate and Shotley Bridge.
- 5.8 In addition to the centres already identified, feedback highlighted the important role that smaller local retail centres/parades of shops provide, particularly those at Blackhill, Delves and Moorside. Policy 1 supports appropriate new development within smaller retail centres and seeks to resist the loss of important local services and convenience retail within these areas.

Policy 1: Smaller retail centres

The following smaller retail parades and clusters, as defined on the **policies map**, are classified as Smaller Retail Centres:

- SR1 Durham Road, Blackhill
- SR2 Delves Lane (north)
- SR3 Delves Lane (middle)
- SR4 Regents Court
- SR5 Park Road/Newmarket Street

Development within the smaller retail centres will be supported where it strengthens the vitality and viability of these areas, while protecting the vitality and viability of Consett Town Centre and Leadgate and Shotley Bridge Local Centres. Applicants should demonstrate how the proposal would add to the attractiveness of these smaller centres and how it would not

have an adverse impact on the amenity and operation of neighbouring properties and businesses.

Tourism

- 5.9 The visitor economy is a growing part of the economy of the county. The CDP includes a policies to support the development of visitor attractions (policy 7) and visitor accommodation (policy 8), including that they are: located in sustainable and accessible locations and appropriate to their location in terms of scale, design, layout and materials. Feedback from early engagement highlighted that there was a need for a new hotel in the town and also that opportunities for enhancing tourism linked to cycling should be exploited. It is considered that sufficient detail to support such development is included within the CDP and there is no need to repeat this within the neighbourhood plan.

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6. Thriving and healthy communities

Introduction

6.1 The social element of sustainable development, as defined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is that the planning system should support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations, as well as supporting communities health, social and cultural well-being.

Housing

6.2 The NPPF highlights the government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes⁶. Neighbourhood plans have an important role in supporting the delivery of the number, type and mix of homes that are required in the area. They must support the strategic development needs that are set out in local plans and not promote less development. The NPPF also highlights that neighbourhood planning groups should consider opportunities for allocating sites for housing in their area⁷.

6.3 In order to assist with the process of planning for housing, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to provide neighbourhood planning groups with a definitive or indicative number of houses to plan for over the neighbourhood plan period. This has not been provided by Durham County Council, despite being requested. The CDP allocates five sites within Consett town to deliver 670 dwellings between 2016 and 2035 (see figure 8).

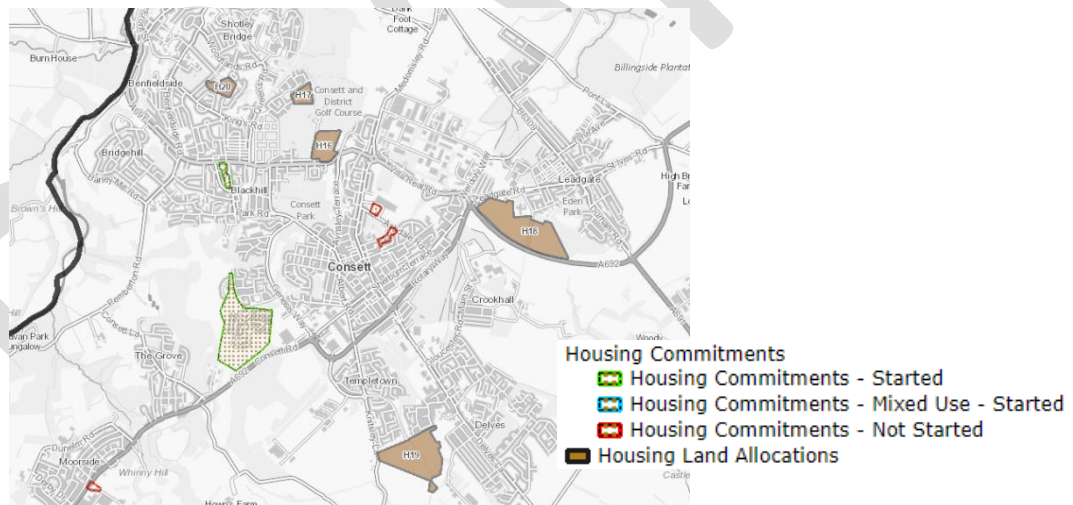


Figure 8 - CDP housing allocations and commitments

6.4 Completions data provided by the council indicates that between April 2016 and the end of March 2024 a total of 623 dwellings have been completed in Consett, with a further 791 dwellings committed. It can however be assumed that the plan area does not have an unmet housing requirement.

6.5 Through early engagement with the local community concern was expressed regarding the type of housing development that has been constructed in recent years not meeting local needs, particularly smaller properties for young people and those looking to downsize in older age. To inform the decision on whether the neighbourhood plan should look to allocate sites for

⁶ Paragraph 61

⁷ Paragraph 74

housing or include housing policies, a housing needs assessment (HNA) was commissioned. This was prepared by AECOM, through the government's technical support programme for neighbourhood planning. The assessment considered the needs for different housing sizes and tenures, affordability issues and whether there was a need to provide specialist housing. The full HNA is available on the Forum website.

6.6 The key issues identified in the HNA are:

- Home ownership is the dominant tenure at 66% of all households, which is slightly higher than County Durham as a whole (62.5). There is a smaller proportion of households living in social rented homes at 16% compared to County Durham as a whole (20%).
- House prices are generally affordable to households with average incomes, but they are generally out of reach of households made up of one lower earner. Private renting is slightly less affordable than home ownership, again average income households could afford average rents but these would be out of reach for households with two lower earners.
- The income required to buy and rent are broadly the same, meaning it is difficult to define who may benefit from affordable home ownership products – meaning that access to a deposit is likely to be a greater barrier to home ownership.
- Social and affordable rented housing appear to be generally affordable to households with a single lower earner.
- It is estimated that there is a long-term demand of 75.6 affordable home ownership dwellings per year to 2040.
- It is recommended that the tenure mix of affordable housing secured in future years is weighted in favour of social/affordable rental homes – the tenure split is recommended to be 75% social/affordable rental and 25% affordable home ownership.
- Recent delivery of new homes in the plan area have tended to be larger detached dwellings.
- Population projections suggest that to the end of the plan period, there could be a 55% increase in those aged 65 and over, but that the lower age groups would grow at a much slower rate.
- Given the demographic trends, it is suggested that new developments should look to address imbalances in the existing housing stock – with 75% of new dwellings having between 1 and 2 bedrooms. This would provide opportunities for downsizing and options for younger people.
- There is estimated to be around 3,543 individuals aged 75 or over in the plan area, this has increased from 3,067 in 2011 and is projected to rise to 5,560 by 2040.
- The potential need for specialist housing with some form of additional care for older people has been estimated, which produces a range of 506 to 918, with broadly between 50-60% likely to be needed for market purchase. With 50-70% estimated to be accommodated through either sheltered accommodation or adaptations to the existing housing stock, rather than extra care. The main unmet need is for sheltered market accommodation – whilst acknowledging that some of this need may be satisfied by new housing that is accessible and adaptable for people with lower support needs.
- The need for care and nursing home beds by 2040 has been estimated at approximately 212.

6.7 The County Durham Plan (CDP) contains policies on delivering affordable and market housing. Policy 15 requires the delivery of affordable housing to meet local needs on sites of 10 or more units, in rural areas, schemes of between 6 and 9 units are required to provide a financial contribution towards the delivery of affordable housing. The level of affordable housing to be provided depends on which housing viability area the site is located. Within the Consett

Neighbourhood Area there are high, medium and low viability areas which means that new housing would be expected to provide an affordable housing contribution between 10-20%. The policy also states how the needs of older people and those with disabilities should be met.

- 6.8 As previously explained, it is not necessary for neighbourhood plans to repeat policies contained within the CDP. Whilst CDP policy 15 is detailed it does not refer to proposals taking account of locally identified needs. Given the needs highlighted within the HNA, it is considered appropriate for the neighbourhood plan to include a policy on meeting identified needs.

Policy 2: Meeting housing needs

In addition to the provisions of Policy 15 of the County Durham Plan, the mix of housing types and tenures delivered on housing sites should have regard and be informed by the Consett Housing Needs Assessment (2025) and subsequent updates. Development proposals should contribute to meeting identified needs, particularly through the provision of affordable rented homes and smaller one and two bedroom homes

Community facilities

- 6.9 Community facilities are identified in the NPPF as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open spaces, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship. These facilities enhance the sustainability of local communities and residential environments. The planning system has an important role in supporting the development of new community facilities as well as seeking to retain valued facilities. It is acknowledged that planning permission is not always required to change the use of a building or land, and this restricts the ability to secure the continued use of an important facility. Notwithstanding this, neighbourhood planning presents an opportunity to identify facilities which are of importance to the local community and also identify where additional facilities are needed. The facilities identified in policy 3 have been informed by early engagement.

Policy 3: Community facilities

1. The following facilities are identified as having great importance to the local community and are identified on the **policies map**:
 - CF1 Consett Leisure Centre, Medomsley Road
 - CF2 Consett Park and Tennis Courts
 - CF3 Methodist Church Hall, Sherburn Terrace
 - CF4 Consett St Patricks Church Hall and Hub
 - CF5 Consett Citizens House
 - CF6 Consett Scout Group Building Constance Street
 - CF7 Consett Heart and Heritage / Arts Centre
 - CF8 Consett Masonic Hall
 - CF9 Consett Parish Church Hall
 - CF10 YMCA – Delta North Facilities
 - CF11 Consett RFC
 - CF12 Consett AFC and Facilities
 - CF13 Glenroyd House Community Centre and Facility
 - CF14 Delves Lane Village Hall
 - CF15 Crookhall Community Centre
 - CF16 Leadgate Community Centre

CF17 Grove Methodist Church hall
CF18 Hamsterley Village Hall
CF19 Hamsterley Community Centre
CF20 Ebchester Village Hall
CF21 St Ebba's Church Hall
CF22 Shotley Bridge Village Hall
CF23 Shotley and Benfieldside Tennis Club clubhouse and courts
CF24 Shotley Hospital
CF25 Shotley Bridge Church Hall
CF26 Blackhill Community Centre
CF27 Blackhill Heritage Centre
CF28 Blackhill & Consett Park
CF29 Consett Park Bowling Pavilion
CF30 St Mary's Church Hall and Community Facility
CF31 Blackhill Comrades Club community facility
CF32 Benfieldside Community Centre
CF33 Bridgehill Community Hub
CF34 Bridgehill Church Hall

2. Development that would result in the loss of a community facility will only be supported where one of the following can be demonstrated:
 - a. Equivalent accessible provision is available locally; or
 - b. There is no longer a need for the service or facility to serve the community in its existing use or as an alternative use; or
 - c. The continued use is no longer economically viable.
3. Where planning permission is required, development proposals will be supported which sustain or protect existing shops, facilities and services, subject to compliance with relevant policies within the development plan.

7. Distinctive environment

Introduction

- 7.1 The natural, built and historic environment of the plan area is highly valued by the local community, as well as its many visitors.

Design

- 7.2 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It creates better places in which people live and work. It is fundamental to what the planning and development process should deliver, ensures that new development contributes positively to the local environment and therefore, enhances the quality of life for residents.
- 7.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights⁸ the importance the government attaches to good design and the important role that neighbourhood plans can play in identifying the special qualities of their areas and explaining how this should be reflected in new development. In addition, the National Design Guide⁹, which forms part of national planning practice guidance, sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. The National Model Design Code provides further detailed guidance to promote successful design.
- 7.4 The County Durham Plan (CDP) includes policies to manage the design of new development. Policy 29 is the main design policy, this includes countywide principles to allow the assessment of the quality of new design in development, such as the need to contribute to an areas character and identity, minimise greenhouse gas emissions, embed renewable energy and provide high standards of amenity. There is also a design review process which assesses appropriate developments primarily against the Building for Life standards and the County Durham Design Code. Supplementary Planning Document. Furthermore, the County Council has also prepared a series of Settlement Character Studies which provide further guidance on local characteristics and distinctiveness on a settlement-by-settlement basis.
- 7.5 Whilst the County Durham Design Code provides county-wide guidance, the Consett Neighbourhood Area has its own distinctive history, townscape and settlement pattern. Early engagement with the local community highlighted concerns regarding the impact of poorly designed development on the character of the area. To provide locally specific guidance, a design guidance document was commissioned. The Consett Design Guidance (March 2026) was prepared by AECOM, through the government's neighbourhood planning technical support programme. The Design Guidance forms part of this plan and is included at Annex 2.
- 7.6 The Design Guidance complements the design policies contained within the CDP and should be read alongside the County Durham Design Code and the relevant Settlement Character Studies where appropriate. It provides an analysis of the special characteristics of the plan area and sets out practical design approaches to illustrate how future developments can preserve and enhance local distinctiveness. It includes a characterisation study which identifies seven area types (see figure 9) and informs design guidelines that are sensitive and responsive to local context, landscape setting and character. The area types are:
- Area type 1: Traditional terraced houses
 - Area type 2: Modern infill development
 - Area type 3: Historic villages

⁸ Section 12

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

- Area type 4: Formal development
- Area type 5: New development
- Area type 6: Retail Consett
- Area type 7: Industrial Consett

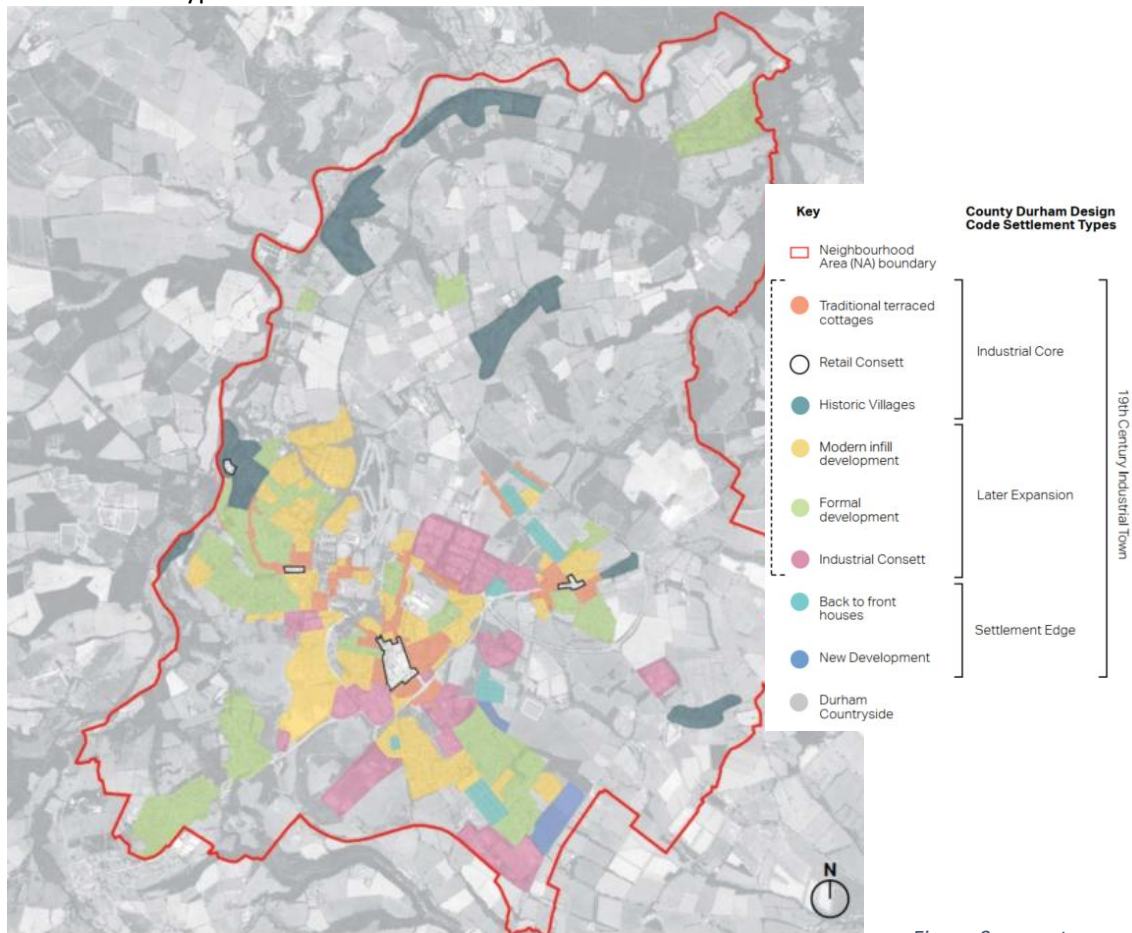


Figure 9 - area types

7.7 The Consett Design Guidance contains detailed character assessments together with area-specific and neighbourhood-wide design guidance covering matters such as layout, scale, massing, building form, materials, landscaping, public realm, movement, nature and sustainability. Rather than repeating this detailed guidance within Policy 4, it establishes the overarching planning requirements and requires development proposals to have regard to the relevant guidance. This approach avoids unnecessary duplication, ensures that detailed design guidance is maintained within a single document and allows it to be read alongside the County Durham Design Code and associated Settlement Character Studies.

Policy 4: Consett Design Guidance

Development proposals should achieve a high standard of design that responds positively to the character and distinctiveness and identity of the Consett Neighbourhood Area. Applications should demonstrate how it:

- Has had regard to the Consett Design Guidance (March 2026, Annex 2 of this plan) and, where relevant the Design Guidelines applicable to the Area Type in which the site is located; and
- Accords with Policy 29 of the County Durham Plan and the County Durham Design Code, including the relevant Settlement Character Studies where appropriate.

Local green space

- 7.8 Green spaces are a vital part of a vibrant and healthy community and are of great importance to the character and identity of a place. They are valued for a wide range of reasons including visual amenity; historic significance; recreational value; tranquillity; and richness of wildlife. Uncontrolled changes to green spaces can irrevocably alter their special character or intrinsic value. Through early engagement the local community identified several valued spaces across the plan area.
- 7.9 The NPPF enables neighbourhood plans to designate areas of local green space for special protection, thereby preventing development on these sites other than in very special circumstances¹⁰. These spaces do not need to be publicly accessible but must be in reasonably close proximity to the community they serve as well as being demonstrably special to them, holding a particular local significance. The designation cannot be applied to an extensive tract of land. The NPPF is clear that designating land as LGS should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.
- 7.10 The sites listed in policy 5 and shown on the policies map are proposed to be designated as local green spaces as they meet the criteria set out within national policy and guidance. The sites have been identified following a good practice methodology¹¹. The online mapping information explains the reasons sites are of particular importance to the local community.

Policy 5: Local green space

1. The following areas, as defined on the [policies map](#), are designated as local green space:

LGS01 xxxx
LGS02 xxxx
LGS03 xxxx
LGS04 xxxx
LGS05 xxxx
LGS06 xxxx
LGS07 xxxx
LGS08 xxxx
LGS09 xxxx
LGS10 xxxx
LGS11 xxxx
LGS12 xxxx
LGS13 xxxx
LGS14 xxxx
LGS15 xxxx etc

2. Development that is not inappropriate in the Green Belt, excluding provisions relating to grey belt and previously developed land, will be supported on Local Green Spaces, providing:
 - a. It would be compatible with the reasons for designation as set out in the Local Green Space Assessment Methodology and shown on the policies map; and
 - b. It would not undermine the designation of the Local Green Space.

¹⁰ Paragraphs 106-108

¹¹ Available at [xxxx](#)

3. Development that does not comply with part 2 of this policy, and development that is inappropriate in the Green Belt, will only be permitted where very special circumstances exist in line with national Green Belt policy.

Green Wedges

- 7.11 Through early engagement the local community highlighted the importance of the relationship between the built up areas of the town and villages. The physical and visual separation are considered vital to the character of the local area. The green wedges are also important to wildlife and the natural environment. National planning policy is clear that one of the ways the planning system can contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment is by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes as well as recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- 7.12 Policy 6 therefore seeks to protect and enhance the setting of the town of Consett and the surrounding villages, preventing coalescence and protecting the rich natural environment of the area. Further information is contained within the green wedges background paper – has this been prepared/do you want me to review?

Policy 6: Green Wedges

Development within the green wedges, identified on the policies map, will be supported where it is demonstrated that it will not result in the coalescence of Consett with the surrounding villages, preserving the open character of the area and protecting the rich natural environment.

Heritage

- 7.13 As indicated in section 2, the town has a rich history, with many designated and non-designated heritage assets of both national and local importance. The conservation and enhancement of heritage assets can bring wider benefits, particularly improving the desirability of the plan area as a place to live, work and visit.
- 7.14 Designated heritage assets have statutory status and include listed buildings and conservation areas. Under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, any works for the demolition of a listed building, or for its alteration or extension requires listed building consent. It is a criminal offence to carry out work which needs listed building consent without obtaining it beforehand. The Act also includes provisions to require conservation area consent for some works of demolition within a conservation area. Where planning permission is required for works within a conservation area, the Act requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.
- 7.15 A non-designated asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which does not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.
- 7.16 As detailed in section 2, the heritage assets of the plan area are a vital part of its identity. There are 85 entries for the area on the National Heritage List, including 82 listed buildings/structures, and three scheduled monuments. In addition to these, there are currently over 500 entries within the plan area on the Durham Historic Environment Record, which is a source of

information on all heritage assets. There are also seven conservation areas that lie within the neighbourhood area.

- 7.17 Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and the NPPF requires them to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Also, that planning decisions affecting a heritage asset are required to be based on a sound understanding of the significance of the asset and the impact of the proposal on that significance¹². Policy 44 of the CDP requires that heritage assets are conserved and enhanced in accordance with their significance.
- 7.18 As part of the early engagement on the neighbourhood plan, feedback identified the importance of the heritage of the area, including those assets that are not designated. As a result, it was concluded that the neighbourhood plan would include policies for the conservation areas and identify non-designated heritage assets. **A methodology and assessment process for the identification of non-designated heritage assets was prepared and details on proposed the proposed NDHA is available on the interactive policies map¹³.**

Conservation Areas

- 7.19 There are seven conservation areas: that lie in the neighbourhood area: Blackhill, Shotley Bridge, Ebchester, Low Westwood, Medomsley, Iveston and Lintzford (part). There is an opportunity through the neighbourhood plan to include policies to guide new development within conservation areas. Three of the conservation areas within have conservation area character appraisals (Blackhill, Ebchester and Shotley Bridge). The conservation areas include many non-designated heritage assets that are important to their character.

Blackhill Conservation Area:

- 7.20 The Blackhill Conservation Area was designated in 1994 and its boundary revised in 2009. The extent of the area is shown in figure 10. A conservation area character appraisal was prepared and adopted alongside the boundary review in 2009. The conservation area contains four listed buildings, all grade II and the appraisal also identifies 36 unlisted buildings of local interest which make a positive contribution to its character and appearance.
- 7.21 The appraisal highlights the area as a particularly high-quality and largely intact late nineteenth and early twentieth century enclave, reflecting the historic development of Blackhill in association with the Consett Ironworks. It encapsulates the social, technological and town planning advances of the period and illustrates the impact of industrialisation on the area.
- 7.22 The significance of the conservation area derives from the strong architectural coherence of its buildings and the carefully planned layout, centred on the extensive landscaped grounds of Consett and Blackhill Park and Benfieldside Cemetery. The area is characterised by a well defined grid-iron pattern of streets, with buildings positioned to add interest to the streetscene. The development reflects the influence of the Consett Iron Company, which provided higher quality housing for its workforce, alongside more elaborate townhouses fronting the park.
- 7.23 Policy 7 seeks to ensure that development within or affecting the setting of the Blackhill Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character, appearance and significance, having particular regard to its planned layout, architectural coherence and its relationship with the surrounding parkland and cemetery.

¹² Section 16

¹³ **Add link**

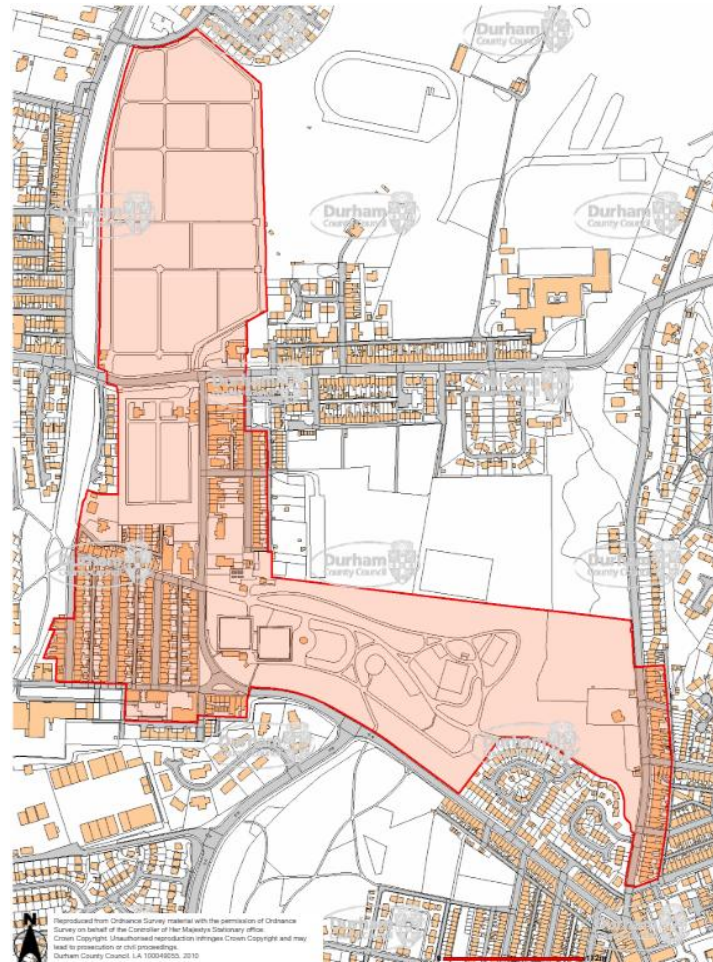


Figure 10 - Blackhill Conservation Area Boundary

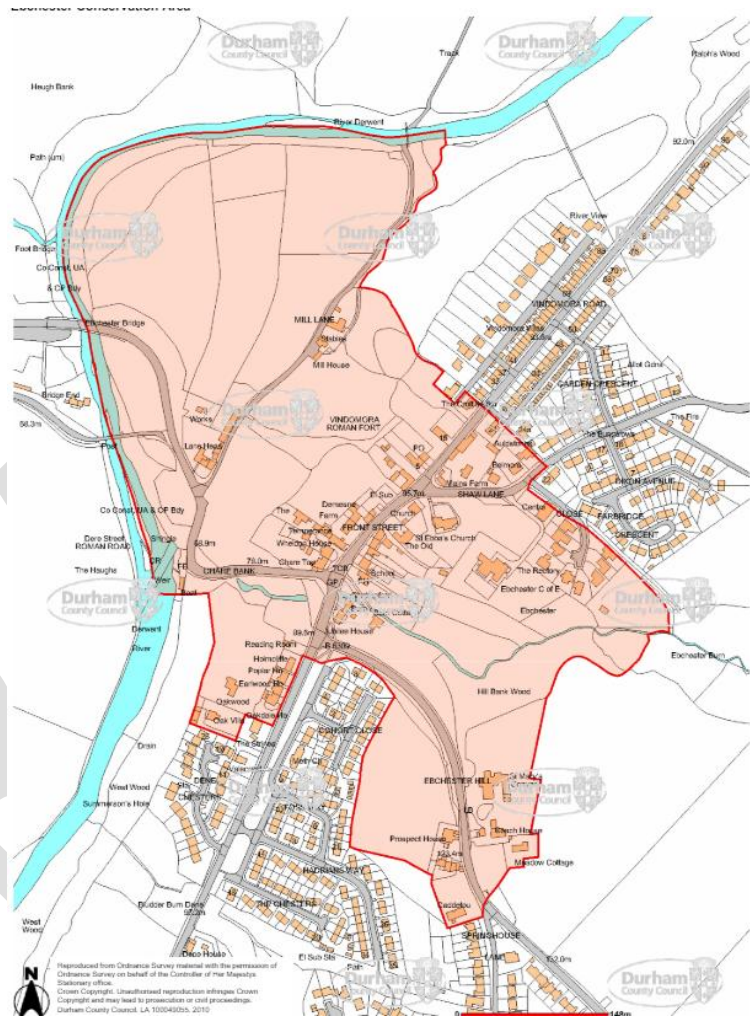
Ebchester Conservation Area:

- 7.24 The Ebchester Conservation Area was designated in 1975 and its boundary amended in 1994 and again in 2009. The extent of the conservation area is shown in figure 11. A conservation area character appraisal was prepared and adopted alongside the most recent boundary review in 2009.
- 7.25 The conservation area contains 23 listed buildings, two of which are grade II* and the others grade II. It also includes the scheduled ancient monument of Vindomora Roman Fort, reflecting the origins of the area as a Roman settlement. The appraisal identifies three key unlisted buildings and a further 20 buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 7.26 The special interest of the conservation area derives from its historic development as a rural village with Roman origins, its strong relationship with the surrounding landscape, and its well-preserved built form. The village occupies an elevated position above the River Derwent, affording extensive views across the valley and contributing to its rural setting.
- 7.27 The settlement developed on the site of the Roman Fort and later as part of the estate of Sherburn Hospital. Whilst primarily agricultural in character, it also provided services to travellers, with mills developing close to the river and during the 19th century mines opened in its immediate surroundings.
- 7.28 The conservation area retains a high degree of integrity, with limited modern development within its core. There are a mixture of buildings, from the 12th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries,

most of which are vernacular in form. The consistent use of local sandstone gives the conservation area a coherent identity and strong sense of place. Country lanes and stone boundary walls are part of its rustic character. Whilst it is predominantly residential, the area retains its village feel.

- 7.29 Policy 7 seeks to ensure that development within, or affecting the setting of, the Ebchester Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character, appearance and significance, having particular regard to its historic layout, architectural character and relationship with the surrounding landscape.

Figure 11 - Ebchester Conservation Area Boundary

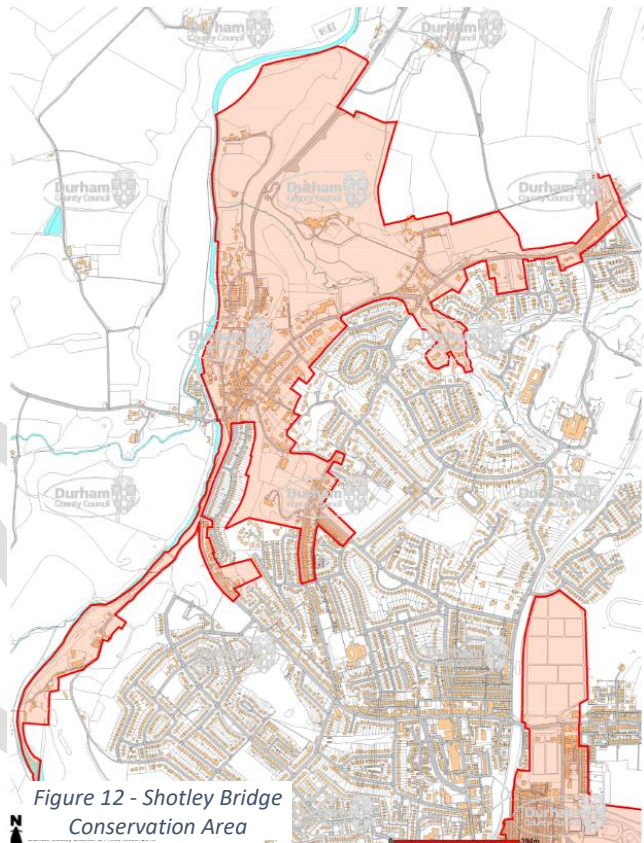


Shotley Bridge Conservation Area:

- 7.30 The Shotley Bridge Conservation Area was designated in 1975 and its boundary amended in 1981, 1994, 2002 and 2009. The extent of the conservation area is shown on figure 12. Part of the conservation area extends into Northumberland. A conservation area character appraisal was prepared and adopted as part of the most recent boundary review in 2009.
- 7.31 There are 40 listed buildings in the conservation area as a whole, with 32 of them in County Durham. The appraisal also identifies a number of unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 7.32 The special interest of the conservation area derives from its distinctive relationship with the wooded valley landscape of the River Derwent and its development as a prosperous Victorian settlement. The settlement is closely shaped by the natural topography, with roads and

buildings responding to the steep, wooded slopes and denes which define the valley. The area experienced significant growth during the 19th century as industrial expansion, including the paper industry at Shotley Grove, the development of the Derwent Iron Company at Consett and the opening of the spa, which led to Shotley Bridge becoming a fashionable place to live and visit. This period resulted in the construction of many of the grand, stone buildings that now define the character of the area.

7.33 The conservation area is characterised by a rich diversity of built form, including grand Victorian villas, terraced housing, cottages and remnants of agricultural and industrial development. This variety is unified through the consistent use of local sandstone and traditional materials, creating a strong and cohesive identity. The area also benefits from a strong landscape framework, with woodland, trees and green spaces penetrating into the built form and reinforcing its rural character. The combination of architectural quality, landscape setting and historic development gives the conservation area its distinct character and significance.



7.34 Policy 7 seeks to ensure that development within, or affecting the setting of, the Shotley Bridge Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character, appearance and significance, having particular regard to its architectural diversity, historic development and its relationship with the surrounding valley landscape.

Low Westwood Conservation Area:

7.35 The Low Westwood Conservation Area was designated in 1994. The extent of the conservation area is shown on figure 13. There is no adopted character appraisal. However, the designation reflects the recognised historic and architectural interest of the settlement. DCC has prepared a character study for the settlement¹⁴.

7.36 The special interest of the conservation area derives from its origins as a small mining settlement and its simple, cohesive built form. The settlement is characterised by an informal layout, with buildings closely related to the street and arranged in a compact form. The built environment is predominantly modest in scale and vernacular in character, comprising traditional cottages and terraces which reflect the area's industrial heritage. The consistent use of local materials contributes to a strong sense of place and visual cohesion.

¹⁴ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/49446/Hamsterley-and-Low-Westwood-Settlement-Character-Study/pdf/HamsterleyAndLowWestwoodSettlementCharacterStudy.pdf?m=1774884197387>

- 7.37 The conservation area also has a strong relationship with the surrounding rural landscape, with the settlement forming a distinct edge between built development and open countryside. This contributes to its character and setting, and reinforces its identity as a small, historic settlement.
- 7.38 Policy 7 seeks to ensure that development within, or affecting the setting of, the Low Westwood Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character, appearance and significance, having particular regard to its scale, layout and relationship with the surrounding landscape.

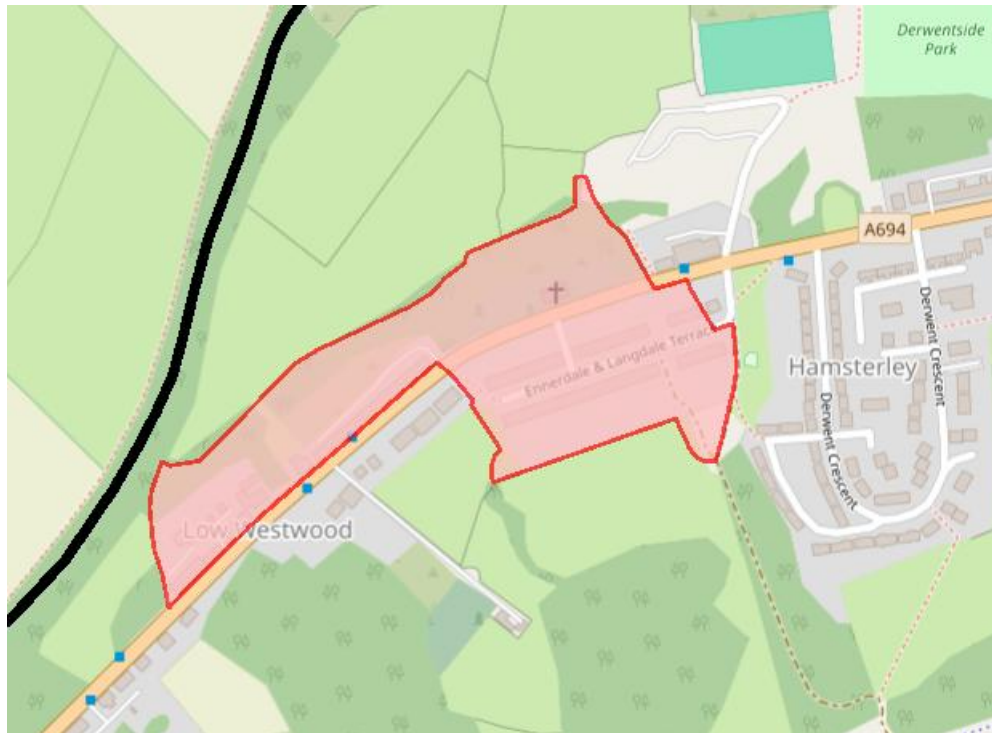


Figure 13 - Low Westwood Conservation Area Boundary

Medomsley Conservation Area:

- 7.39 The Medomsley Conservation Area was designated in 1975. The extent of the conservation area is shown on figure 14. There is no adopted conservation area character appraisal. The designation reflects the recognised historic and architectural interest of the village core. The following description of its character is informed by the Medomsley Settlement Character Study prepared by DCC¹⁵.
- 7.40 The special interest of the conservation area derives from its historic development as a rural village with medieval origins, centred on its historic core and landmark buildings. The area contains a number of heritage assets, including the Church of St Mary Magdalene, which contributes significantly to its character and townscape.
- 7.41 The conservation area is characterised by an informal village layout, with buildings arranged along historic routes and spaces, forming a cohesive and legible settlement pattern. The built form is predominantly vernacular in character, comprising traditional cottages and terraces, together with larger buildings, reflecting the village's gradual evolution over time.
- 7.42 The consistent use of local sandstone and traditional materials creates a strong sense of place and visual cohesion. The elevated position of the village and its relationship with the

¹⁵ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/48470/Medomsley-Settlement-Character-Study/pdf/MedomsleySettlementCharacterStudy.pdf?m=1767783756080>

surrounding countryside, including views across the Derwent Valley, make an important contribution to its setting and significance.

- 7.43 Policy 7 seeks to ensure that development within, or affecting the setting of, the Medomsley Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character, appearance and significance, having particular regard to its historic layout, architectural character and landscape setting.

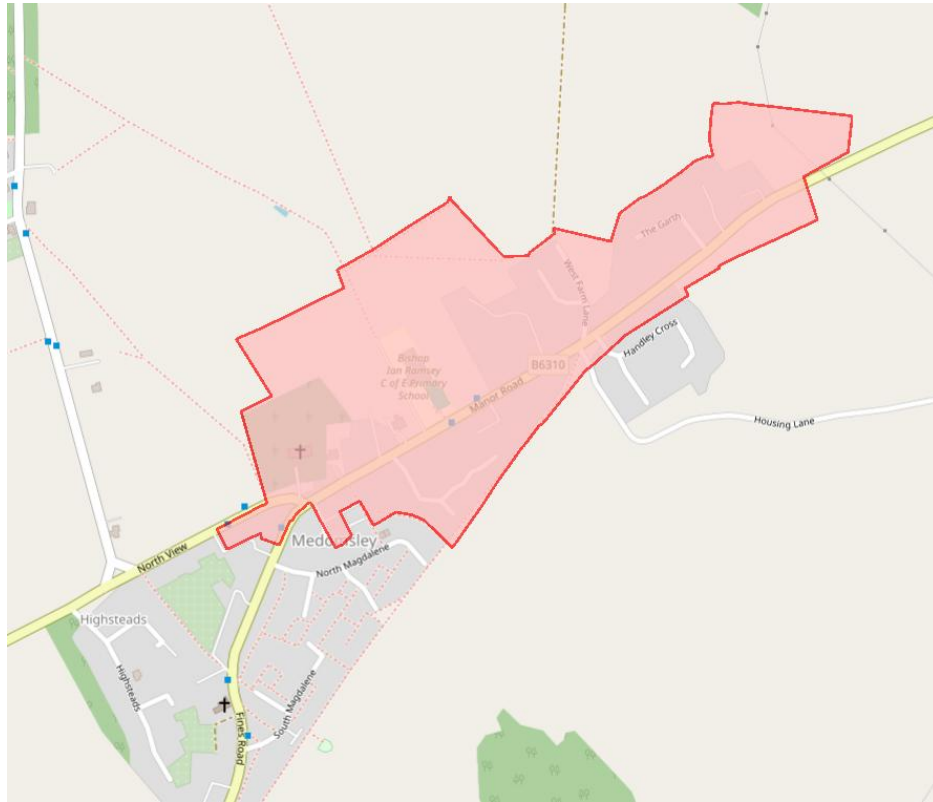


Figure 14: Medomsley Conservation Area Boundary

The Iveston Conservation Area:

- 7.44 The Iveston Conservation Area was designated in 1975. The extent of the conservation area is shown on figure 15. There is no adopted conservation area character appraisal. The designation reflects the recognised historic and architectural interest of the village core. The following description of its character is informed by the Iveston Settlement Character Study prepared by DCC¹⁶.
- 7.45 The special interest of the conservation area derives from its development as a small hilltop village, with a simple and coherent settlement form. The village is characterised by a largely linear layout, with buildings arranged along historic routes, together with the presence of a central village green which provides an important focal point. The built form is predominantly vernacular in character, comprising traditional cottages, terraces and farmsteads of modest scale. The consistent use of local stone and traditional materials creates a strong sense of place and visual cohesion across the conservation area.
- 7.46 The elevated position of the village, its green and its relationship with the surrounding countryside make an important contribution to its character and setting. Views into, out of and

¹⁶ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/49448/Iveston-Settlement-Character-Study/pdf/IvestonSettlementCharacterStudy.pdf?m=1774884224217>

across the conservation area reinforce its identity as a distinct settlement within the wider landscape.

- 7.47 Policy 7 seeks to ensure that development within, or affecting the setting of the Iveston Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character, appearance and significance, having particular regard to its layout, architectural character and landscape setting.



Figure 15 - Iveston Conservation Area Boundary

The Lintzford Conservation Area:

- 7.48 The Lintzford Conservation Area was designated in 1976. The extent of the conservation area is shown on figure 16. The conservation area extends beyond the neighbourhood plan area, with only part falling within the plan boundary. There is no adopted conservation area character appraisal. However, the designation reflects the recognised historic and architectural interest of this small riverside settlement.
- 7.49 The conservation area is characterised by its strong relationship with the River Derwent and its distinctive valley setting. The settlement occupies a bowl-shaped landscape, with a relatively flat central area enclosed by steep, wooded valley sides. The river, bridges and surrounding woodland form an integral part of the overall composition and character of the area. The built form comprises a small cluster of buildings, including former industrial buildings, farmsteads and high-quality stone-built dwellings. The consistent use of traditional materials and the relatively low-density pattern of development contribute to a cohesive and attractive environment.
- 7.50 Policy 7 seeks to ensure that development within, or affecting the setting of, the Lintzford Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character, appearance and significance, having particular regard to its riverside setting, historic industrial origins and distinctive landscape form.

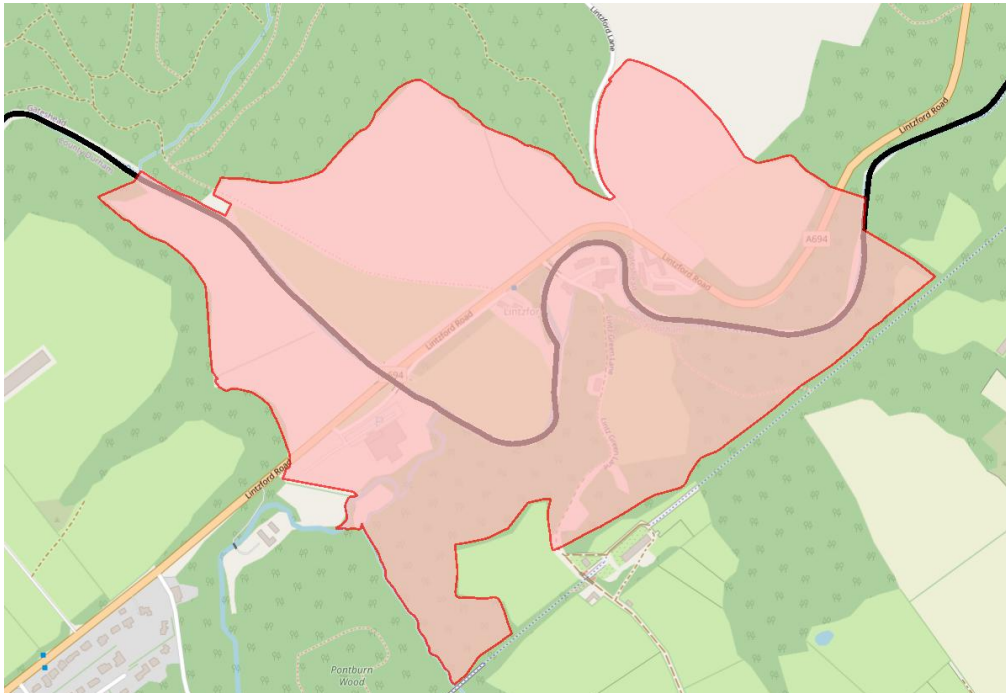


Figure 16 - Lintzford Conservation Area Boundary

Policy 7: Conservation Areas

1. Development proposals within, or affecting the setting of, a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance its significance, character, appearance and setting, having regard to the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal. Applicants should demonstrate the proposal has responded positively to the locally distinctive characteristics identified below.

Blackhill Conservation Area

2. When assessing the impact of development on the character or appearance of the Blackhill Conservation Area and its setting, proposals should, where appropriate and relevant to the development:
 - a. Have regard to its significance as a planned late nineteenth and early twentieth century development centred on Benfieldside Cemetery and Consett and Blackhill Park;
 - b. Preserve the planned layout of the conservation area, including its grid-iron street pattern, and the parkland character, including historic paths, open spaces and designed vistas;
 - c. Maintain the spatial relationship between Blackhill and Consett Park, Benfieldside Cemetery and surrounding built development, including the sense of openness and visual connection between these elements;
 - d. Reflect the architectural character of the area, including the contrast between workers' housing and larger dwellings, and the use of traditional materials, scale, form and detailing associated with late nineteenth and early twentieth century development;
 - e. Protect important views within, into and out of the conservation area, particularly those which contribute to its open and green character;
 - f. Retain and enhance trees, planting and landscape features which define the character and appearance of the area;

- g. Conserve and, where appropriate, enhance non-designated heritage assets and historic park features which contribute to the area's significance.

Ebchester Conservation Area

3. When assessing the impact of development on the character or appearance of the Ebchester Conservation Area and its setting, proposals should, where appropriate and relevant to the development:
 - a. Have regard to its significance as a historic rural village of Roman origin, occupying an elevated position above the River Derwent;
 - b. Preserve the historic and informal layout of the village, including its network of narrow lanes, spaces and plot patterns;
 - c. Maintain and enhance the conservation area's relationship with the surrounding landscape, including important views into, out of and across the area, particularly towards and across the Derwent Valley;
 - d. Reflect the architectural character of the area, including the use of local sandstone, vernacular building forms, traditional detailing and appropriate scale and massing;
 - e. Retain and reinforce the rural character of the area, including the contribution made by stone boundary walls, low-density development and the absence of urbanising features;
 - f. Conserve and, where appropriate, enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the conservation area;
 - g. Ensure that new development responds positively to the historic layering of the area and does not harm its overall integrity or introduce incongruous modern forms or materials.

Shotley Bridge Conservation Area

4. When assessing the impact of development on the character or appearance of the Shotley Bridge Conservation Area and its setting, proposals should, where appropriate and relevant to the development:
 - a. Have regard to its significance as a Victorian settlement of architectural diversity set within the wooded valley landscape of the River Derwent;
 - b. Respect the organic layout of the settlement, including its winding streets, varied plot patterns and the way built form responds to the underlying topography;
 - c. Maintain and enhance the relationship between the built form and the surrounding landscape, including wooded valley sides, denes and the River Derwent, and ensure that development does not erode the strong sense of greenery within the area;
 - d. Reflect the architectural character of the area, including its diversity of building types, from grand Victorian villas to terraces and cottages, and ensure appropriate scale, form and detailing;
 - e. Use materials which are characteristic of the area, particularly local sandstone and natural slate, and avoid the introduction of incongruous modern materials;
 - f. Retain and enhance trees, woodland, green spaces and landscape features which contribute to the area's distinctive leafy and spatial character;
 - g. Conserve and, where appropriate, enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets, including buildings which contribute positively to the conservation area;
 - h. Ensure that new development does not harm the overall integrity of the conservation area or dilute its distinctive mix of architectural styles and historic development.

Low Westwood Conservation Area

5. When assessing the impact of development on the character or appearance of the Low Westwood Conservation Area and its setting, proposals should, where appropriate and relevant to the development:

- a. Have regard to its significance as a small, former mining settlement with a simple, vernacular character;
- b. Respect the informal layout and compact form of the settlement, including its street pattern, building lines and plot structure;
- c. Reflect the architectural character of the area, including its modest scale, simple building forms and vernacular detailing;
- d. Use materials which are characteristic of the area, including natural stone and appropriate roofing materials;
- e. Maintain the relationship between the settlement and the surrounding countryside, including views into and out of the conservation area;
- f. Retain and enhance boundary treatments, trees and landscape features which contribute to the character and setting of the area;
- g. Conserve and, where appropriate, enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings.

Medomsley Conservation Area

6. When assessing the impact of development on the character or appearance of the Medomsley Conservation Area and its setting, proposals should, where appropriate and relevant to the development:
 - a. Have regard to its significance as a historic village core with strong vernacular character and an elevated rural setting;
 - b. Respect the historic and informal layout of the village, including its street pattern, building lines and spatial form;
 - c. Reflect the architectural character of the area, including traditional building forms, scale, massing and vernacular detailing;
 - d. Use materials which are characteristic of the area, particularly local sandstone and appropriate roofing materials;
 - e. Maintain the prominence and setting of key buildings and landmarks within the conservation area, including the Church of St Mary Magdalene;
 - f. Maintain the relationship between the settlement and the surrounding countryside, including important views into, out of and across the conservation area;
 - g. Retain and enhance boundary treatments, trees and landscape features which contribute to the character and setting of the area;
 - h. Conserve and, where appropriate, enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings.

Iveston Conservation Area

7. When assessing the impact of development on the character or appearance of the Iveston Conservation Area and its setting, proposals should, where appropriate and relevant to the development:
 - a. Have regard to its significance as a small hilltop settlement with a simple, linear form and vernacular character;
 - b. Respect the linear and informal layout of the settlement, including its street pattern, building lines, plot structure and contribution of the village green;
 - c. Reflect the architectural character of the area, including its modest scale, simple building forms and vernacular detailing;
 - d. Use materials which are characteristic of the area, including local stone and appropriate roofing materials;
 - e. Maintain the relationship between the settlement and the surrounding countryside, including important views into, out of and across the conservation area;
 - f. Retain and enhance boundary treatments, trees and landscape features which contribute to the character and setting of the area;

- g. Conserve and, where appropriate, enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings.

Lintzford Conservation Area

- 8. When assessing the impact of development on the character or appearance of the Lintzford Conservation Area and its setting, proposals should, where appropriate and relevant to the development:
 - a. Have regard to its significance as a historic riverside settlement focused on early milling activity within a distinctive wooded valley landscape;
 - b. Respect the small-scale and informal layout of the settlement, including its relationship with the River Derwent and historic crossing points;
 - c. Maintain and enhance the conservation area’s distinctive valley setting, including the bowl-shaped landform, wooded valley sides and the river corridor;
 - d. Reflect the architectural character of the area, including the use of natural stone, traditional detailing and appropriate scale and massing;
 - e. Retain the relatively low-density form of development and the spatial relationship between buildings and the surrounding landscape;
 - f. Conserve and, where appropriate, enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets, including the historic bridge, former mill complex and associated buildings, and their settings;
 - g. Retain and enhance trees, woodland and landscape features which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area;
 - h. Ensure that development does not harm the tranquil, rural character of the conservation area or introduce urbanising features.

Non-designated heritage assets

- 7.51 A non-designated asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which does not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. Across the plan area there are over 500 entries on the Durham Historic Environment Record, which are not designated.
- 7.52 Whilst some of the assets lie within the conservation areas, several do not. Given the importance of the heritage of the area to the local community, policy 8 seek to ensure that the significance of non-designated heritage assets, particularly those identified in policy 8, are preserved and enhanced. The process for the identification of the assets is explained within the non-designated heritage assets assessment methodology. **A summary of the significance of the proposed assets is included on the online policies map.**

Policy 8: Non-designated heritage assets

- 1. Development proposals that preserve or enhance the significance of non-designated heritage assets, as defined on the **policies map** will be supported.
- 2. Non-designated heritage assets located outside the Conservation Areas are:
 - NDHA01 xxxxx**
 - NDHA02 xxxxx etc**
- 3. Development proposals which would result in the loss of or harm to a non-designated heritage assets, or its contribution to local character, will only be supported where the public benefits of the development outweigh the harm, having regard to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

4. Where development would result in the loss of, or substantial harm to a non-designated heritage asset, applicants may be required to provide an appropriate and proportionate level of survey and recording, including archaeological investigation where justified. Any resulting record should be deposited on the Historic Environment Record.
5. The non-designated heritage assets identified within the neighbourhood plan are not intended as an exhaustive list of non-designated heritage assets within the neighbourhood area. Where the significance of other buildings, structures or features can be demonstrated, the principles of this policy will also apply.

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Annex 1 Community actions

Introduction

As part of the process of developing the neighbourhood Plan, the steering group identified aspirations and issues that cannot be addressed through the planning system. These have been listed as 'community actions' all of which related to the policy areas of the neighbourhood plan and are supported by CNF. Whilst it may be possible for CNF to take forward some of these on its own initiative, others will require collaboration with other bodies and, in some cases, funding will be required.

Objective 1 - Sustainable development and climate change

Community Action SD1
Set up a local Climate Action Group to lead on awareness and small-scale sustainability initiatives.
Community Action SD2
Support and share community renewable energy projects (e.g., solar panels on public buildings).
Community Action SD3
Encourage retrofitting and energy-efficiency improvements in homes and businesses through local advice and grant signposting.
Community Action SD4
Organise and share information workshops on recycling, sustainable gardening, and reducing food waste.
Community Action SD5
Work with local schools and charities on eco-projects and sustainability education.
Community Action SD6
Promote sustainable construction and green infrastructure in planning applications.

Objective 2 - Growing and vibrant town

Community Action GVT1
Share and promote the "Visit Consett" group to develop local tourism branding and support heritage trails, festivals, and events.
Community Action GVT2
Support the local Consett markets – the weekly and additional markets.
Community Action GVT3
Support initiatives that promote local produce and independent businesses to promote local, independent businesses.
Community Action GVT4
Encourage community use of vacant or underused town centre spaces through pop-up shops or arts projects.

Community Action GVT5
Explore Business Improvement District (BID) options to support ongoing town centre improvements.
Community Action GVT6
Collaborate with local colleges or enterprise groups to support new startups and youth enterprise. Support the implementation of our Consett Area Youth Manifesto

Objective 3 - Thriving and healthy communities

Community Action THC1
Develop a Community Needs Assessment to identify gaps in services and facilities.
Community Action THC2
Promote and share our Housing Needs Assessment, and discuss with community groups to advocate for a mix of housing types, including affordable and adaptable homes for older residents.
Community Action THC3
Support community-led housing initiatives where possible.
Community Action THC4
Promote access to mental health, youth, and elderly support services through local signposting and drop-in sessions, and social prescription services.
Community Action THC5
Work with health providers and local groups to increase physical activity opportunities, such as walking groups or fitness classes.

Objective 4 - Distinctive environment

Community Action DE1
Support local heritage and nature groups to survey and document key local assets and habitats.
Community Action DE2
Support and organise regular litter-picks, tree planting, and wildflower seeding events.
Community Action DE3
Campaign for the protection of green spaces under pressure from development.
Community Action DE4
Develop local walking routes and interpretation boards highlighting historic and natural features. Promote the walks that already exist.
Community Action DE5
Work with schools, charities and community groups to engage in conservation education projects.

Objective 5 - Connected and accessible

Community Action CA1
Set up a local transport forum to work with Durham County Council on improving rural and town transport links.
Community Action CA2
Support the creation and maintenance of safe walking and cycling routes, especially linking housing to schools and shops, and advertise the local cycle tracks.
Community Action CA3
Expand the local car-share or community transport scheme for those with limited access to services.
Community Action CA4
Install more benches and rest areas on common routes for older or mobility-limited residents.
Community Action CA5
Campaign for improved digital connectivity in rural areas to ensure better access to online services. Support and develop local digital inclusion initiative.

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